

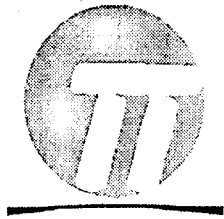
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- Voltaire



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COVER:

Depth of agony and grief of a woman having to bury the dead members of her family.
Courtesy of AFP/BBC

Facing Post-Tsunami Challenge

It was nature's fury. Unannounced and without warning, a reminder of the man's limited control over nature. Tsunami struck the coastlines of many Asian countries wrecking the lives, livelihoods and homes of millions of people. It left an approximately 200, 000 dead. Many thousands remain missing or unaccounted for.

Sri Lanka has been one of the worst affected countries to be hit by the Tsunami. In just twenty minutes, it left nearly 40,000 people dead and over a million people displaced, many of them destitute, their kith and kin and all their world possessions having been swallowed up or swept away by its giant powerful waves. All along the coastline from Vadamarachchi in the north, Mullaitivu, Tricomalee, Muthur, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, Tirukovil and Ampara in the east, Hambantota, Tangall, Matara and Galle in the south, the Tsunami left a trail of unimaginable destruction. Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Christians, rich and poor, young and old, men and women, military men or Tamil Tiger cadres, were all hit without distinction.

As the sheer scale and sweep of the calamity that struck a section of the human family came to be known, the rest of humanity world over reacted with an unprecedented outpouring of spontaneous and genuine heartfelt concern and selfless generosity digging deep into their pockets. They gave their heart out in the form of money and material valued at hundreds of millions of dollars. Humbled by this display of limitless generosity, the Governments of rich nations competed with each other in pledging billions dollars in humanitarian support to the devastated people of South East Asia.

In Sri Lanka, in the initial stages after the tragedy, it was the people who survived and living in adjoining areas belonging to all communities who provided urgently needed relief and assistance to the affected people without distinction. Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims came to each others help. In the east, the army and LTTE cadres came to each others help ignoring the past when they fought each other to death. There have been reports of instances where LTTE cadres had rescued soldiers from being drowned, and soldiers who sacrificed their lives while attempting to save Tamils from being submerged in water. In the east a joint committee comprising government officials, LTTE area leaders and army personnel coordinated the rescue and relief effort. It has been reported that the cooperation between the authorities, the army and the Tamil Tigers were so striking that it raised hopes for peace breaking out from the ashes of the devastation caused the Tsunami.

Soon it became evident it was not to be. It has to be recognised that politics is all pervasive, and rescue and relief effort was not going to be an exception even following a calamity of this magnitude that had visited upon the people. Politics is about the exercise of power, control and influence over people. To the uncared for, the grief-stricken, the homeless, the unfed and the hungry, it would not matter from whom or where the relief came from. But to those who want to exercise control and influence over people it would and did matter. The result was an unseemly public dispute as to who controlled the welfare centres for the displaced people and through and by whom relief should be channelled and distributed. The LTTE's position was that in the Northeast including the Government controlled areas, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) should be in charge and run the welfare centres and all relief supplies should be channelled through the TRO. The Government's position was that the TRO could operate in that manner in the LTTE controlled areas but not outside and put the military in charge of military welfare centres. When the international community has responded substantially to the plight of the Tsunami affected people, the spectacle we witness in Sri Lanka is the shameless politicisation of the effort of distribution of relief to the affected people.

There is no doubt that similar and more acrimonious dispute will emerge even in regard to the rehabilitation and reconstruction phases. The Government has drawn up elaborate plans for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the devastated areas. But already there are complaints of lack of consultation and over-centralisation.

Sri Lanka is a divided society and it is a fact. The Ceasefire Agreement reflects that division. There are substantial parts of the Northeast which are recognised as being under the control of the LTTE and where the writ of the Government does not run. And since the Ceasefire Agreement came into being in February 2002, the LTTE has succeeded in spreading its influence over many more areas in the Northeast. In this context it has to be recognised and accepted that without consultation with and cooperation of the LTTE no meaningful rehabilitation and reconstruction can be undertaken in those areas. It also has to be recognised that the LTTE on its own cannot undertake this monumental task. It is therefore self-evident that the need of

the hour is the establishment of a joint mechanism among all concerned and relevant parties, particularly by the Government and the LTTE, to formulate and undertake the urgent task of rehabilitation.

In the days and weeks before the Tsunami struck, the war drums were being heard and there was talk of the imminence of resumption of another bout of bloodletting. However tragic as it is, the Tsunami and the resulting devastation all round has made that prospect distant at least for the present. The message that comes from the latest round of talks between the high level Norwegian delegation led by Foreign Minister Jan Petersen, the

Government and the LTTE is that at present the urgent task is to concentrate on rehabilitation and reconstruction effort. The hope is that the extent to which the parties set about cooperating with each other in the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction will in due course produce a conducive climate for the peace process to be resurrected and peace talks resumed towards a lasting political solution.

The international community has come forward in a substantial measure in Sri Lanka undertaking its urgent task of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The country and its people, the Government and the LTTE in particular, must rise up to this challenge. □

NORWEGIANS IN SRI LANKA

Talks focus on Post-tsunami Relief and reconstruction

rendering hundreds of thousands displaced," said Mr. Balasingham.

According to Mr. Balasingham who spoke to journalists after the meeting with Norwegians, the Norwegians had said that there should be a common mechanism, acceptable to both the parties, that is government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, so that the assistance should directly reach the people without any bureaucracy or other hurdles. "The Government and the LTTE are engaged in preliminary discussions to formulate a mechanism to co-operate in relief work in the North-East. The discussions will be confined to humanitarian work and no political issues will be taken up," he said adding that the Norwegians underlined the need for a mechanism acceptable to both parties, the Government and the LTTE to co-operate in relief work. The Norwegians had told the LTTE this mechanism should be worked out so that the International Aid Community could direct the assistance through such mechanism to ensure equal distribution.

Replying to a question, Mr. Balasingham said that Mr. Pirapaharan had expressed his disillusionment that the government had not come forward with the positive confidence building measures to create mutual trust and understanding which was crucial for LTTE to cooperate with the government.

It would seem that although the need for confidence building measures was recognised by both parties, the issue of the peace process and the solution to the decades-long ethnic conflict "did not arise" during the discussions with the parties. "Do not mix the peace process and the solution with this. We are not discussing the peace process or the solution at this stage," Mr. Balasingham told journalists.

Indicating that the subject of resuming peace talks for a political solution of the ethnic conflict, at least for now, is not on the present agenda, Mr. Balasingham said, "This is a sudden intervention of nature, for which we have to give

Jan 22 - LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran ended four weeks of speculation about his whereabouts by surfacing from his self-imposed seclusion to meet a Norwegian delegation led by Foreign Minister Jan Petersen who told journalists, "I met with him. Obviously, he is alive." Prabhakaran's failure to appear in public after the tsunami disaster had fuelled widespread speculation that he was either dead or missing.

Leaders of the LTTE have requested the visiting Norwegian delegation led by to ensure that the northeast region of the island received equitable proportion of the international aid Sri Lanka is expected to receive in the aftermath of tsunami disaster. In the Northeast region about seventy five thousand families have been affected and around 25,000 have lost their lives.

The high level Norwegian delegation led by Mr. Jan Petersen met with Mr. V. Pirapaharan, leader of the LTTE and held discussions for about two hours which centred mainly on foreign aid to be applied to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Tsunami hit coastal areas in the northeast.

Minister of International Development, Ms Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Norwegian peace envoy, Mr. Erik Solheim, and Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr. Hans Brattskar accompanied Mr. Jan Petersen to the discussions. LTTE political strategist, Mr. Anton Balasingham, LTTE political head, Mr. S.P. Thamichelvan, Special Commander of the Sea Tigers, Colonel Soosai, and Head of the Thamilaelam Police, Mr. P. Nadesan, participated in the dis-

ussion along with Mr. Pirapaharan.

Later Mr. Anton Balasingham and Mr. Thamichelvan held a press briefing at the headquarters of the LTTE Planning Secretariat in Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka.

Mr. Anton Balasingham said: "Our leader Mr. Pirapaharan has brought to the notice of the Norwegian delegation that the international aid coming to the country due to sympathy following Tsunami disaster is being misused by the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). Our leader has pointed out that the GOSL has taken steps to purchase arms from Iran at a cost of 150 million US dollars. This act is considered as an attempt to tilt the balance of military power."

"About seventy five thousand families have been affected in Tsunami in the northeast and around 25,000 have lost their lives. This number includes all three communities Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim, in the province. Hence the international community should ensure equitable distribution of aid to the affected people and the areas. We appealed to the Norwegian government to enlighten the international community that northeast province has suffered the worst in Tsunami that hit the coastal belt of Sri Lanka," said Mr. Balasingham.

"Our leader has appealed to the Norwegian delegation not to forget the peace process in the midst of Tsunami disaster and related relief and rehabilitation measures. The international community that has turned its whole attention on the Tsunami disaster should also contribute constructively to find an acceptable political resolution to the three decade old war that had devastated the northeast and

total attention, leaving the political aspect aside," but adding "But that doesn't mean the tsunami waves have wiped out the political struggle." "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. "The political struggle will continue but we need to put that away now, Balasingham is quoted as saying by the AFP news agency. "The struggle will be there but now we are concentrating on the disaster made by nature."

Talks with the President

On arrival in Colombo on 21 January, Norway's Ministers of Foreign Affairs Mr. Jan Peterson and International Development Ms. Hilde F. Johnson met with Sri Lanka's President Ms. Kumaratunge at President's House in Colombo and held discussions which covered mainly the post-tsunami relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction and the peace process that has remained stalled since April 2003.

A press release issued following discussions stated, "The two Norwegian Ministers conveyed their sincere condolences to the Government and People of Sri Lanka and expressed their deep sympathy to the victims of the tsunami tragedy. They assured the President of the continuous support and assistance of the Royal Norwegian Government in the rehabilitation efforts.

"The President thanked the visiting Ministers for the Norwegian assistance and briefed them on the steps taken by the Government with the support of local NGOs and the International Community to organize rescue and relief measures. Explaining the magnitude of the disaster she added that plans for the next phase of rebuilding has been completed in the shortest possible time as a basis for an inclusive and transparent discussion with all political parties, the LTTE, NGOs and civil society.

"The visitors viewed a presentation made by Mr. Mano Tittawella and Dr. Tara de Mel on statistics, plans, proposed implementation measures and rescue and relief efforts conducted under the aegis of respective Task Forces. The presentation revealed the needs-driven, non-discriminatory nature of the relief undertaken since the 26th of December and significant share of resources proposed for rebuilding in the North and East.

"Minister Hilde Johnson expressed her appreciation of the work done to-

wards recovery. She emphasized the need for donor coordination and for donors to relate to Sri Lanka's national plans. Foreign Minister Peterson said Indonesia and Sri Lanka being the two most affected Norwegian assistance will focus on these two countries. The Norwegian delegate said they proposed to visit the South and the North East in order to see the tsunami damage for themselves.

"Associated with the Norwegian Ministers were Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgessen, Ambassador Hans Brattskar, Special Advisor Erik Solheim and other officials of the Royal Norwegian Government. Present at today's discussion were Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, Secretary to the President W J S Karunaratne, SG of the Peace Secretariat Jayantha Dhanapala, Foreign Secretary H M G S Paliakkara, Rehabilitation Ministry Secretary M S Jayasinghe, Public Security Secretary Tilak Ranaviraja and other senior officials."

A Norwegian delegation, including Development Aid Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister and Special Envoy to Sri Lanka Eric Soleheim, also met and had discussions with Finance Minister Dr Sarath Amunugama in Colombo. "We discussed aid and aid distribution" including LTTE complaints that the Government was not adequately distributing aid to LTTE-controlled areas," said Amunugama who dismissed these claims as 'propaganda' saying, "these envoys can observe the ongoing relief operation themselves and they can see how the government aid and relief is reaching out all affected areas. In Trincomalee, not only NGO's, the LTTE is also working alongside the Government in disaster committees. These accusations are from the NGO's operating in Colombo and who do not have a feel of the ground situation."

'A national disaster'

Emphasizing on the need for wider co-operation between President Chandrika Kumaratunga-led government and the LTTE, visiting Minister of International Development of Norway, Ms. Hilde F. Johnson said at a press briefing in Colombo that the frustration of the tsunami affected people was growing high as a result of their needs not being met by authorities.

"I spoke to the affected people both in Hambantota in the South and Mullaivituvu in the North. Their impatience is growing and the frustration is growing

even more. We all, the government of Sri Lanka, the LTTE and the international donor community should meet their expectations and focus on this urgent need before it could lead to tension," the Norwegian Minister told reporters at a briefing held at Colombo before winding up her visit to Sri Lanka.

The Norwegians had urged the Government and the LTTE to view the tsunami as a "national disaster" and "Therefore, the two parties should work together to help the needy. People should not be the hostages of the situation. If this cooperation is improved, it can create a conducive environment for future peace talks."

Highlighting for practical approach for urgent co-operation between the government and the LTTE regarding the distribution of relief supply she said that the affected people "should not be held hostage" of the situation.

She said that the "risk of politicization" was one of the main concerns of the donor community and pointed out that one of the key challenges is to ensure that international assistance is conducive to build in a lasting peace in the country.

Having held lengthy discussions with the leaderships of both the government and the LTTE during his three-day visit, the Norwegian Minister said that the allocation of aid "should be on the basis of the need of the people and all in need should get help."

"One of the key challenges" for the donors "is to ensure that the assistance is conducive to building peace," she said. She hoped there would be decentralisation of the funding for relief efforts, but did not elaborate. Asked at the press conference of a possible joint mechanism between Colombo and the Tigers, she said: "I am not aware of any joint mechanism."

Answering a question whether the LTTE had wanted the foreign aid to be released to them directly, she said it was one of the main focuses during discussion with the LTTE leadership. "They also need international assistance and aid. That's why we urge for greater co-operation and practical approach between the government and the LTTE," she said.

Expressing her willingness to revisit Sri Lanka at the earliest, she said the co-chairs of the Tokyo donor conference for Sri Lanka was to meet soon to focus on "donor co-operation" in the background of reviving the stalled peace process. □

● President launches recovery drive

Jan 20 - President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in a ceremony launching the US\$3.5 billion recovery drive from Siribopura in Hambantota said the tsunami

tragedy should be a new beginning to rebuild our nation by joining hands irrespective of caste, creed or political affiliation in a massive united effort in overcoming this unprecedented catastrophe, the worst in our history.

She made it a point to thank all foreign governments, NGOs, political parties including the Opposition UNP in making a joint united effort to restore not only Hambantota but the entire country not only to normality but also to improve it.

President Kumaratunga said that people should make a determined effort to make new Sri Lanka a better and developed country joining hands to work in unison keeping and strengthening the unity which has emerged in the country following the tsunami catastrophe.

President Kumaratunga also struck a controversial note when she in her speech said there would be no elections for the next five years, as the recovery plan from the tsunami disaster would take precedence over everything else. If an election was held tomorrow, votes should be marked before the country symbol shedding all party and individual politics to take the country forward, she added. The President did not specify whether she was referring to a general election or the Presidential election. If she was referring to the parliamentary election, there cannot be any problem. However if the reference was to the Presidential election, then that would raise serious constitutional controversy. The Presidential election is due before December 2006, but the Opposition holds the view that it should be held by November 2005.

Launching the rebuilding programme from Siribopura, just 24 days after Sri Lanka faced its biggest ever catastrophe, President Kumaratunga said she was proud of the people of the country for their commitment towards rebuilding the country.

President Kumaratunga along with Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and representatives from all political parties in the South launched this massive reconstruction project to rebuild the tsunami affected nation with the inauguration of a housing construction project for the displaced people in the Hambantota district.

"To strengthen the country, the people should get together keeping country before self to face this massive reconstruction process. We should not allow the unity of the country and also the strength of the people to be shattered over petty differences. We should work in unity and unison so that we could achieve the task of rebuilding the nation more effectively," the President added.

President Kumaratunga said the Government alone cannot accomplish the task of reconstructing the country and added that people and political parties should work together to reach that goal. "We do not want to draw political advantage over this disaster. People should work together for at least five years and then they can work on their political agendas," the President said adding that the government would launch reconstruction programmes in other tsunami affected areas by the end of this month.

She expressed her gratitude to the private sector, local and international NGOs and foreign countries for the support extended to Sri Lanka to rebuild the country. Prime Minister Rajapakse, Urban Development and Water Supply Minister Dinesh Gunawardana, Hambantota District UNP MP Sajith Premadasa and JVP Propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa also spoke at the meeting

● Action Plan for Rebuilding Nation

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga presented the Action Plan for Rebuilding the Nation encompassing detailed

News Review

plans to construct 15 new townships in the tsunami affected Southern and Eastern coasts of the country with better and modern infrastructure.

President Kumaratunga presented the action plan for

rebuilding the nation before the High Level Committee for Disaster Management comprising Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and heads of political parties represented in Parliament, at the Presidential Secretariat on 17 January.

The President had earlier announced that the reconstruction process would be inaugurated on January 19 at Hambantota after laying the foundation for the construction of housing schemes for the tsunami affected people in the district. The President had given specific instructions to start all projects within this month for rapid completion.

The Action Plan compiled by the Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation with inputs by respective Ministries was explained to party leaders by the TAFREN Chairman and Presidential Advisor Mano Tittawella.

The action plan for rebuilding the nation envisages plans for the reconstruction and replanning of roads, rail tracks, bus transport, electricity, water supply and sanitation, telecom services, ports, education sector, health sector, social services, housing and township development, industrial sector, tourism, environment and judicial institutes.

The action plan will be implemented after taking into consideration the valuable suggestions and inputs of all stakeholders such as religious and political leaders, members of the civil society and NGOs.

Tittawella told the party leaders that the action plan will be implemented in three phases- emergency repairs, rehabilitation and reconstruction and improvement and modernisation. The implementation of the action plan in three phases is estimated to cost US \$ 3,484 million, Tittawella told the party leaders. He pointed out that the existing projects to provide electricity, water and other infrastructure facilities with budgetary allocations can be re-planned for the tsunami affected areas without using funds set apart to rebuild the tsunami affected areas. He said 12 large towns, 20 medium towns and 30 small towns are to be reconstructed along the tsunami affected coastal belt.

The action plan also includes post tsunami assistance for the affected people such as a start up allowance of Rs.5000 per family on presenting the tsunami relief coupon to any People's Bank branch.

It also calls for the reconstruction of partly damaged houses if located in safe areas with government assistance, provision of free books, uniform materials and shoes for schoolchildren. Electricity, telephone, water bills will be written off for those affected by the tsunami.

The action plan also detailed plans to resuscitate the tourism industry by offering BOI concessions for totally destroyed tourist hotels and to provide concessions for cottage industries affected by the tsunami. President Kumaratunga invited all political parties to put forward their suggestions.

● India's massive assistance

Since December 26, 2004, the day the Tsunami struck the coast of Sri Lanka, to date (18 January), almost 500 MT of relief supplies have been provided by India to Tsunami victims in Sri Lanka. Indian Air Force aircraft have flown 340 sorties to deliver relief material and rescuing the affected people. Fourteen (14) Indian Naval ships have brought relief supplies and disaster management personnel including medical specialists, doctors, paramedical staff, engineers and technicians to Sri Lanka. Indian Naval survey ship, INS Sutlej has completed surveys of Galle and

Colombo harbours at the request of the Sri Lankan authorities. An Indian Army Field Hospital with 145 personnel has been operational in Embilipitiya since January 01, 2005. Medical teams from this hospital have been working in affected areas of Southern Sri Lanka. Coastal disaster management teams have been operating in Hikkaduwa and Trincomalee areas to help restore communications and connected rehabilitation work. Indian medical doctors have also brought medical relief to tsunami victims in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara. A 45-bed Indian Naval Hospital Ship, INS Jamuna is also anchored off Trincomalee to provide specialized medical assistance for the affected people.

India will extend her tsunami assistance by helping the Sri Lankan navy rebuild its defences on the Trincomalee coast. The fortifications which were part of the overall defences covering the strategic Trincomalee naval base were washed off in the recent Indian Ocean tsunami.

The military acknowledged that India's priority was to assist the civilian population in the tsunami-ravaged districts. "They are concentrating on the Trincomalee district," he said, adding that the Indian navy would also survey fisheries harbours that had been ravaged. Indian vessels are using Trincomalee, Galle, KKS and Colombo harbours to launch their relief and support operations. The navy acknowledged that it wouldn't have been possible to clear the Galle harbour without Indian help in such a short time.

India had assured Sri Lanka that the assistance would be on a long term basis. The military said that Indians played a pivotal role in restoring the Kuchchaveli government hospital. They were the first foreign personnel to reach Trincomalee to join hands with the SLN, the sources said, adding that an Indian medical team had been based at that hospital. The Indians had also brought with them adequate medicines and medical equipment. The military said that Indian volunteers cleared the debris at the hospital and also cleaned the wells in the area.

The LTTE and its sympathisers had been upset over the recent developments, particularly the unprecedented support given by the Indian armed forces. "Their commitment here astonishes us," a senior officer said. "We appreciate their help to re-build the Nilaveli SLN base and the positions along about 40 km sea stretch covered by the SLN," he said, adding that the Indians had been also engaged in clearing the Galle harbour. The military said that Indians, while focusing on humanitarian relief operations, had been helping the security forces re-build positions devastated by the recent Tsunami.

The Galle harbour in southern Sri Lanka which was severely hit by the Tsunami is back in operation. It was cleared for work on Tuesday 4 January following a joint clearance operation undertaken by Sri Lankan and Indian navies. A senior Navy spokesman said the southern key port Galle was cleared after an extensive operation, which was one of the major tasks launched by both countries.

Several large ships, including 'Weligowwa' and a war ship belonging to the Sri Lanka navy were also damaged as they were drifted towards the coast by the Tsunami waves.

The spokesman also said soon after the renovation of the harbour, Indian navy ships 'Sarvekshak' and 'Sutlej' entered and anchored in the harbour. By clearing the Galle harbour for work, the war ships from the United States and India, providing relief will be able to enter the harbour easily to carry out relief distribution.

Though the other affected ports including Colombo and Trincomalee have resumed operations, the navy said that the Kankasanturai and Point Pedro ports had not resumed functions, since they were badly damaged.

Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka Ms Nirupama Rao said on 5 January that India would provide 23 million US dollars for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of tsunami devastated areas in Sri Lanka. She stressed that this would be strictly on a government to government basis. She said that the Sri Lankan

government would decide what to do with the Indian assistance.

She dismissed reports that India had reservations about the deployment of US forces in Sri Lanka.

Asked whether the Indian Government would provide direct aid to the LTTE, she reiterated the Indian aid package would be on a government to government basis. She acknowledged that there had been no request from the LTTE. India wouldn't object to various organisations including the Indian Red Cross from coming to Lanka's assistance, she said.

Ms Rao said India by virtue of her closeness to Sri Lanka geographically and the time tested friendship between the two countries responded spontaneously to Sri Lanka's call for assistance when disaster struck her with the Indian relief operation dubbed "Operation rainbow".

The High Commissioner praised the genuine effort in assisting in the relief and rescue operations in saving the life of an Indian boy who had lost his parents and the brother in the Yala national park in the Tsunami tragedy which claimed over 70 lives in Yala only. She also said that the Sri Lanka public was very cooperative with the Indian volunteers who came here to provide relief assistance.

She had visited most of the disaster stricken areas in the country and seen that the work went on well and all those affected were being looked after.

Ms Nirupama Rao visited northern town of Jaffna on January 11. She arrived in Palaly by a special aircraft. Thereafter she was taken in a Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) helicopter and showed the destruction in the coastal area in Manatkadu and Kudathanai, according to local sources. The High Commissioner later visited the Ramakrishna Ashram in Point Pedro under heavy security and handed over a consignment of relief materials brought by six lorries from Palaly to Swami Chitrupananda, Head of the institution. The consignment of relief materials was earlier brought to Palaly from Colombo in a special plane. Relief materials donated by Indian High Commissioner are to be distributed to Jaffna Tsunami victims through the Jaffna District Secretariat.

On 17 January, Healthcare and Nutrition Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva officially accepted 120 tonnes of relief material from Indian High Commissioner on board the "Samar" at the Colombo port. Samar, an Indian coastguard ship arrived at the Colombo port carrying the relief provisions which includes 80 tonnes of alum (used for water purifying), cooking utensils including kerosine stoves, hurricane lamps and clothing items for the people affected by tsunami. The consignment also includes children's books, painting books and children's school items.

Expressing appreciation for the donation made by India, Minister de Silva said India was Sri Lanka's closest friend." He also thanked the crew members of the ship for their devoted service and for arriving in Sri Lanka with the relief.

Indian High Commissioner Nirupama Rao said from the very outset of tsunami tragedy, the Indian Government has made all efforts to assist Sri Lanka which is its close friend and neighbour. "India is ever prepared to help Sri Lanka." She said this donation has further demonstrated the solidarity and friendship of India towards Sri Lanka. While stressing that special focus should be made to help affected children, she said this consignment contained items useful for children.

On January 16, the High Commissioner of India visited Ampara in eastern Sri Lanka. Prior to arriving at Ampara, the High Commissioner undertook an aerial survey of the affected areas. She held discussions with the civil and military coordinating authorities of the area. The Government Agent of Ampara briefed the High Commissioner on various aspects of the relief operations.

The High Commissioner had a meeting with Mrs. Farial Ashraff, Minister of Housing and Construction Industry at which a Consultant Architect, Mr. P. R. Mehta, from the Indian NGO, "Architecture for All", which specializes in post-disaster reconstruction architecture was also present. The High commissioner

visited the Welfare Centre at the Ramakrishna Boys School in Karaithivu and a coastal fishing village at Kurakada Palliaya and Kalmunai. She interacted with the locals and discussed relief efforts. The High Commissioner also handed over relief supplies comprising 24 portable generator sets; and about 30 tons of relief supplies that included 1,200 packets of ready-to-eat meal packages: dry provisions comprising rice, sugar, dhal and spices; 10,000 packets of cup noodles; 1.5 tons of biscuits, clothing and about 3,500 blankets for distribution to affected people in Ampara District.

● Govt. needs \$ 1,500 million for rehabilitation

The Government in an assessment report submitted to foreign governments and donor agencies in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster says that given resource constraints and the current balance of payments pressures it is only with donor support on highly concessional terms that this massive task of rehabilitation and reconstruction can be undertaken effectively.

The Government estimates that it will need US \$ 1,500 million to carry out its immediate rehabilitation and reconstruction plan in the tsunami affected areas. It has identified thirteen areas which will come under the plan including development of roads, railways, telecommunication, water supply and sanitation, ports, electricity, housing and townships, fisheries, industrial development, tourism, wild life resources, HRD and social services and private enterprise development.

The report prepared by the Department of National Planning of the Ministry of Finance and Planning says the government has decided to declare the damaged coastal belt as a development zone within which reconstruction and rehabilitation will be implemented in a well co-ordinated manner and wherever possible, this would be done through "active and effective participation of the private sector."

To emphasise the need for external support, the report states that 2004 ended with BOP deficit of US \$ 212 million primarily on account of the additional oil bill. It says the drought followed by floods and finally the tsunami disaster also affected the economy.

The official foreign reserves of the country depleted from US \$ 2.3 billion to US \$ 1.7 billion while the adverse impact of oil prices is likely to continue in 2005, it said. It is therefore critical for the country to receive urgent assistance to enable Sri Lanka to preserve its economic stability and continue with proposed rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes without dampening other development work, it added.

● World Bank funding for recovery

Jan 8 - Reserving over USD 100 million to Sri Lanka from the existing projects for immediate recovery work and to rebuild the devastated homes and spectrum of livelihood, visiting World Bank chief D. Wolfensohn hinted in Colombo that the post tsunami relief assistance of the Bank to rebuild the devastated region could well go up to the mammoth USD one billion mark. He said in addition to the already released USD 10 million to Sri Lanka, an emergency credit of not less than USD 75 million, of which 40 percent would be a grant, would be made available to enable the government to begin recovery work.

Speaking at a media briefing at Colombo Hilton at the end of his tsunami tour to Sri Lanka, he said that the Bank had been in discussion with Finance Minister Dr. Sarath Amunugama to explore "how the current portfolio (of the Bank) can be restructured to release more funds to the emergency work."

Answering to a question whether the World Bank's fund would flow even into rebuilding the LTTE-held territories, he said that the Bank would adopt a 'colour-blind approach' in reserving and distributing the relief fund, the World Bank chief, and "are going to proceed on the assumption that it is a human tragedy and not going to see whether one is Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslim".

"We will support the government as it develops a fast, trans-

parent and effective way to convert the billions of dollars pledged all over the world into rupees in the hands of poor fishermen in Sri Lanka or for a community to rebuild its homes," he said.

Answering questions posed by reporters with regard to transparency and accountability in handling the outpouring international funds for rebuilding activities, he said that the Bank has the monitoring mechanism already in operation to battle any such corruption. "As planning and implementation got underway, it was also necessary to ensure the full involvement of local communities, civil society and key stake holders, and do so in ways that will support the peace process," he said, adding that the advantage of getting greater local community involvement would be that they would know better as to who the crooks were.

● Equipment for LTTE areas

President Chandrika Kumaratunga responding to a request from the LTTE for relief and rehabilitation assistance to tsunami affected areas within LTTE controlled territory. Vehicles, generators and water pumps have been dispatched to the LTTE controlled areas in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Batticaloa, and Ampara, on a directive of the President in response to a request made by the LTTE, a media release from the President's Officesaid on 18 January.

The fleet of vehicles include 12 pick ups, 10 tractors with trailers, 20 two wheel tractors with trailers while the other equipment sent to the LTTE areas include 90 generators and 50 water pumps.

These were purchased by the Ministry of Rehabilitation the previous week. Quotations have been called for the hire of more vehicles to be used for debris clearing and reconstruction in the tsunami affected areas including the North and East in association with the UNDP, the releases said.

The press release added that in addition, the Rehabilitation Ministry had already purchased and dispatched a stock of pick up trucks, tractors, generators and water pumps to tsunami affected areas in the North East. As at 13th January the Ministry purchased and had dispatched the following vehicles and equipment to the affected areas in the North and East: * Jaffna received 07 Generators; * Killinochchi received 02 Pick-ups, 05 Tractors with Trailer, 10 two wheel tractors with trailer, 08 generators and 25 water pumps; * Mullaitivu received 02-Pick-ups, 05 Tractors with Trailers, 10 two wheel tractoss with trailer, 10 generators and 25 water pumps; * Trincomalee received 02 pick-ups and 15 generators; * Batticaloa received 03 Pick-ups and 20 generators; * Ampara received 03 Pick-ups and 20 generators.

The Ministry in association with the UNDP has also placed newspaper advertisements calling for quotations to hire more heavy machinery and equipment. These too will be utilized for debris clearance and reconstruction in the affected areas, particularly in the North and East where such equipment is in short supply.

The despatch of the latest batch of equipment followed from the representations made by the Vanni Rehabilitation Minister, Rishard Badurudeen, to the President on behalf of the LTTE regarding urgently required assistance needed by tsunami victims in LTTE-held areas, particularly the Vanni.

The Minister said that he met with Sea Tiger chief Soosai in Mullaitivu, where they discussed ways and means of assisting the tsunami victims on a priority basis. Soosai had urged Badurudeen to take up the issue with the government and take immediate remedial measures.

According to Badurudeen, Soosai had requested for heavy earth moving machinery and assistance to the fishing community. The one-hour meeting with the Vanni Rehabilitation Minister had been Soosai's first with a ruling party minister. Soosai had emphasized that Badurudeen as the Minister in charge of Vanni Rehabilitation and Reconstruction would be responsible for looking after the interests of the people living in LTTE-held areas ravaged by

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the recent Indian Ocean tsunami.

The minister had a separate meeting with Muhundan, believed to be the group's political leader in charge of Mullaitivu. Fielding questions, the minister said that TNA MP Kanagaratnam arranged the meeting with Soosai.

● **TNA meeting with Canadian PM**

Jan 17 - At the meeting with the Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, leaders of the Tamil National Alliance, LTTE's proxy party in parliament, is reported to have lobbied him for securing "charitable status" for the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) in Canada where its bid for such status up to now has been unsuccessful. They also seem to have requested Canada's "proactive" participation in the peace process which has remained stalled for nearly two years now.

They had also urged increased monitoring of international aid distribution in the wake of the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka until a joint mechanism between the LTTE and the Government had been established. They appear to have contradicted the Canadian PM's belief that the Sri Lankan Government was acting without discrimination in the distribution of relief to affected areas in the Northeast and aid was flowing freely to the LTTE-held areas saying the flow of aid was being unilaterally decided by the Government and not fairly distributed.

According to a Canadian reporter R. Sampanthan, TNA's parliamentary leader, providing vigorous defence of the LTTE had said, "We don't think the LTTE is either terrorist or vicious." When Paul Martin had raised concerns about the issue of forced recruitment of child soldiers by the LTTE, the TNA had told him that the LTTE took care of destitute children orphaned by the civil war with the Government. "We told him that everyone is concerned about child soldiers now. But no one is concerned about children being blown to smithereens when they were bombed

from the air, when they were shelled from the seas, or when rockets were fired at them from the land," Mr Samabanthan had said adding that the civil war had left many children homeless and poor, or their parents unable to feed them.

"In that type of situation it is possible that the LTTE lends a helping hand to some of these children. It could very well be that when such things happen, that is being described as child recruitment," he said. "I assume the Prime Minister will now be in a position to formulate different thoughts on some of these questions. We look forward to that," said Sampanthan.

However, before the Prime Minister left, he appears to have got a lesson in Sri Lanka's divisive history from the country's president, Chandrika Kumaratunga who reminded him that they in Sri Lanka understood the "bloody history" of the Tamil Tigers than anyone coming from outside.

On the question of distribution of relief supplies, the President told him that need, not politics, determined where tsunami aid was going. On resuming peace talks with the Tigers, "The President was quite frank in saying that they're in need of a re-engagement. The ceasefire has held, but peace talks are not actively engaged at this moment.", said Martin's decision to meet the two denied visas was "troublesome."

Conservative MP Jason Kenney, another MP on the trip said the Tamil Tigers were one of the world's most violent terror groups. "They make Al Qaeda look like amateurs." "Insofar as there's a peace process right now, I would hope we would keep open lines of communications with those who are engaged in a political solution to the problems here in Sri Lanka," he said. But Kenney said if the TNA politicians are directly involved in fundraising or logistical support for the LTTE, "then I think it crosses the bounds. We would not, I hope, meet with Hamas or Hezbollah or the IRA, and I'd hope we're not doing that with Tigers."

In a press release issued after the meeting with the Canadian PM, the TNA said that they raised the following issues:

* A mechanism needs to be set-up in the Northeast to deal with the post Tsunami situation. Until such a mechanism is set up, TNA urged all international aid, including Canadian aid, to be channeled through international NGOs or, that such aid should be allocated for identified projects so that the Northeast will be assured of an equitable share of the international aid.

* There is also a need to fully involve the LTTE and the TRO in the activities related to the post Tsunami situation in the Northeast. The LTTE and the TRO have been engaged in delivering effective and efficient services to affected people in the Northeast during the period of the conflict, and from the moment the Tsunami occurred.

* The Prime Minister also inquired about the relationship between the TNA and the LTTE. It was explained to the Prime Minister that the TNA comprised of traditionally democratic political parties such as the TULF, the ITAK and the ACTC and others. Since the acceptance of international facilitation by both the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE, and the declaration of ceasefire, and the commencement of negotiations, there was an imperative need for the TNA and the LTTE to work together in the interest of the Tamil-speaking people.

* The Prime Minister inquired about the nature of the federal arrangement. The TNA responded that countries such as Canada, Australia and Switzerland offered models of federalism. The TNA further stated that the Tamil linguistic region in the Northeast which had been accepted as the areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking people should enjoy sovereign power within its area of competence.

* The Prime Minister also inquired about the problem relating to child-soldiers. Responding, the TNA stated that when Tamil villages were bombed from the air, shelled from the sea and land, and Tamil children rendered orphans and destitute, or when they were compelled to seek refuge under trees or in some public building, no concern was shown for them, by those who now talk loudly about child-soldiers.

The TNA disapproves of child-soldiers and have in fact taken up this matter with the LTTE. The LTTE had often stated that many parents were not in a position to look after their children, and that such destitute children often sought refuge with the LTTE. All such children should not be looked upon as child soldiers. The TNA further asserted that all such problems could be effectively brought to an end only when there was an acceptable negotiated political solution, and that it is the government which is unable to take the peace process forward.

● Military to coordinate relief in 12 districts

Jan 4 - Amidst widespread reports that aid distribution to millions of Tsunami victims was largely uncoordinated, if not chaotic, while some stocks were being mishandled robbed, and not reaching the intended recipients the armed forces took control of the whole distribution network on 4 January.

The military moved in as the death toll rose with more bodies being recovered and the fear of deadly epidemics grew as heavy rain in the worst affected eastern districts hampered relief and rehabilitation work.

Chief of Defence Staff and Navy commander Daya Sandagiri was appointed by President Chandrika Kumaratunga as the overall commander of the biggest relief operation in Sri Lanka's history. In concurrence with the President who is also the Commander in Chief, Rear Admiral Sandagiri appointed 12 high ranking military officers to take command of relief operations in 12 districts.

The military coordinators appointed are: Rear Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda for Kalutara District, Rear Admiral Wasantha Tennakoon for Galle, Captain P. Jayawardane for Gampaha, Commodore S.R. Samaratunga for Hambantota, Major General Sharman Kulatunga for Matara, Major General Sumith

Balasuriya for Trincomalee, Major General Parami Kulatunga for Vavuniya, Major General Sunil Tennakoon for Jaffna, Brigadier Vajira Wijegunawardane for Batticaloa, Brigadier P. Chandrawansa for Colombo, Col. Jagath Dias for Ampara and Col. Kamal Gunaratne for Puttalam.

Military sources said District Commanders moved into action fast and as a first step relocated victims from small centres to larger refugee centres in a bid to streamline aid distribution and prevent abuse, waste or dumping as often seen in the past few days.

Till the latest development, the aid distribution was coordinated by District Secretaries and gramasevaka officers who will continue to play an important role but under the command of the district military coordinators.

"Our people will not accept the directive issued by Sri Lanka's President to hand over the management of Tsunami welfare centres in the government controlled areas in the northeast to the Sri Lanka Army," Colonel Soosai, Special Commander of the Sea Tigers, said at a conference on 6 January.

Colonel Soosai further said that Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) and harbours in the south have sustained heavy damage in the Tsunami disaster. Troops from several countries have arrived in Sri Lanka. The government is interfering with the management of relief centres in order to distract the attention of the international community. There is no reason for our people to get alarmed over the decision of the government to hand over the management of the welfare centres to State armed forces, said Colonel Soosai.

Reportedly the LTTE has taken up the issue of the deployment of members of the military to assist in the distribution relief supplies with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). Army headquarters said that the security forces moved in support of civil administrators on a presidential directive. "This has nothing to do with the cease-fire agreement and there is absolutely no need to involve truce monitors," an officer said. He also emphasized that the LTTE wouldn't be allowed to take control over the welfare camps operated by the government and the ongoing relief efforts in Government controlled areas of the Northeast. However he had said that there was no objection for Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) joining in relief work.

"Tsunami victims and Tamil politicians appreciate our role. But they are scared to voice their opinion for obvious reasons," he said accusing the Tigers of taking advantage of the calamity to enhance their influence in government-held areas.

Government sources dismissed claims that the armed forces had taken over welfare camps. The camps have been run by civilians and the military only helps in the distribution and coordination efforts.

● Avoid politicisation of relief efforts - EU

Jan 14 - Calling upon the government, all political parties and the LTTE to actively promote a fair distribution of relief assistance to the tsunami victims, Colombo-based Heads of Missions of the European Union cautioned that there should be no politicisation of relief efforts. The member countries of the EU have also urged all parties to refrain from any actions during the distribution of humanitarian aid that might have a potentially negative impact on the peace process.

According to a statement from the EU office in Colombo, these observations have been made at a high level meeting by the Colombo-based Heads of Missions (HoMs) of the European Union on 14 January in Colombo, amidst reports of allegations by the LTTE against mishandling of relief assistance and distribution followed by rejection of such allegations by the government.

"The EU HoMs call upon the Government, all political parties and the LTTE to actively promote a fair distribution of relief assistance to the victims of the Tsunami disaster, irrespective of their political affiliation, religious and ethnic background. It is essential that there will be no politicisation of relief efforts," the

statement said.

While recalling the overwhelming European support and sympathy for Sri Lanka to overcome the tragedy following the tsunami disaster, they have strongly urged all stakeholders to seize this opportunity for peace building and reconciliation. "The EU HoMs believe effective and appropriate decentralisation is necessary for a successful relief and reconstruction operation," the statement said.

They have assured that they would impress upon their partner organisations to ensure that relief and reconstruction aid "is allocated to all victims of the tsunami independent of their political, ethnic or religious background" The EU HoMs have also called for the establishment of an 'independent and multi stakeholder monitoring mechanism to review proceedings that would further support the UN system in co-ordination and monitoring.

● New towns to be built in South and East

Sixty small and big towns by the Southern and the Eastern coast would be relocated closer to the new Colombo-Matara expressway and the proposed Ampara-Trincomalee highway under the tsunami reconstruction plan.

By-roads to connect these towns would also be constructed and twelve such roads have already been earmarked to connect new towns, Director-General of Urban Development Authority Prasanna Silva told the Sunday Observer.

UDA had made recommendation on construction for these areas even before the tsunami but were not carried out due to various reasons. People and politicians have now realised the danger of disturbing the coast and want to follow the UDA guidelines to avoid another calamity, he said.

Therefore, strict measures would be taken in implementing new development and reconstruction work in these areas, Silva said. One kilometre from the mean sea level has been declared as vulnerable area and this area has been divided into three strips to be developed for different purposes.

The first 100 metres is reserved for a green belt, recreational area and it would stand as a buffer area to mitigate adverse effects to the coast, he said.

The second strip of 200 metres would consist of trees, crops and construction of hotels and restaurants. The balance would be used to relocate activities removed from other areas. Settlement, construction specially towns and housing would be located preferably on high ground in this strip, he said.

Silva said that new construction work would not prevent any economic activity such as fishing and tourism. A new mechanism has to be used in the operation of tourism, fisheries and other economic activities.

Tourist operators can introduce new measures such as shuttle service to transport their guests to and from hotels and recreational areas.

Silva added that all ministries together with the Urban Development Ministry are working in consensus to make this new scheme a success and each ministry and its related institutions have been given respective tasks.

A new railway line is also on the boards along Colombo-Matara expressway. Towns by the Eastern coast too would be relocated close to the proposed highway between Ampara and Trincomalee. UDA would strive to shift all towns and human settlements into the interior which would be a precautionary measure against any tidal waves in the future. That would also help protect environment and prevent sea pollution, he said.

● LTTE relief operations in the east

Jan 2 - "Our leader has instructed me to involve all our fighters, medical corps, vehicles, engineering units and other resources in relief and rescue operations in the Batticaloa- Amparai district. He has sent a large number of troops from the north with supplies for this work. The Malathy Infantry Regiment has also arrived

along with head of our women's wing, Ms. Thamilini, and deputy head of political division for Jaffna, Mr. Semmanan, to help Tsunami affected people in this region and alleviate their suffering", said Col. Bhanu, a senior military officer of the LTTE who is the overall commander for Batticaloa-Amparai District, in an exclusive interview to TamilNet.

"We are not looking at this disaster in terms of Tamils, Muslims or Sinhalese. Our concern is only with people hit by the Tsunami. We took our heavy vehicles to Kattankudy the day after the sea surge to repair and clear roads. We helped the Muslim people recover bodies of their dead in Kalmunai too".

He said that ten Sri Lanka army soldiers who were dragged by the surging sea far into the lagoon were rescued by the LTTE and some civilians. They were treated for their wounds and handed over to the SLA in Batticaloa town, according to him.

Col. Bhanu said several children had survived the disaster by clinging to logs and branches in waters that rushed into the lagoon as far as Kokkaddicholai. "Some children survived by holding on to ceiling fans, rafters and beams in their houses. But sadly two little children were killed in Thirukovil when there was a stampede caused by a false Tsunami warning three days ago. Four elderly persons were left with fractures", he said.

Speaking to TamilNet about the state of relief and rescue work in Batticaloa-Amparai, the LTTE commander said: "I see on TV aid arriving by planes from foreign countries. But nothing of this has come to Batticaloa or Amparai so far. We are depending on donations from our own people to provide relief to the refugees".

"We need more than sheer man power to clear fallen buildings and other heavy debris under which many bodies are trapped. The stench from such bodies is terrible. We urgently need heavy machinery and vehicles for this task - particularly before diseases break out.

"Several Non Governmental Organisations (NGO), community groups and some traders are also providing relief to refugees in Batticaloa and in some other areas. In some places they are giving cooked food too".

"But no one is taking responsibility for moving the refugees to safer grounds where their health and sanitation can be ensured; where they can be protected from deceases. The places where they have found temporary refuge now are fast becoming serious threats to their health.

"We have to shift refugees to areas with clean water and healthy surroundings four or five kilometres inland soon - before there is an outbreak of epidemics. Many refugees are sheltered in places not far from the shore which were hit by the Tsunami where one finds salt water, debris, polluted water and decomposing bodies and carcasses of dead animals. Things have got worse with the heavy rains lashing on the fragile

"This is also a major task for the Tamils' Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO)"

"I must say that the Special Task Force (STF) has been helpful to civilians in the Amparai district. They rescued several people hit by the Tsunami and helped retrieve bodies. Their work has been commendable in that region.

"We are able to solve problems in dealing with the crisis at a local level. The LTTE and the STF are able to discuss and coordinate several issues in order to facilitate assistance to the people. We try to resolve problems at the local level in the interests of the people.

"Relief supplies to the east are delayed at checkpoints by Sri Lankan armed forces personnel who harass the transporters. We take this up with the higher authorities. The Batticaloa Government Agent too has sought to resolve the problem by appointing his officials at main checkpoints to expedite the arrival of supply vehicles".

● Joint action to ensure children safety

Jan 6 - The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL), United Na-

tions Children Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children Sri Lanka (SCiSL) are working together to ensure safety for children who survived last week Tsunami disaster, from violence, exploitation and abuse, said in a joint press release issued by UNICEF and SCiSL

The press release further said, "Many of the children who survived last week's lethal earthquake and tsunami were separated from their families and caregivers. The Government of Sri Lanka, UNICEF and Save the Children Sri Lanka (SCiSL) are working together closely to ensure that these children remain in safe environments, protected from violence, exploitation and abuse.

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), Dept of Probation and Childcare, UNICEF and SciSL have mobilised teams to identify and register all unaccompanied and separated children. Joint teams are identifying children living in temporary camps for the displaced as a priority. They will then be working with communities to identify and register all children who have been separated from their immediate families.

The agencies are asking communities to contact any of the above agencies at their local offices, with information on separated children within their communities.

The teams will be tracing the children's closest relatives, in order to reunify them as quickly as possible. If relatives cannot be found, Probation Officers will make comprehensive assessments to plan for the best possible care. Options include fostering, adoption or, as a last resort, a home for children. The agencies stress that children will not be considered for adoption during the emergency phase, and until every opportunity to locate family members is exhausted. Adoption is a lengthy process and takes many months; the relevant authority for this is the DPCC.

Family members or others who are caring for children who

have lost their parents should register with the Divisional Secretary or the Department of Probation and Child Care (DPCC). Even if children are being cared for they should register the children so that tracing of their family can be activated for the child in the case of children whose parents have died other family members will be traced.

Parents and other family members who have lost children should go to any of the following agencies to register details of their child: District Child Protection Committees, Department of Probation and Child Care, Save the Children Sri Lanka or UNICEF."

● Thousands could have been saved

Jan 4 - A Japanese government agency accused the Peradeniya University's Geology Department of not making use of expensive equipment given by Japan to monitor earthquakes and tsunami waves and thus possibly saving thousands of lives in the catastrophe of December 26.

A spokesman for the Japan International Cooperation Agency JICA said the earthquake and Tsunami monitoring equipment had been given to the University last year and a lecturer was trained in Japan to handle the equipment. Japan which is often hit by tsunamis is known to have one of the most advanced systems to monitor earthquakes and resultant tidal waves.

The JICA spokesman said the Peradeniya monitoring project had come to a halt due to a malfunctioning of equipment. "Since the machinery was not functioning there is no way of knowing if it had recorded the earthquake just off Sumatra. But when we donated the equipment the plan was to turn Sri Lanka into the South Asian hub to monitor earthquakes in the region. The plan was for Tsunamis to be detected in advance and be part of a



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warning system. If the equipment was utilized properly we might have detected the Tsunami in advance," the JICA spokesman said.

In the aftermath of the catastrophe JICA has asked the geology department to submit a report on the breakdown and has offered to repair the equipment so that it could function as an earthquake and tsunami warning system.

An official of the University's Geology Department denied the charge that the department could have saved lives by giving an early warning. "It is wrong to suggest that we could have warned the people of this catastrophe. It is impossible to expect a man to stay on duty 24 hours a day, especially since the government has stopped us recruiting any new staff.

"Once the computer readout is taken it has to be analyzed by an expert. Moreover, as it was a Sunday and a Poya day even if the equipment had been working there would not have been anyone on duty to assess the danger. We have requested other experts in the Universities to help us run this properly and we will be speedily repairing the apparatus," Geology Department Head L.K. Perera said.

● US military presence not to affect peace process

Jan 7 - Pledging USD 25 million for immediate relief and reconstruction of Sri Lanka, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said in a press briefing held at the runway at the Bandaranayake Memorial Airport, Katunayake Colombo, that US military presence will not affect the ongoing peace process. Responding to a question about how long the US military would stay, he said, "I cannot tell you how long those units will be here. But in terms of recovery effort the principal agent responsible for the recovery effort is the Sri Lankan government and as long as it takes them to restore infrastructure and reconstruct their society the United States will be here with them.

they would remain long as it is required by the Sri Lankan government and would ensure that the reconstruction and rehabilitation work is complete."

Mr Powell said that the U.S received request for help from Sri Lanka's President and Foreign Minister within 48 hours of the disaster. He added that U.S will continue to assess the situation throughout the tsunami affected region and react appropriately.

Mr Powell toured tsunami ravaged Southern harbour city Galle where US marines are stationed. Of the 25 million \$4m will be used for immediate humanitarian needs and a further \$10m will be utilized for temporary housing. US has promised similar amounts for twelve other countries, Mr Powell said.

Asked about the role of the US in the island's peace process, Mr Powell said "As you know we have always tried to pay a helpful role working with our Norwegian colleagues. My deputy secretary Mr. Armitage has been deeply involved in the process. I don't think our military presence in anyway shapes or affects political situation. Ultimately the problem has to be solved between the parties concerned. United States military presence is strictly for humanitarian purposes and not in any way to influence political outcome one way or the other. We are hopeful however that if all Sri Lankans come together to deal with this common catastrophe, this common crisis, and work with each other and cooperate with each other and cooperate with each, then perhaps that spirit of cooperation can be elevated and extended into the political dialogue and find a way forward to a political solution to this long standing crisis between government and the LTTE."

● Aid, not foreign armies: LTTE

Jan 17 - During a meeting with the United Nations Food Programme (UNFP) at Kilinochchi on 16 January the LTTE's Political Wing leader S P Tamilselvan had said although the peo-

ple in the North and the East needed aid, they did not need the assistance of foreign armies.

During discussions with UNFP Executive Director James Moris the LTTE's political chief had reportedly said that foreign armies were involved in relief work in the South as they had no sufficient manpower but in the Tiger-controlled areas LTTE members were able to perform the duties and help from foreign armies was not required.

He further said that the international community was helping the tsunami victims with more relief than what they had received from the government since the relationship between the government and his organization developed. He said there was better rapport between his organisation and the government's Peace Secretariat.

He charged that although the President had initially talked of a national programme for aid to tsunami victims in consultation with the LTTE, it was not acted upon.

When questioned about the visit of Norwegian Foreign Minister's visit, Mr. Tamilselvan said the Minister was coming not only to discuss political matters but to see the tsunami devastation too.

Executive Director James Moris said his organisation will offer US \$ 256 million and 1,72,000 tonnes of food. He further said that the objective of his organisation was to supply food to the people in hunger in any part of the world and that the aid offered would be methodically distributed by agents in active service in Sri Lanka. Mr. Moris added that when food items were distributed more attention would be paid to children under five-years, lactating mothers and expectant mothers.

● US Marines to stay till needed

Jan 17 - Visiting Deputy Defence Secretary of the United States of America, Paul Wolfowitz said in Colombo on Monday morning that the US Marine troops would not stay in Sri Lanka any longer than they were wanted. "We don't want to stay any longer than we are needed, most certainly not longer than we are wanted," he told both foreign and local reporters at a press conference at Ceylon Continental Hotel before completing his short review visit to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Wolfowitz, who was accompanied by Admiral Thomas Fargo, Commander of the US Pacific Command, visited the tsunami-hit Galle district in the Southern Sri Lanka, where the US Marines are engaged in clearing the wrecked buildings to help rebuilding a sea wall.

Asked if he thought that in the aftermath of the tsunami tragedy in the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka and Aceh in Indonesia there was a greater possibility of peace in these two countries, Mr. Wolfowitz was cautious about seeing any similarities between Tamil rebels and the Acenese. Sri Lanka had witnessed a much more deep-seated insurgency, he said. However, he saw indications that the Tamil Tigers were at least cooperating with the government and facilitating relief efforts, and this was a positive sign. At the same time, he also expressed the hope that all sides would realise the benefits of being part of a larger community.

Wolfowitz was in Sri Lanka as part of a tour of countries stricken by the killer tsunami of December 26. US marines, besides aircraft and ships, are involved rescue, relief and restoration work.

Initial reports said that about 1,500 marines would be deployed in Sri Lanka, but Mr. Wolfowitz said there were about 700 personnel, most of them engineers. Two positioning ships with water purification capability were also brought to the island, but since normalcy was fast returning to Sri Lanka, the ships would be shifted to the Maldives, he said.

The Deputy Defence Secretary noted that Sri Lanka was crossing the relief and rescue stage and moving towards reconstruction

and rehabilitation. The tsunami catastrophe had created an emergency of the sort that only the military could be deployed to tackle it. However, the ground situation had improved, and the need for continued deployment of military forces had diminished. He also pointed out that fourteen other countries had sent their military forces and equipment to Sri Lanka for rescue and relief work. India had sent the largest force, he said.

● More than 2,400 school children killed in NE.

Jan 17 - More than 2400 school children in the North-East have been killed by the tsunami waves that ravaged the country's coastal belt on December 26. North-East Province Assistant Director of Education S.Vijayanandamurti told the press that according to the information updated by January 13, 1502 students had died in the Kalmunai Education Zone alone.

"So far 130 student deaths have been reported from Mullaitivu. This number might increase in the future. In the Batticalao Zone 235 deaths have been reported," he said.

Some 217 and 141 students had died in Muttur and Akkaraipattu respectively. The number of student deaths in the Trincomalee zone is 38.

Nine education zones out of a total 24 in the North-East have been affected by the tsunami tragedy.

Fifty four schools have been destroyed out and the estimated damage caused to the buildings of these schools is Rs. 436 million. The scale of damage to furniture is placed at Rs. 72.8 million while the damage to equipment like computers amounts to Rs. 49.1 million.

Damage estimated at Rs. 107.9 million has been caused to the buildings of 67 partly damaged schools. The damage caused to the furniture and equipment in these schools has been estimated at Rs. 74.4 and Rs. 25 million respectively.

The damage suffered by the Education Offices in the prov-

ince has been placed at Rs. 21.4 million. "Official quarters worth Rs. 3.4 million have been destroyed after the disaster. We need at least Rs. 28 million to prepare temporary sheds for the re-opening of schools for academic activities," Mr. Vijayanandamurti said.

● UNHCR relief operations

Jan 14 - A statement issued by the UNHCR office in Colombo said that some 130,000 tsunami-displaced people have so far been supplied with UNHCR shelter and non-food relief items, such as plastic sheeting, mats, clothing mosquito nets and kitchen sets. Three airlifts from Copenhagen and Delhi have already brought in additional supplies for the displaced people while the fourth airlift of plastic sheeting from China is scheduled next week. "This weekend, UNHCR will airlift portable warehouses from Colombo to its offices in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara. With a capacity of 1,000 cubic metres each, these warehouses will enable us to store more relief supplies from UNHCR and other UN agencies," the statement said.

The government statistics said that there are still 425,620 people displaced by the tsunami, and the number of temporary accommodation centres had dropped to 444 with more people leaving the temporary accommodation centres either for home or to live with friends or relatives.

"But given that more than 130,000 houses have been destroyed by the tidal waves, there will be people who cannot go home in the near future. UNHCR is working with the government and international agencies on the planning of semi-permanent shelters, ensuring that they respect the basic rights of the displaced people to security, privacy, as well as sanitation and health facilities," the UNHCR statement said, adding that the special needs of women and children must also be taken into consideration.

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The UNHCR said that it was also in the process of advising the local authorities on the need to ensure the land rights of people who could be affected by a draft law to create a 300-metre buffer zone from the sea.

● 90 Govt institutions destroyed

A total of 90 local Government Institutions and regions under their purview in the Southern, Western and North East Provinces were completely destroyed in the tsunami tidal wave catastrophe.

Of the 311 Local Government bodies, 90 institutions and regions have been destroyed. Of the 42 Local Government institutions in the Southern Province, 17 have been destroyed causing over Rs.450 million damage, Provincial Councils and Local Government Minister Janaka Bandara Tennakoon told the Daily News.

The Ministry has taken a number of measures to restore the affected Local Government institutions to their normal functioning as soon as possible.

The Moratuwa University has assisted the Ministry to formulate and supervise all the township development programs for these cities destroyed by tsunami disaster.

Several countries have also pledged assistance to rebuild these cities, the Minister said. The tsunami devastation brought to a halt these functions in the Local Government institutions posing problems for the conduct of the local government activities in the tsunami affected areas.

The Southern Province Chief Minister alone has requested Rs. 31.5 million to pay the salaries of the employees in these 17 destroyed Local Government institutions in the Southern Province. This is because the salaries are paid to the employees of these Local Government institutions by income self generated by these institutions. Therefore the Ministry has taken steps to pay the salaries to these employees on January 20 as usual, the Minister said.

Tennakoon following a discussion with the Local Government Heads last week has also decided to set up a special fund at the Ministry to implement long-term development projects to rebuild the damaged Local Government institutions and develop the infrastructure facilities in affected areas, he said.

The Minister said as agreed at this discussion that Rs. 50,000 will be collected to this fund from each of the 311 Pradeshiya Sabhas, Municipal Councils and Urban Councils.

In addition, seven Provincial Councils will also contribute to this fund. A sum of Rs.60 million has already been provided for this fund solely by the Local Government institutions in the North Western Province. This money will be utilised to construct 700 houses destroyed in the Southern Province.

Meanwhile, the vehicles belonging to the Local Government institutions have been sent for clearing work in the areas destroyed by tidal waves, he said.

● Dutch aid to renovate Galle and KKS ports

An accelerated project to reconstruct and renovate Galle and Kankasanturai seaports damaged by the tsunami waves will get under way with aid from the Netherlands Government.

The proposed project is being implemented on a scheme prepared by Minister of Ports and Aviation Mangala Samaraweera, a senior Ministry official told the press.

It has been estimated that the Galle project would cost Rs. 1,740 million while Kankasanturai Rs. 2,300 million.

"The request by the Ministry of Ports and Aviation to The Netherlands Government to assist to renovate Galle and Kankasanturai has received immediate and a satisfactory response," the official added. However, one out of four berths of the Galle harbour is operating. "Two of the other berths have

been damaged while the remaining other berth is fully occupied due to a gas barge," he said.

The official said the tsunami had damaged the Kankasanturai port as well. "The breakwater and existing piers were severely damaged while the depth of harbour basin has drastically reduced in most places," he added. Dredging of the basin and repairs to the breakwater and piers has to be done on an urgent basis. "It is believed that this breakwater is subject to more damages and destruction due to the monsoon if the repair work is delayed," the official said.

Repairs to bridge, roads, warehouses, construction of damaged buildings, workshops, breakwater and two berths south of the existing port will cost Rs. 1,665 million.

● Tsunami wipes out fishing communities

Jan 14 - The tsunami that ravaged Sri Lanka's coastline may have wiped out more than 80 percent of the island's fishing fleet which may take years to rebuild, the United Nations said on 14 January.

"Preliminary figures show that so far close to 18,500 fishing vessels have been reported lost or damaged", said Miguel Bermeo, head of the UN in Sri Lanka, where more than 30,800 people lost their lives in the disaster.

"This will hit already poor families hard, because fishing is what supports people in coastal communities and what keeps them out of poverty," he said in a statement.

The UN will soon launch a programme to repair or replace boats, engines and fishing equipment so fishermen can get back to work, it said. The average price of a fishing vessel with fishing gear in Sri Lanka can range from about Rs. 120,000 for a seaworthy canoe to Rs. 4,500,000 for a larger boat with an inboard engine, it added. Over 7,500 fishermen were killed, 5,600 are still missing and more than 90,000 displaced by the tsunami waves, according to UN figures.

Support industries, such as cold storage facilities, ice makers, market places, harbours and anchorages were also lost. The few Sri Lankan fishermen who have returned to the seas have complained about diminishing demand due to rumours that fish were either carrying viruses or had nibbled on corpses. The World Health Organisation (WHO) however said fish was safe to eat.

● Laws to monitor work of NGOs

The Government plans to bring laws to monitor and scrutinise the work of Non Governmental Organisations, Minister of Women's Empowerment and Social Services Sumedha Jayasena told the press.

Many defunct NGOs got reactivated with the tsunami disaster. People have doubts about these moves to operate suddenly, she said. Minister Jayasena said "there were many NGOs rendering a yeoman service to the victims of tsunami and the country. They also did commendable social service during the drought and floods which hit the country frequently in the recent past. We really appreciate their work." But informed sources have revealed that certain NGOs were trying to fish in trouble waters and we should have a check on them, she added.

The Minister noted that a Bill has already been drafted and was with the Legal Draftman. "Very soon it will be tabled in the House", Minister Mrs. Jayasena added. She said many persons came suddenly to the Ministry to register new NGOs but the Ministry took a decision to delay of registering new NGOs at this juncture.

She said that reputed NGOs were really helping the tsunami victims working with the Ministry. Ministry had helped them to release their aid packages and hand over them to District Secretaries for the distribution among the victims. □

After the Tsunami: A plea for Responsible Reconstruction

Rajan Philips

Political bickering is causing unnecessary distraction from what should be an exclusively humanitarian focus on the immediate relief efforts. Equally, or even more, worrying is the possibility that medium and long term reconstruction efforts may be misdirected by wrongheaded priorities.

Engineering and environmental professionals and civil society activists are raising concerns about the government's national task force on redevelopment that includes only representatives from the finance, tourism and development sectors but no one from the affected areas or from the technical professions and scientists. Their fear is that Sri Lanka's reconstruction effort may be driven more by national economic and elitist considerations than by local community and environmental priorities.

At particular issue is the future of the fishing communities whose homes and livelihood have been uprooted by the tsunamis. The Coast Conservation Department has traditionally recommended a 300 metre setback from the shoreline for all coastal construction. This requirement was consistently ignored in the past by the tourism industry and its political supporters, and now only the fishing communities may have to conform to its new enforcement. The tourist hotels that were damaged by the tsunami are likely to be allowed redevelopment at their old locations, while the fishers' dwellings that were destroyed will be relocated interior. This will also clear the coast for beautifying the rural beaches and gentrifying the urban edges in the affected areas, which appears to be the elitist 'visioning' among the advocates of a top-down Master Plan approach to reconstruction. Jayadeva Uyangoda, the political scientist, has criticised this approach as "anti-poor" and "un-humanitarian". According to him, government officials have already warned some fisher communities that they should not return to their coastal habitat and this has sent "shock waves among the poor, displaced communities".

It is important to bear in mind the human, social and the environmental costs of the tsunami disaster. Generations of

families, long established but uninsured ways of life, whole communities and ecological systems have been either obliterated or seriously damaged in Aceh, in Sri Lanka, in Thailand, in parts of India's Tamil Nadu and the islands of Andaman and Nicobar - the two isolated island groups that have long preserved some of the pristine forms of human culture studied by anthropologists. The relief and reconstruction efforts should be humbled by the losses that are irrecoverable, and should be sensitive to the trauma of the survivors and the need for ecological rehabilitation. The tsunami victims should be rehabilitated through their own empowerment. It would be a double tragedy for them to be victims, yet again, of top-down Master Plans.

This is not to deny or minimize the role of the government in relief and reconstruction efforts or the usefulness of Master Plans, especially in the rebuilding of the hard infrastructure, but it is necessary to emphasize that the government and political leaders should give up their traditional patron-client attitude towards their own citizens, and that planning and implementation should involve grass root consultation and empowerment. At a Peradeniya Faculty of Engineering seminar, held soon after the tsunami disaster, one of the participants proposed that while the government should spearhead the task of rebuilding infrastructure, the affected communities should be empowered to re-establish their habitats and livelihood with help from professionals and civil society organizations. Such an approach will enable local design solutions being found to local problems including that of providing safe shoreline setbacks and stronger structures to accommodate the fishing communities without arbitrarily severing them from their sea-based livelihood. This is also the approach preferred by Cameron Sinclair's Architecture for Humanity, a New York based group that provides design services to communities affected by natural disasters.

The government will be well advised to exercise more caution and less haste in undertaking long term reconstruction. In

many areas, the impacts of the waves are reported to have been so severe that their effects need to be properly assessed and properly mitigated. The reconstruction program should also be used to integrate the traditional coastal communities with their modern intruders, namely, large scale commercial fishing and the tourism industry. What the tsunamis did comprehensively to all three parties in a matter of minutes, commercial fishing and tourism have been doing incrementally to the traditional communities for over three decades. Their small boats were squeezed in the ocean by commercial trawlers sailing out of fishery harbours, and they were squeezed on the land by the string of tourist hotels that were often developed without assessment or mitigation of their community and environmental impacts. In most cases, there is very little by way of infrastructure integration between individual hotels and the adjacent community in a given area. In Sri Lanka, the garbage generated by tourist hotels became a serious problem with no one taking responsibility for a managing it. The governments have a role in ensuring that infrastructure integration and environmental management are properly addressed in the reconstruction of the tourist areas.

It is no secret that the government is a short term financial beneficiary of the tsunami disaster. With relatively smaller debt load (\$9.6bn at \$500 per capita, compared to Indonesia's \$132bn at \$5,500 per capita), Sri Lanka need not have accepted the freeze offer. But the government may not have had a choice given the state of its finances due to political instability and the moratorium on the peace process. No doubt, the government leaders will take undue credit as the economic indicators start showing an upward trend as aid moneys flow in and economic activities burst out after the tsunami disaster. It is a moot point whether, in the long run, the Sri Lankan government will be able to effectively absorb and utilise the new aid considering the low aid utilization rate (14%, lower than the international average of 20%) that Sri Lanka has traditionally been able to achieve. It is also no secret that low aid utilization in the past has been accompanied by a high corruption rate. What guarantees are there that these trends will not persist but be reversed as the country begins to absorb and use the tsunami aid money? The World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, is said to

(continued on next page)

Amid Tsunami hell, a glimpse of heaven

Asad Latif

The words have all but become a signature line: Hell is other people. Spoken by a character in *No Exit*, a play by French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the line captures the claustrophobia and hopelessness of a banal world where people loathe one another from the shallow depths of their fickle beings and false words seduce communication.

There is more to hellishness, of course. Hellish characters have peopled history and they lurk in the dark alleys of the present. From Nazis, fascists and perpetrators of genocide, to those who profit from slave labour, to intellectuals who rationalise injustice or are silent about it, hell is these people.

Hell is ordinary people as well: corrupt bureaucrats, black marketeers who profit from food scarcity, the denizens of Third World high-rises who sleep peacefully while, in the slums below, children cry out in malarial delirium.

Hell is anybody who glides through life, gracefully immune to the blighted reality of millions of other lives.

But such is the destiny of man that if hell is other people, so is heaven.

Unfortunately, it sometimes takes a calamity to prove this truth.

The year 2004 ended with a resounding reminder of the truth.

Like the Greek Furies, the cataclysmic tsunami fell upon its victims with the pagan force of nature gone berserk.

Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, residents, foreigners, animals, trees, homes, shops, boats, cars - whatever stood in the way of the maddened waves was snatched up and swept along with manic abandon.

(continued from page 16)

have suggested the creation of a web site to record the ins and outs of the tsunami cash. A necessary but insufficient condition, for transparency and efficiency can only be achieved in any significant measure by empowering local communities and transferring decision making powers to provincial and other local bodies.

To persist in political bickering is a betrayal of all tsunami victims. The survivors of the tsunami disaster deserve better than patronage handouts and top-down master plans from their government. The people of the world responded with extraordinary generosity to help the victims of the Asian tragedy. In every country, the citizens were a mil-

lion bucks ahead of their governments in their generosity. The people forced the governments to out-pledge each other to the global relief effort. Questions have been raised as to how much of the monies pledged will actually be delivered. In the BBC's 'Hard Talk' program, Barbara Stocking of Oxfam, London, assured that civil society organizations will keep the people power in flow to force donor governments to honour their commitments. What is equally important is to use the same power to make sure that the recipient governments and political groups do not betray the victims of the tsunami waves and that they are given the power and the resources to reestablish their own lives. □

Everyone and everything was dispensable. What mattered was how angry the waves were, how far inland they invaded, how long they battered human habitation before retiring, clawing screaming innocents away from life and land.

The tsunami has left in its wake an epic trail of death and destruction. The dead are gone. It falls on the living to wail, powerless to give even decent burials to family and friends who were torn out of their lives and, sometimes, their very hands. Mankind stands reminded: Nature is more powerful than him. Nature is supreme. Nature's hidden moods determine the Darwinian rituals of life and death.

But mankind refuses to be humbled, to bow to tyrant nature's decree and give up on itself.

Even though battered by an earthquake that may have permanently accelerated the Earth's rotation and altered the global map, humans have reached out to one another in the very midst of their collective punishment.

Heaven is such people.

Stories abound about them.

People who lost almost everything themselves offered clothes to protect the modesty of a couple whose clothes were ripped off by the ferocity of nature.

There have been reports of looting, pillaging and theft, of course. It does not take long after the waters have subsided for human nature to sink to its lowest common denominator.

But far more numerous have been uplifting stories of human solidarity.

My colleague Ben Nadarajan reports from

Sri Lanka about the head monk of a Buddhist temple on a hill. The monk had looked with disdain at the people pandering to the foreigners who lazed on the beach, played in the water, and gathered around the seafood and the nightlife.

But since the calamity struck, the monk has turned host to about 1,000 of the same people, whether tourists or locals.

The stricken have found a place to stay at three temples.

Truly have houses of worship fulfilled their human mandate as well.

Over in Iran, where thousands were killed by an earthquake in Bam a year ago, an Associated Press report mentions struggling survivors thinking of the victims in this part of Asia.

'Some school kids came to me and asked how they could help people in South-east Asia,' a primary school teacher said.

Across the world, including in Singapore, the response to appeals for aid has been overwhelming.

Looking at the outpouring of human solidarity, it is impossible not to think that heaven is other people.

Heaven is other people working for the community, compassion and comradeship. These are the higher possibilities of the human condition.

People are working for them.

For me, the tsunami has brought about a rather strange conversion.

Coarsened by the hellish suffering that has become commonplace around a six billion-strong globe, I have wondered for some time whether there are not too many humans around for their own good.

Famine, pestilence, war, civil war, religious strife, inhumanity to the old, the infirm, children: these multiplying attacks on humanity are fuelled, after all, by the sheer numbers of people who are willing to kill, or are helpless to fight and are therefore ready to die.

Perhaps a world of three billion would have fewer monsters and victims, I thought. The scale of human iniquity might go down even if the propensity towards violence did not, I thought.

Then came the tsunami - and the heart-breaking images.

And this old, calloused heart of mine stirred. I saw each death for what it was - one too many.

The vile idea that there are too many humans vanished.

I looked more carefully for signs of life in the murderous epic. I found them in stories of humans holding hands and facing the ravages of chance.

I realised: Hell might be other people, but so is heaven.

And heaven is more powerful than hell.

Courtesy of "The Straits Times"

For Sri Lanka, a 'ground zero'

Robert Marquand

Telwatte, Sri Lanka - A small train station along Sri Lanka's southern belly - a sun-drenched, palm-flanked stop called Telwatte - is becoming this country's psychological "ground zero" This is where the Dec. 26 tsunami wiped out a packed nine-car train and took most of its passengers, too.

Amid the scattered debris, and Army soldiers dragging the maroon wreckage away, many Sri Lankans - including relatives of the estimated 1,000 travelers who perished - are arriving to stare and ponder. They stand in silence. The only sound is the song of tropical birds and bulldozers. To some, the devastation brings to mind Pompeii, Italy, where residents were suddenly overwhelmed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. This whistle-stop is emerging as Sri Lanka's locus of discussion, where deeper questions about the national disaster are being asked.

For some 200 yards, a classic symbol of civilization is strewn out across the landscape, cars askew in twisted right angles. The 80-ton engine, a silvery mastiff, was ripped from the tracks and flung dozens of yards away. Bodies were still being found and buried five days later.

On Dec. 26, the coastal train called "Queen of the Sea" left two minutes late from Colombo, arriving at the tiny Telwatte station at 9:20 a.m. - 2-1/2 hours after the earthquake occurred off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.

The cars and platform were packed with holiday goers, since Dec. 26 was a "full moon day" - a day that Lord Buddha was born and died, a time when Sri Lankan fishermen don't work and families travel. Telwatte is usually a momentary stop. But not this time. The conductor was waiting for the signal ahead to turn green. (Officials now say the green light never came because there were reports of waves down the coast.) When the first wall of water flooded in, "like a huge river," one eyewitness recalls, the Queen of the Sea was fully exposed.

Thuresh Dharamadasa, a local woodcarver, was eating rice for breakfast in

his house, 40 yards away, when he heard screaming. He thought someone had been hit by the train, and ran outside. He saw the first wave of water already lapping at the wheels of the train engine.

He rushed back and ushered the eight members of his family onto a "slab" - a poured concrete roof over a concrete latrine - where they watched events unfold.

Karl Max Hantke, a German whose house sits next to the tracks (and is one of only three structures still intact), also saw the tragedy unfold from his roof.

As the first wave arrived, they say, instead of climbing off the train, the water drew more people to the cars. The water was waist high, and the train seemed solid. People clambered aboard, some handing their children up from the platform, and some climbing on the roof.

No one expected the second wave. Witnesses said it came between 10 and 20 minutes later, and seemed more a massive new swell than a distinct wave. Still, it hit Telwatte with such force that the entire train was ripped off the tracks instantly - with such force that heavy concrete forms underneath the tracks were uprooted and turned entirely upside down. The cars twisted and turned, and filled with water. As Mr. Hantke describes it, the scene was one of screaming followed by complete silence.

Officials at Telwatte today either don't know, or won't say, how many passengers perished. The figure is estimated between 800 and 1,200 out of some 30,000 deaths in Sri Lanka. Civilian authorities say only 100 people survived.

One of the most widely told tale of survival in the country is the rescue of Sathsara, a 4-year old boy.

After the first wave struck, Sathsara's parents, who could not swim, worked to save their son. Just as the second wave arrived they pushed the boy through a hatch in the roof where his cries caught the attention of a "railroad engineer" who pulled him up. The "engineer," who no one has since been able to find, kept the boy with him as they were swept

away in the water. His aunt says that the boy remembered where his uncle worked in Colombo, and Sathsara was eventually delivered to their care.

Today, Telwatte is still a random landscape of tragedy: A sari is plastered against a tree, a suitcase is spilled next to a train door, a muddy tennis racket made in China, scattered macaroni on the ground, a pile of pocketbooks presumably emptied by scavengers. Teams of Air force and Army soldiers are making braces to pull the cars out. Most wear kerchiefs because the smell is overpowering, and not all corpses have been removed. A small dog, obviously nursing, runs back and forth, whining, looking for pups.

At the site, many survivors have left pictures of those who perished. Here and across the country the question that hangs in the air is "why"?

Thuresh, the woodcarver, says that his family has decided that nature, after 2,000 years, has made a statement.

O.G. Guruge, a senior politician in Sri Lanka's west coast district, told reporters on the scene that the tsunami was sent by "Lord Buddha." Mr. Guruge said the wave was Buddha's retribution for not taking care of the earth properly, and it was also a judgment on a Buddhist nation where "corrupt priests drive around in big cars and don't pray enough."

In Sri Lankan churches, temples, and mosques, similar questions are raised. On Sunday, many of the newspapers here published commentary that tried to draw meaning and lessons from the Telwatte train tragedy and the tsunami.

A local philosopher, Ajith Samaranayake, asked in the Sri Lankan Sunday Observer whether or not the tsunami would jolt local people into a far more sober appraisal of their personal and national shortcomings than before. He noted that Sri Lanka was the first British colony to be granted universal suffrage, but that the country has not lived up to its promise.

On a kind of metaphysical jeremiad, Mr. Samaranayake added that the tsunami may be a lesson in humility: "For a stark moment, man in the new millennium, armoured supposedly against all calamities by his rational technological outlook and advanced political philosophies, has been rendered helpless by nature ... his cities ruined and laid low and all his grand inventions in disarray."

- The Christian Science Monitor

The Asian Tsunami in Sri Lanka: a personal experience

Professor Chris Chapman,
Fellow American Geophysical Union
Schlumberger Cambridge Research

(Written in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. The footnotes and appendix were added somewhat later)

At 9:30am local time (03:30 GMT) on Boxing Day, December 26, Lillian, my wife, and I were sitting eating breakfast at the beachside Triton Hotel¹, Ahungalla, Sri Lanka (about 30 km north of Galle). The previous week we had been touring Sri Lanka, ending our trip travelling through Yala National Park and Galle – places we hardly knew of before but images of which are now indelibly imprinted on the world (of about 150 staying at the Yala Safari Game Lodge, only 11 survived; the centre of Galle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a 16-17th century Portuguese/Dutch fort and port, is essentially gone). The Triton hotel is a three storey building, well designed by the famous Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Dawa² and, thankfully, solidly constructed in 1981. As we finished breakfast, the sea slowly rose a few metres to the level of the hotel's swimming pool and a small wave gently rolled through the pool and hotel lobby.

Mention of a high tide immediately seemed wrong – Lillian and I had been walking on the beach several times and there was essentially no tide and the sea was calm. I said to Lillian, "There must have been an earthquake in the Indian Ocean" but with no previous experience assumed it to be small. Lillian, having suffered 30 years of the English understatement, immediately went and spoke to the manager and warned that worse might be to come and that it was important to get people off the beach. Gently the sea went back to its previous level and the hotel staff began to clean up. But it continued to retreat for the next 20 minutes or so and I began to realize that something big was coming. The sea level was now perhaps 7m below normal³. Lillian again spoke to the hotel manager who immediately got his staff out with a megaphone advising people to leave the beach. Many people had begun to go down onto the beach out of curiosity.

At 10:10am the big wave came, rising to perhaps 7m above normal³. Most people in the hotel were already near the stairs and escaped to the higher floors. A few were initially trapped on the ground floor in their rooms and public spaces but were rescued by hotel staff. Girls at the hotel reception were swept through the hotel lobby into the front gardens and survived clinging to palm trees. The ground floor of the hotel was devastated – all windows, doors, furniture, belongings ... were gone, swept first inland and then out to sea. Power, water and telephones were immediately cut, of course. No one from the hotel staff or guests was lost, although neighbouring fishing communities cannot have been so lucky – before the wave we had been able to see, in the distance, villagers coming down to the beach to see the retreating sea. Tragically, it would have been impossible to warn them as things happened so fast. An elderly Austrian gentleman who had been out taking his morning constitutional walk, was swept off the rocks by the first wave and rescued by villagers, was walking back to the hotel and survived clinging to a fence. A few people had minor injuries – mainly cuts and bruises – but nothing life threatening. Those people who were trapped by the wave fared worst.

In the aftermath of the big wave, sea level continued to oscillate for many hours (the peaks were at approximately 09:30, 10:10 – the big one, 11:10, 11:50, 12:35, 12:55, etc. local time). The 3rd and 4th surges were larger than the 1st but now seemed insignificant. By afternoon the amplitude of the oscillations had died away even though it was still visible. Only a few people left the hotel as there was an unknown risk of aftershocks. Amazingly, although the kitchens had been destroyed, by lunch-time food and bottled water was rustled up by the hotel staff, and a local doctor attended the injured. As darkness

¹ <http://asiatours.net/srilanka/hotels/triton.html>

² http://archnet.org/library/parties/one-party.tcl?party_id=73
http://archnet.org/library/sites/one-site.tcl?site_id=7313

³ In earlier drafts of this letter, I gave this figures as 10 m. Looking at my photographs more carefully, I have decided that I was probably guilty of the usual exaggeration of wave heights. This figure, 7m, is probably more accurate.

approached we knew that coaches had left Colombo for us but were having difficulty getting through the blocked roads. Another meal appeared, I know not how, and we prepared to spend a long night (darkness comes by 7pm) with some candle light. But the buses arrived at 10pm and the hotel was evacuated, again the hotel providing us all with snack meals and drinks – where from?

Travelling along the darkened roads we were able to see some of the devastation but were still unaware of the true magnitude of the disaster (as was the whole world), and anyway we had to take a circuitous inland route to avoid blocked roads. At 1:00am we arrived at *Water's Edge*, a new golf/sports-club/hotel complex on the outskirts of Colombo. Although incomplete, the bar, sports-club and ballroom were open and during the day the manager had procured 200 mattresses, sheets, pillows, towels! The sports-club was useful as it had the only TV in the place showing the ubiquitous CNN. For the next 3 nights the ballroom was our home. Over the next two days everyone moved on to other hotels or to flights home, until on the morning of Wednesday 29th we were the final couple to leave for our scheduled flight home (as we had already confirmed our flight we did not try to alter it), having to endure a rather ponderous welcome by the police (on behalf of the Foreign Office) at Heathrow airport.

Could I have done more? With hindsight I could have been more emphatic about the impending risk and got everyone on to higher floors before the big wave. This would have saved the trauma of the final rush to safety – I didn't realize how fast I can still run – and would have saved some minor injuries and loss of property on the ground floor, but might have caused panic. But thankfully, no lives were lost. Given the time and distances, there was little we could have done for the neighbouring villages.

Would an early warning system have helped? Of course but the situation is very different from the Pacific: the recurrence rate is very low (there appear to be no recent historical events – locals spoke of a tsunami in their history more the 2000 years ago, although I have been unable to check this⁴). With a recurrence rate longer than a generation, how would people have reacted? We had 40 minutes warning and still did not behave in the most logical fashion); the distances and hence warning times are less than in the Pacific; and some of the countries surrounding the Indian Ocean have fragile infra-structures at best. But given that an early warning system is technically relatively straightforward and inexpensive, of course it should be installed. Perhaps it can be used as a catalyst and driving force for improvements to the local infra-structures rather than just being imposed from outside?

Did the early, small precursor wave occur in all regions? At the time of writing, I have heard no mention of it in the media. I still don't fully understand what I could have learnt from the 40-45 minute period of the surges⁵. Is this a function of the earthquake mechanism, or the propagation path? At the time, it was difficult to get my mind around Airy or Jeffreys phases⁶ and the like. Afterwards, I realized I could have deduced roughly the source of the tsunami – if only I'd remembered my PhD thesis from 35 years ago on the *Diffraction of Seismic Waves*. Between each set of waves there was considerable long-shore drift of the debris, fast enough to roughen the water, south during the ebb and north during the flood, indicating that the waves were being diffracted around the southern coast of Sri Lanka from a source to the SE. And we had only been in the shadow of the island!

We heard two interesting stories about animals. An Englishman living with a Sri Lankan family near Matara fled to high ground when an alarm about the approaching wave was raised (they must have had a warning wave as we did). When he arrived, he was surprised to find the cattle, which roam freely, already there. Despite the utter devastation, no dead animals have been found in Yala National Park.

⁴ The recent review article by K. Satake, "Tsunamis", *International Handbook of Earthquake and Engineering Seismology*, 2002, Chapter 28, 437-451, Academic Press, makes no mention of Indian Ocean tsunamis and the distribution map is only of the Pacific Ocean.

⁵ Satake, *ibid*, does not mention this period. Barber, N.F., 1969, *Water Waves*, Wykeham Publications (London) Ltd. mentions 10 or 20 minutes; Bolt, B.A., 1978, *Earthquakes: a primer*, W.H. Freeman and Company mentions a period of 15 min for the Hilo, Hawaii 1975 tsunami (p. 79); Bullen, K.E. and Bolt, B.A., 1985, *An Introduction to the Theory of Seismology*, 4th Ed., Cambridge University Press

(p. 465) state "In some cases there are several great waves, separated by intervals of some minutes or more, and the first of these waves is not always the greatest. Frequently, the first great wave is preceded by an extraordinary recession of water from the shore which may commence several minutes or even half an hour beforehand.", an accurate description of our observations except for the longer period, presumably caused by the earthquake magnitude and mechanism.

⁶ Jeffreys, H. and Jeffreys, B.S., 1962, *Methods of Mathematical Physics*, Cambridge University Press describe the dispersion of water waves (Section 17.09 – see equation (21)) but this does not predict such long oscillations (see appendix). Presumably this period arises from the large size of the earthquake.

In the West, we tend to think of the Internet as the technology revolution from the end of the 20th century. In countries like Sri Lanka, the revolution has been the mobile (cell) phone, which has altered organizing at the local level beyond belief.

Memories? Of the extreme generosity and kindness of the Sri Lanka people. Why should 200 foreign tourists in no particular, immediate danger after the main wave, be treated so well? Despite the fact that the hotel staff came from local villages where their personal losses were considerable, many stayed around to rescue and care for us. When we arrived at *Water's Edge*, the assistant manager immediately offered his mobile phone to anyone who had not contacted home – the complex was new enough that neither International Direct Dial lines nor Internet had yet been installed. We gratefully rang our daughter (unbeknown to us, Michael Thambynayagam, my manager at Schlumberger Cambridge Research had already contacted her and the Catholic Bishop of Colombo to try to find us). Our guide on our tour of Sri Lanka, Peter Perumal (of Walkers Tours⁷), despite the loss of colleagues and possibly relatives, and preparing for his daughter's wedding on December 28th, went out of his way to find and visit us at *Water's Edge* to check that everything was OK. At the local and individual level, the Sri Lankans are resourceful, well organized and generous people. Unfortunately, the infra-structure is fragile and unable to cope with the wider tragedy. As soon as the country has reconstructed enough to cope, we would urge anyone to visit this beautiful country. We will again.

Appendum

The basic theory for the propagation of tsunami has been given by Jeffreys and Jeffreys (1962, Section 17.09) in an analysis of the dispersion of gravity water waves in a flat ocean of constant depth. In terms of a dimensionless frequency, $\Omega = \omega(d/g)^{1/2}$, where d is the water depth, g the gravitational acceleration and ω the angular frequency, and a dimensionless wavenumber, $K = kd$, where k is the wavenumber, the dispersion relationship for gravity water waves is

$$\Omega^2 = K \tanh K.$$

The dispersion curves for this function are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

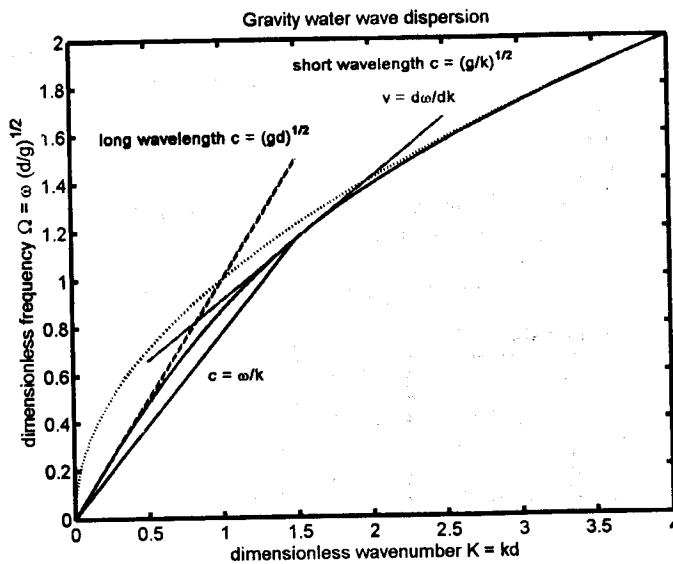


Figure 1: The dispersion curve for gravity water waves, with the short and long wavelength limits illustrated, and the derivation of the phase c and group v velocity from this curve.

⁷ <http://www.walkerstours.com/>

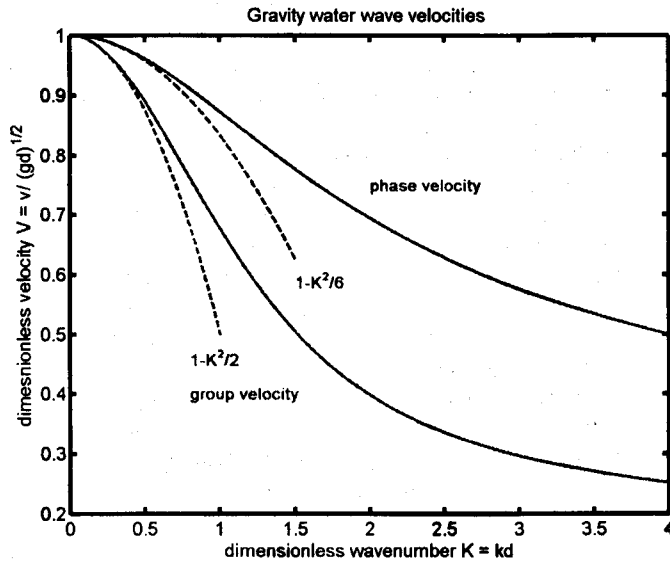


Figure 2: The phase and group velocities for gravity water waves, derived from the dispersion curve in Figure 1. The dashed lines show the long-wavelength approximations.

In fact for tsunami, we only need the long-wavelength limit, $K \ll 1$, when the phase and group velocities can be approximated by the quadratic term, i.e. for dimensionless velocities, these are

$$C = c/(gd)^{1/2} = 1 - K^2/6$$

$$V = v/(gd)^{1/2} = 1 - K^2/2,$$

respectively. Then a wavenumber integral can be evaluated using the Airy function to give the wave displacement in the form of the so-called Jeffreys phase (Bullen and Bolt, 1985, p. 465)

$$u = \frac{2\pi}{(T/2)^{1/3}} Ai\left(\frac{X - T}{(T/2)^{1/3}}\right)$$

where $X = x/d$ is the dimensionless range and $T = t(g/d)^{1/2}$ the dimensionless time. For a water depth of $d = 5$ km and a range of $x = 2000$ km, this gives a velocity of $c = v = 220$ m/s ($C = V = 1$) and an arrival time of $t = 9000$ s = 150 min or $T = X = 400$. These approximate values are consistent with our observations. Each dimensionless time unit is 0.375 min or 1 hour = 160 units. The Jeffreys phase is illustrated in Figure 3.

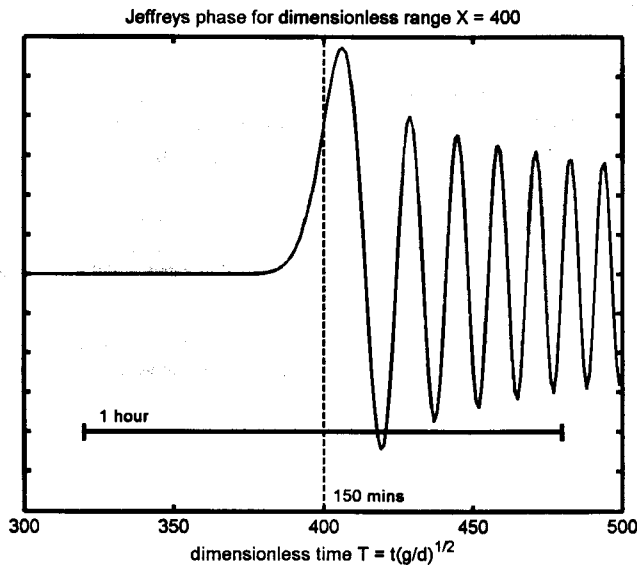


Figure 3: The Jeffreys phase for $X = 400$.

The important features of the Jeffreys phase, caused by the stationarity of the velocity with respect to wavenumber/frequency, i.e. $C'(0) = 0$, are the slow decay with range, $X^{1/3}$, due to dispersion (this is the decay due to second-order dispersion only, i.e. one-dimensional wave propagation. Including the geometrical spreading in two dimensions, the decay rate would be increased to $X^{5/6}$), the build up to a large initial wave and the slow amplitude decay and decreasing periods at later times. The periods of oscillation depend on the dispersion and are only a function of time. The amplitude and sign are arbitrary depending on the excitation. Taking the inverse of this curve, the prolonged initial retreat and large wave agree with observation. The smaller precursor wave is missing but the main disagreement is the large difference in the period of oscillations. In this figure, the periods of about 20 units correspond to 7.5 min, much shorter than our observations. The small precursor wave could probably be modelled by including a higher-order term or phase shift in the wavenumber integral, but the longer period will presumably need a complex (large) source mechanism.

Preliminary rupture models by Chen Ji⁸, indicate that the rupture propagated north-westwards for nearly 400 km (80 dimensionless units) with a speed of 2.0 km/s and a maximum vertical surface displacement of some 10 m. Normally when a source propagates towards the observer, the Doppler shift increases the frequency (decreases the pulse width), e.g. for a train approaching or for seismic waveforms (seismic signals in Sri Lanka will be higher frequency than in Australia). But the rupture velocity is supersonic with respect to the tsunami velocity (2000 m/s compared with 220m/s), so the effect is different. Effectively an observer in Sri Lanka in the direction of the rupture propagation, sees tsunami waves from the last point of rupture (the nearest point) first, and from the first point of rupture (the furthest point) last. In fact the rupture velocity is so high (as it is in rock), about ten times the tsunami velocity, that the direction of rupture relative to the observation point is not very important. The tsunami from the nearest point of rupture always arrives first, and from the furthest last. For simple numerical calculations, we assume that all the rupture occurs instantaneously, i.e. an infinite rupture velocity. The pulse can be broadened by the interference of waves generated all along the rupture. This can be simulated by integrating the Jeffreys phase

$$u = \frac{2\pi}{(T/2)^{1/3}} \int w(x - X) Ai\left(\frac{x - T}{(T/2)^{1/3}}\right) dx$$

where $w(x)$ is a weighting function indicating the source strength along the rupture. Numerical experiments show that the resultant waveforms are very sensitive to the width and form of this weighting function. Trials have been made with triangular and boxcar weights of various widths. If the weighting function is narrow (a few dimensionless units) the wave shape is close to the Jeffreys phase (Figure 3), of course. With a greater width (say 20 units), the main change is that waves from the two ends of the rupture of slightly different frequencies (because the frequencies in the Jeffreys phase increase with propagation time), interfere and cause beats and a more rapid decay – see Figure 4.

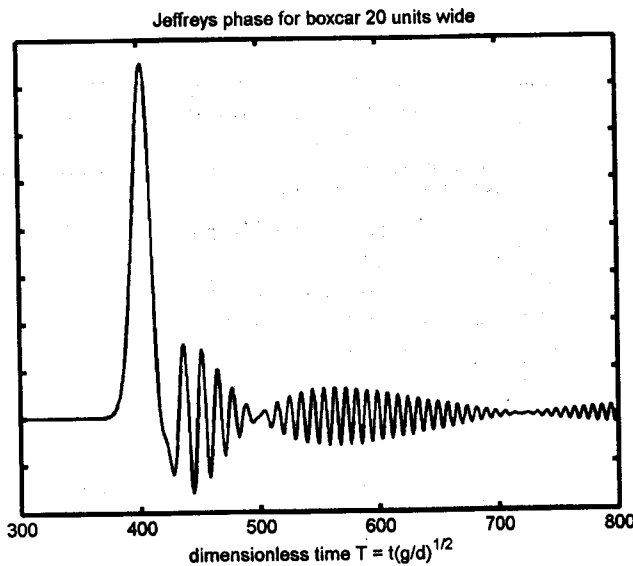


Figure 4: The Jeffreys phase for a boxcar source 20 units wide. Note the interference beats at later times and that the time axis is extended to 800 units (5 hours) compared with Figure 3.

⁸ http://neic.usgs.gov/neis/bulletin/neic_slav_ff.html

For long source widths (40 units and greater), the wave begins to have approximately the form of the weighting function with reduced later oscillations (for large integration lengths, the Airy function in the above integral looks more like a Dirac delta function) – see Figures 5 and 6.

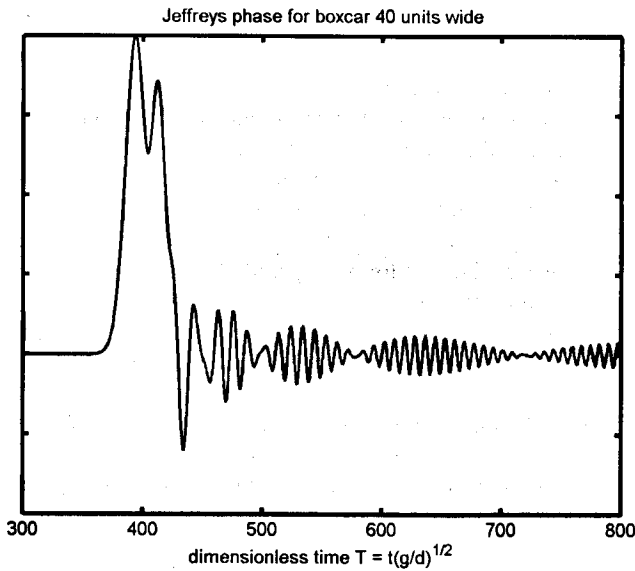


Figure 5: The Jeffreys phase for a boxcar source 40 units wide. Compared with Figure 4, the initial pulse begins to approximate the source, and the later oscillations are reduced

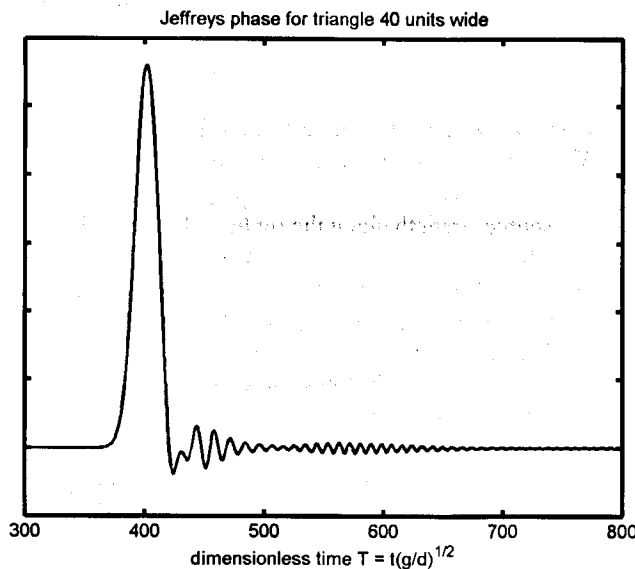


Figure 6: The Jeffreys phase for a triangular source 40 units wide. Again as in Figure 5, the initial pulse approximates the source. The later oscillations are much reduced due to the lack of waves from the start and end of the source.

In reality, it is unlikely that the high-frequency oscillations in Figure 5 would be propagated coherently due to spatial variations of the source and ocean. If these oscillations were removed from Figure 5, the remaining long period oscillations would begin to approximate the observations better. Although these numerical simulations are instructive, further numerical experiments with such a simple model seem pointless given the sensitivity of the final waveform to the source weighting function, and the undoubted complexity of such a large earthquake. The varying water depth of the actual ocean will cause further dispersion and focusing of energy. Full numerical simulations for realistic models have already been performed⁹ including all these effects.

*Professor Chris Chapman has been a scientific advisor at Schlumberger Cambridge Research for 14 years. Before that he was Professor of Geophysics at Cambridge University, and Professor of Physics at the Universities of Toronto and Alberta. His wife, Lillian, is Canadian. His research speciality is theoretical seismology and he has just published a graduate textbook **Fundamentals of Seismic Wave Propagation** with Cambridge University Press, which didn't even mention tsunamis!*

⁹ <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/eqinthenews/2004/usslav>

● **Dispute over Kofi Annan visit**

Jan 8 - Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan visited the tsunami-wrecked districts of Hambantota and Galle in the South and Trincomalee in the East to witness by himself the unprecedented natural disaster in Sri Lanka on December 26. The Secretary General flew by helicopter over the Southern town of Galle town, which was completely devastated in tsunami before landing at another wave-hit Southern town of Hambantota, where he was received by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and World Bank chief, Wolfensohn.

Hundreds of people had gathered alongside the streets to greet him. According to reports he had assured to give maximum possible assistance to rebuild the devastated towns and houses.

Visiting eastern Trincomalee, Kofi Annan consoled Tsunami affected Tamil refugees at Alankerni Tamil School and Muslim victims sheltered in Kinniya Central College. UN officials cancelled the inspection of the Tsunami destroyed Kinniya government hospital site at last minute. In the company of UN officials he arrived in Kinniya Central College grounds by a special helicopter. Mr. Gamin Rodrigo, Trincomalee Government Agent received Mr. Kofi Annan when he stepped down from the helicopter. Later he was introduced to heads of UN agencies in the district.

Mr. Kofi Annan was taken in a motor convoy to Alankerni, a Tamil village, which is, located about five km from the site he landed. He chatted for a while with Tamil Tsunami victims. He then returned to Kinniya Central College where he met with Muslim refugees who are given shelter. Kinniya division in Trincomalee district topped the death toll more than 559 with few more reported missing due to Tsunami disaster.

The LTTE and the Tamil National Alliance accused the Government of blocking Annan's visit to the northern LTTE-controlled areas, and this it did despite the requests by UN officials. A Reuters report filed from Hambantota quoted Annan as saying: "I am here on a humanitarian mission. I would like to visit all the areas, but as you know I am here as a guest of the government and they set the itinerary."

It is understood that the initial request to facilitate a visit by Annan was made by the LTTE's Legal Advisor, V. Rudrakumaran to Country Director, UNDP, Miguel Bermio. On Friday 7 the

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request was reiterated by Head, LTTE Peace Secretariat, S. Puleethevan who contacted his counterpart in Colombo, Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala. Also, their Political Wing Leader, S. P. Tamilselvanput in a request through the Norwegian facilitators to urge on their behalf a visit by Annan, a message that was conveyed to senior officials in Colombo.

Though the Foreign Ministry in Colombo sought to dismiss the accusation by saying that Mr Annan's programme was arranged by the UNDP office in Colombo very few doubt that the Government, given its normal position vis-à-vis the LTTE, played a role in preventing his visit to LTTE-controlled areas. The Government's view is that visits by international dignitaries like the Secretary General of the UN or US Secretary of State Colin Powell to LTTE controlled areas would serve as giving more legitimacy to the Tamil Tigers and to their "separatist" goal, and such visits would be used by the Tigers for propaganda purposes. President Chandrika Kumaratunga is reported to have told CNN that she had "no second-thoughts" in asking Dr. Annan not to visit LTTE-held areas.

The visiting Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, said in Colombo that he was "hoping to be able to come back and visit all parts of Sri Lanka, not just to visit but to celebrate peace," adding that the UN was not a "one man show" and there were a number of people attached to the UN agencies working in parts of the country, including the LTTE-held areas. The UN agencies are very active. And I think my presence in this country and the region on the scores of the important UN and the international community, attached to the crisis that we are trying to deal with here. We are in it for the long haul and encourage to the donor to think in longer term," he said.

Asked whether he discussed the pro-

longing issue of the fragile peace process, he said that he did raise the question of the peace process with the leaders of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), leaders of all political parties and President Kumaratunga and "insisted the need to intensify the peace efforts".

He expressed optimism that his not visiting the LTTE-held Wannai areas would not affect the routine work of several UN agencies that are already working there.

"I think the UN has had very good relation with the people, the NGOs and with the government. I intend to keep it that way including with the LTTE," Annan said, adding that the natural disaster has transcended all the division that had remained in Sri Lanka for so long. "So the ordinary people of Sri Lanka have come together on an extraordinary scale to meet the needs created by the emergency. I fervently hope that their political leaders would do the same in joined hands," he said.

Representatives from ICRC, OXFAM, FORUT, Save The Children, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Dr Kumar Rupasinghe from Civil Society Forum, Neela Marikkar president of Sri Lanka First (a group comprising of business leaders advocating negotiated settlement to ethnic conflict), and various representatives from ethnic organizations participated at a meeting on 9 January convened for a selected group of civil society bodies by the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan at Jai Hilton Hotel on 9 January.

The meeting focused on the impact of the tsunami disaster and the participation of the civil society in disaster response and in the long-term recovery operations. Mr Annan told the participants that it was critically important that all civil society organizations openly expressed their concerns so that an effective mechanism to conduct relief operations can evolve.

According to Tamilnet website, the Executive Director of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), Mr. K. P. Regi, submitted a letter to the Secretary General detailing how the TRO was leading the effort in the NorthEast to provide urgent and immediate relief.

The Sri Lankan government has rejected the allegation that it was instrumental in preventing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan from visiting tsunami affected northern areas of Mullaitivu and Jaffna.

Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry in a statement issued on 9 January said that the final itinerary was drawn only after the government authorities and UNDP's Resident Representative's Office reached an agreement in Colombo after it was known that the Secretary General was planning to visit Sri Lanka on his way from the Jakarta Conference on Tsunami Disaster, the UNDP office in Colombo in its official request dated January 3, for an itinerary, had proposed that Annan visit Hambantota, Amparai and Trincomalee.

The Foreign Ministry statement added: "The government whilst agreeing to these proposals also offered that the Secretary General consider visiting Jaffna and Batticaloa as well," the statement said. It said that following consultation with relevant line Agencies and "taking into account the security, programming and time considerations involved the UNDP office and the government authorities eventually agreed on an itinerary for the Secretary General that included an aerial survey of the affected coastline and on-site inspections at Hambantota and Trincomalee." "The government also offered access and air transport facilities to 'any member' of the Secretary General's delegation to any Tsunami affected areas in the country including the Mullaitivu, an area visited by UNICEF Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy, a few days ago," it said. "The government, therefore, rejects any assertion by any quarter to politicise this essentially humanitarian Mission initiated by the Secretary General and gladly hosted by the government of Sri Lanka," it said.

● Pirapaharan alive and kicking

The Big Tiger is alive and kicking or should one say roaring. Pulithevan, head of the LTTE's peace secretariat, on 15 January scotched all previously circulating speculative news reports about the fate of LTTE leader V Pirapaharan by saying that the LTTE leader would be meeting Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen who is due to visit Sri Lanka beginning 20 January. "He (Pirapaharan) is going to meet the Norwegian foreign minister next week." Pulidevan had said adding, "I can assure you that our chief is alive and fit." Asked as to why he had not been seen in public, Puledevan had replied, "Prabhakaran doesn't seek publicity. He is a statesman and not a mere leader" and adding that the Tiger chief had visited several camps but "without

publicity".

Pirapaharan's non-appearance in public in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster and his failure to visit the devastated areas for nearly three weeks had raised doubts as to whether he was in fact alive. Some reports even speculated that he and the LTTE's intelligence chief Pottu Amman had been washed away by the Tsunami waves when they hit the northeastern coastline areas of Mullaitivu where the LTTE's Sea Tiger base is located. Mullaitivu and its adjoining coastline villages suffered heavily with thousands reported dead including hundreds of children and many thousands of civilians were displaced.

It was also reported that at least 1200 LTTE cadres and many of its boats anchored off the Mullaitivu coastline were washed away by the angry tsunami waves though the Tamil Tigers have not made any statement about their tsunami casualties.

The first rumour was that the Tiger leader had died inside a church by the coast on Boxing Day with some children when its roof collapsed after being engulfed by the tsunami. The second was that he was drowned in one of his many bunkers. The rumour-mill worked overtime to the point when the State-run Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation announced in a radio broadcast on 8 January that according to Chief of Defence Staff and Navy Commander Vice Admiral Daya Sandagiri that the whereabouts of the LTTE leader were unknown, possibly missing or dead. Within 24 hours, the SLBC retracted the announcement as it could not substantiate the story, but the fiasco resulted in the summary dismissal of the station's News Director.

Referring to the broadcast by the SLBC the LTTE in a press release said that it "strongly protested against the mischievous act of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, stooping down to such low level of broadcasting news that are fabricated by interested parties." This is not the time for gossip mongering and malicious propaganda, the LTTE press release said. "At a time of a national catastrophe of this magnitude, it is very much regrettable that a responsible media of the government takes upon itself the job of spreading rumours and speculation that tend to create confusion in the minds of the people," the press release said. Strongly protesting against this mischievous act of the SLBC, the LTTE pointed out that,

"The government has a moral responsibility to ensure that its media exercise extra caution in broadcasting news material that tend to create tension and confusion, especially at a time the people are in distress consequent to the natural disaster. This is not the time for gossip mongering and malicious propaganda,"

Then on 17 January, disappointing those who indulged in wishful thinking as to the fate of the Tamil Tiger leader, the TamilNet website reported that Mr Pirapaharan met with disaster management planners who have been participating in relief and reconstruction planning and praised them for their services to the people of Northeast. It also published a photograph of the meeting with the Tiger leader presiding. The meeting took place in the Tiger heartland of Kilinochchi.

● Sangaree's open letter

Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) President V. Anandasangaree said that the 22 Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs have failed in their duty to help the tsunami affected Tamil people of the North and East to benefit from the huge humanitarian assistance being continuously provided by the international community.

Instead of bringing to the notice of the Government any shortcomings in the distribution of the relief assistance and ensuring remedial measures, they were only blaming the government for not channelling all the distribution of relief to the people only through the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) and the LTTE, he said in a letter addressed to TNA leader and MP for Trincomalee, R. Sampanthan.

"At this time of grave national crisis, they should remain in the affected areas to help the people, to give directions on their relief and rehabilitation and coordinate with the relevant authorities on the matter," he said.

A majority of the Government Agents of the affected Tamil districts have said that adequate food and other humanitarian relief have arrived. The proper way for the TNA MPs to help the affected people is to work in coordination with GAs, their staff, the Provincial Council administration and other relevant authorities instead of demanding that everything to be handled by the LTTE, he said.

Sangaree has also blamed Mr Sambanathan for not having said anything

(continued on next page)

Recruiting child soldiers

Jan 15 - The issue of recruitment of child soldiers in Northeast Sri Lanka has again hit the headlines with human rights and humanitarian organisations alleging that the LTTE has engaged in recruiting children in the wake of the tsunami disaster which had left thousands of children orphaned.

The New York based Human Rights Watch (HRW) has alleged that the LTTE is involved in forcibly recruiting Tamil children to replace their lost cadres in the tsunami disaster of 26 December, which reports suggest killed hundreds of its armed cadres.

Human Rights Watch alleged in a press statement released that the Tamil Tigers are preying on the most vulnerable by taking advantage of children who have been orphaned and displaced by the tsunami.

On 14 January, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which runs an Action Programme with the LTTE for the rehabilitation of child soldiers, reported three cases of children recruited from camps for tsunami survivors in Batticaloa and Ampara.

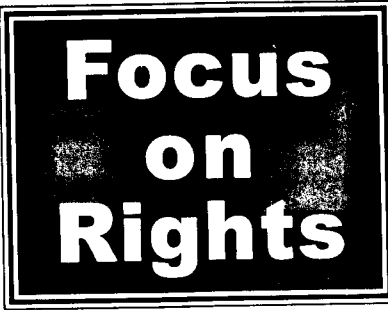
UNICEF chief in Sri Lanka Ted Chaiban told reporters that three children from two eastern districts had gone missing and had been recruited by the LTTE. "We have enough proof that these children had gone missing from the camps and are now with the LTTE. We will soon take up these cases with the LTTE." He said there were a few other cases of children recruited by the rebels but they were before the tsunamis. He did not specify how many such cases UNICEF was investigating.

(continued from page 26)

at the meeting presided over by the President and attended by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on January 9 about want of adequate relief assistance to the tsunami affected people of North and the shortcomings, if any, in distribution of the relief. Mr Sambanthan attended this meeting and if there was partiality, that would have been the best forum to have brought this up.

"Tamils living abroad in response to the appeal of the TRO irrespective of their party affiliations are contributing liberally and the TRO must have collected several millions in foreign currency. People here and abroad wish to know the truth.

"Relief items had come from all



Chaiban said children were worst hit by the tsunamis, with nearly 1,000 left without both parents and a further 3,200 having lost one parent. "From the very beginning, priority has been given to finding unaccompanied children and reuniting them with their parents, siblings, extended family or home communities," he said.

UNICEF spokesman Geoffrey Keele later said later that two of the three had been reunited with their families, leaving only one girl's fate in doubt. "We now have information that two girls from the Ampara district are with their families," said Keele. "It is only in respect of the 15-year-old girl in Batticaloa that we now have issues."

A survey conducted by the UNICEF in collaboration with the National Child Protection Authority, Save the Children, ILO and Probation and Child Care Services confirmed that nearly 1000 children had lost their parents and 3,200 children had lost at least one parent.

Anneieke Kranenberg, reporter from "Volkskrant" on 7 January reported after having visited eastern Sri Lanka, "At this moment, the LTTE is recruiting child soldiers in the camps. The orphaned children are especially vulnerable. It is open

around the world. Several ship loads and over 150 plane loads of relief items, of all varieties needed for the tsunami victims are flowing in everyday. About 50 countries have promised aid and are doing their best. Under such circumstances, if the victims are not looked after properly, who is to be blamed?

"Large stocks of medicines, a good number of medical specialists, heavy equipment, helicopters, tents etc. have been sent by foreign countries. Some countries have even sent Engineering Divisions of their army to get engaged in relief work. One in your team of MPs showed his ignorance by protesting against army units being sent to the North. This type of speech will not help anybody. The losers are poor victims of the tsunami," Mr Sangaree said. □

hunting season for the Tigers. At some schools, where most of the refugees in this area are being housed, government army soldiers are keeping watch. Farther Miller, who has devoted himself to helping former child soldiers of the LTTE, nevertheless fears that little can be done to prevent young boys and girls from being recruited. "The LTTE is abusing this disaster in order to increase its influence in the east."

In its statement HRW has urged that "Every effort must be made to stop this unconscionable recruiting from families who have already suffered so much."

The press release dated 14 January issued by the HRW said, "The rebels Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers) are recruiting children affected by the tsunami for use as soldiers, Human Rights Watch said today.

"Human Rights Watch said that the Tamil Tigers, who were already recruiting large numbers of child soldiers, now may seek to replace forces lost to the tsunami with child recruits.

"The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported on three cases of children recruited from camps for tsunami survivors in Batticaloa and Ampara, on Sri Lanka's eastern coast. 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 for 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 recently 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.

"The LTTE has a long history of recruiting children as soldiers. A Human Rights Watch report published in November 2004 documented LTTE recruitment of thousands of children since a ceasefire between the government and LTTE took effect in early 2002. Human Rights Watch found that the LTTE often used threats, intimidation and even abduction to bring children into its ranks. Prior to the cease-

(continued on page 29)



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 Tel: 0114 256 1033

LTTE appeals for International Assistance:

Jan 26: The political wing of the Liberation Tigers appealed for international assistance in providing relief to the people affected by the tsunami waves Sunday. "We appeal to the international community to provide the wherewithal to meet with the exigencies and to avoid a humanitarian crisis. The human disaster and the tragedy the survivors face are unprecedented and need immediate and effective humanitarian intervention. We therefore solicit the support of the Donor nations, UN agencies and INGOs to consolidate their efforts and ensure that the assistance reach the needy in time," the appeal said.

The appeal said, "This is an urgent appeal to the international community and the donor nations for immediate intervention in providing relief to the disaster-affected areas in the Northeast. Tens of thousands of people have been swallowed by the surge and thousands have suffered major injuries. The medical institutions in the Northeast are full of the injured. Tens of thousands of people whose dwellings and entire belongings have been swept away by the sudden tidal surge, are now displaced and seeking refuge in public buildings in safer places. It is ironical that this tragedy had befallen on a people who suffered the brutality of a war for two decades and are continuing to exist without realizing the basic dividends of peace, normalcy."

Large number killed said to be children: Jan 27 - A large number of children were killed by Tsunami waves in Sri Lanka's

(continued from page 27)

fire, children were routinely used in combat, and often deployed on suicide missions. "Various sources estimate that the LTTE lost between 700 and 2000 soldiers during the tsunami, including nearly 400 women and girls who were washed away from an LTTE training camp in Mullaitivu. Sri Lankan government sources have reported that the LTTE navy suffered major losses.

"As the LTTE seeks to rebuild its forces after the tsunami, children are at enormous risk," said Becker. "Children have always been targeted, but children who have lost their homes or families from the tsunami now are even more susceptible to LTTE recruitment."

The LTTE is reportedly pressuring many camps for tsunami victims to relocate from government-held areas to LTTE-held territory. Human Rights Watch expressed strong concern that such relocation will put children at greater risk of recruitment.

Human Rights Watch called for intensive international monitoring of camps for tsunami victims, with special attention to vulnerable children. It urged international governments providing aid to affected areas in Sri Lanka to publicly condemn the LTTE's recruitment of children and call on the LTTE to release the children in its ranks. The organization welcomed UNICEF's efforts to register all orphaned and separated children and monitor under-age recruitment cases.

LTTE denies: In denying the accusations, the Tigers have blamed the UNICEF for rushing to the press without consulting them first. Their political wing Leader S. P. Tamilselvan said that the LTTE was aggrieved that the UNICEF sought to make a statement saying that the LTTE was recruiting children from Tsunami refugee camps "without consulting it first. They should have asked us first without rushing to make a statement," he said. "We are not recruiting children from camps" he said. □

NEWS TRACK

northeast, rescue workers and local journalists said. Thousands of children have been wounded in the floods and are still without access

to first aid, they said. Lack of transport and roads destroyed by the monster waves are slowing rescue work in Mullaitivu, Muttur, Batticaloa and Amparai, according to aid workers.

"In some places here there aren't people to identify many bodies because whole families have been killed by the waves. In several areas we found the bodies of both parents and children killed by the waves," according to an aid worker in Batticaloa.

He said that Navalady and Thiruchendoor, two coastal suburbs of Batticaloa town, were completely devastated by the Tsunami. Rescue work has been further hampered by a curfew imposed on the eastern town by the Sri Lankan armed forces, according to aid workers.

Mullaitivu, the main coastal town of the Vanni region has been completely destroyed by the Tsunami. Liberation Tigers and local rescue workers are continuing to search for bodies of people killed along this coast. "There is nothing left standing along the entire stretch from Mullaitivu to Vadamaradchi east. The devastation is total on the coast and its hinterland from 800 metres to 1.2 kilometres from the shore. Boats and fishing gear of the thousands of families that rely on the sea for their livelihood are gone", said Mr. Sudar, an official of the LTTE Peace Secretariat who was in the area.

"All the roads along the coastline have been ripped up and washed away by the tidal wave. This is impeding relief and rescue work in these areas", he said. "We have been able to recover only about 635 bodies, 1600 are dead in Mullaitivu," said Col. Soosai, commander of the Sea Tigers who was in the area assisting relief operations.

LTTE sets up Disaster Management Task Force: Dec 27 - Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan, Head of the LTTE Political Wing in an urgent meeting with the International NGOs, District Secretaries, TRO officials and local NGOs requested to set up a North-East Disaster Management Steering Committee and Special Task Force Units consisting of the District Secretaries, INGO's, TRO, local NGO's and representatives of the Planning and Development Secretariat of the LTTE. Similar mechanisms for the districts of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai have also been planned and details would be worked out in the respective districts soon, an LTTE news release said.

Harim Peiris, UPFA Minister visit Jaffna: Dec 29 - Mr.Harim Peiris, Presidential Advisor, accompanied by Mr. D.E.W. Gunasekara, Constitutional Affairs and National Integration Minister in the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government, arrived in Jaffna to see the devastation of the Jaffna peninsula after Tsunami. Mr.Gunasekara visited government controlled areas from Valvettithurai to Manatkadu accompanied by the Government Agent of Jaffna and other officials.

Mr.Harim Peiris later visited LTTE controlled areas from Thalaiyadi to Maruthankerni and held discussions with the LTTE activists stationed there. They addressed a press briefing at the Jaffna district secretariat. Minister Mr.Gunasekara said no discrimination would be shown in assisting the affected Tamil areas. Priority would be given to Tamil areas in rehabilitation. A

master plan would be prepared to rehabilitate destroyed areas without any differences, said Mr.Gunasekara.

President asks LTTE to join national effort: Dec 29 -Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge on 29 December sent an urgent message through the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to join the National level Rehabilitation Bureau headed by her to reconstruct and rehabilitate Tsunami destroyed coastal areas of Sri Lanka. The message is to be delivered by the SLMM head Major General (ret'd) Trond Furuhoed to the LTTE political head Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan, disclosed Mr.Harim Peiris, Presidential Advisor at a press briefing held at Jaffna district secretariat.

Thamilchelvan stresses urgent needs: Dec 30 - Mr. Thamilchelvan, Head of the LTTE Political Wing, met with representatives of more than 60 international and UN aid agencies in Kilinochchi. The urgent needs of the NorthEast, caused by the tsunami which struck the coast on Sunday, were explained to the representatives. He stated both the immediate needs of those affected by the tsunami and their more intermediate needs. He explained that whatever little infrastructure has been built up was damaged or destroyed by the tsunami, sources in Kilinochchi told TamilNet.

US Military advance planning teams arrive: Dec 30 - Advance teams for the US Military's disaster relief response arrived in Colombo to begin assessment efforts and plan humanitarian aid operations to Sri Lanka and the Maldives. According to a statement from the US Embassy, the Disaster Response

Assessment Team (DRAT), Commanded by Colonel Thomas Collins, will work closely with the Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of Maldives to begin to determine the most immediate relief needs and start planning the US Department of Defense's (DoD) relief efforts in coordination with the US Embassy in Colombo. "The 30-person team is comprised of U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Air Force and Navy personnel," the statement said.

Cut red tape to deliver urgent aid- LTTE: Dec 30 - The Liberation Tigers said that red tape should not impede or delay delivery of urgent international aid to the Tsunami hit areas of the northeast. Addressing representatives of international aid agencies and donor community in Kilinochchi, Mr. Thamilchelvan emphasised that the international community has a "moral responsibility" to ensure that humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka is "equitably distributed to the North-East". LTTE's Political Head stated clearly that the immediate relief measures would be best undertaken by the Task Force mechanism already set up at district level by the LTTE in coordination with the Government Agents of the affected districts.

Muslims in southeast coast suffer heavily: Dec 31 - Muslims who live in densely populated villages along the southeastern coast of Sri Lanka suffered heavy casualties in Sunday's Tsunami, with at least ten thousand killed. Rescue and relief efforts in Muslim towns and villages on the southeastern coast are hampered by lack of coordination and heavy rains. Seventy two Muslim schools were completely washed off and eighty five mosques were severely damaged, Secretary of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, Mr. Hassan Ali told TamilNet Thursday.

Meanwhile, Assistant Government Agent (AGA), A.L.M. Phaleel said the family of each person killed by the Tsunami in Kalmunai is being given 10, 000 rupees and that each injured person is being granted 5000 rupees.

Mr. S. M Izzadeen, a member of the local monitoring mission for the Batticaloa district told TamilNet Thursday that although Tamils and Muslims are coordinating relief and rescue work in many parts of Amparai and Batticaloa, more volunteers in the remoter areas of the southeast coast are urgently required. He said that according to latest figures at least ten thousand Muslims died in the Tsunami.

Fifth Indian relief ship arrives: Dec 31 - A tanker from the Indian Navy fleet, INS Aditya, arrived in Colombo harbour on 31 December with relief supplies, medical teams and other provisions. This is the fifth Indian naval war ship to arrive in Sri Lanka aftermath of the Sunday's tsunami disaster on immediate rescue and relief operation. Two Russian-built IL-76 transport planes from the Indian Air Force, each consisting full-fledged field hospital each with 70-member medical team and medical supplies, arrived in Colombo today.

Six MI-17 Indian Air Force helicopters are also in Sri Lanka helping the Sri Lankan air force in carrying provisions, medicines and drinking water to remote areas and bringing back stranded persons from these areas to safety areas. According to the defence sources, INS Sandhayak and INS Sukanya are in Trincomalee, while INS Sharda and INS Sutlej are stationed in Galle assisting the Sri Lankan authorities in relief supply and rescue operation. These ships have brought medical and general relief items, diving teams and inflatable boats. One naval helicopter on each of the ships is being used for search and rescue operations.

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President briefs diplomats: Dec 31 - President Kumaratunga Friday met Colombo based diplomats and members of the International Agencies to brief them on the crises faced by Sri Lanka in the aftermath of Sunday's disaster. Commenting on the long term needs of the country she has said that the country "would welcome the assistance of all friendly nations", adding that the damaged road network would be given the first priority followed by telecom, hospitals, schools, housing.

Claiming that the UN would send a special team to make an assessment of the damage to infrastructure, President Kumaratunga has conceded that the country was not at all prepared to face such an enormous natural disaster.

"We were not prepared to face such a calamity. In the first 48 hours coordination was poor. However it is now functioning smoothly with in organized manner," a statement from the President's office said. Explaining them on the special task force, which operates from the President's Office, she has said that a National Reconstruction Fund (NRF) has been put in place already to rebuild damaged infrastructure.

She also has said that all political parties in Parliament, except the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), have accepted her invitation. The president denied media reports about the neglect in delivering relief supply to Northeast. Such reporting is the work of "LTTE's propaganda mechanism", she said.

The envoys representing India, Bangladesh, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Japan, Malaysia, Switzerland, the UK, the USA, Norway, Italy, and the heads of the UNDP, World Bank, ICRC, ADB, IMF expressed their views in the meeting. The President was accompanied by Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, Secretary to the President W.J.S. Karunaratne, head of the Peace Secretariat Jayantha Dhanapala, the Service Commanders and the Police Chief.

Relief stalls due to flood waters: Jan 1 - Relief supply to hundreds of thousands of Tsunami victims in the districts of Amparai and Batticaloa has been hampered due to flood caused by torrential rain during the last two days. Several hundreds of victims have been evacuated from camps now under flood to safer areas. Heavy monsoon rain lashing in the province has added more sufferings to the Tsunami victims sheltered in makeshift camps and damaged schools. Relief workers are battling to recover bodies still trapped under the collapsed building and debris in the midst of rain. Several hundred families in Irrakamam and Amparai have been evacuated to safer places, social service sources said. Victims in shelters suffer due to flood at a time when they are still not provided with basic facilities such mats, bed sheets, lanterns, candlelight, good drinking water and kitchen utensils, volunteers said.

Lorries transporting relief materials to these districts are unable to proceed to their destinations as main roads are under flood at several places. Relief supply to Amparai district by government agencies and humanitarian organizations has been completely cut off, District Secretariat sources said. Social Service department officials and volunteers have made urgent appeals to the authorities concerned to provide assistance to airlift urgent relief materials to victims.

Sri Lanka mourns: Jan 1 - Sri Lanka observed Friday 31 December as a national mourning day to express shock and grief to the deaths due to Sunday's Tsunami that hit the coastal areas in the northeast and the south killing about 30, 000 and rendering around one million homeless. Sri Lanka's National Flag was flown

half-mast on government buildings and Thamelelam National Flag was flown half-mast on all political secretariat offices of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the North East.

Mourning day was observed in the northeast at the request of the LTTE. All activities came to a standstill sharp at 12 noon Friday to observe ten-minute silence to mourn the deaths of several thousands in the Tsunami disaster. White flags were flown in private buildings and business establishments in Sinhalese areas and black flags in Tamil areas. President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge, Opposition Leader Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe and leaders of other political parties participated in a prayer meeting held Friday evening at the Henry Pedris Park in Colombo. Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe and other party leaders carrying lighted candles pledging to work for the reconciliation and rebuilding of Sri Lanka, rising above all differences.

1500 U.S Marines to arrive: Jan 1 - U.S Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Jeffrey Lunstead, U.S Commander of U.S Disaster Response Assessment Team (DRAT), Colonel Thomas Collins, and a USAID representative said at a press conference held in Colombo that 1300 U.S Marines are to arrive in Colombo in a U.S Wasp class amphibious assault ship, USS Bon Homme Richard, equipped with a helipad and supporting five helicopters on board.

The Aircraft Carrier, USS Bon Homme Richard, which is to support full fledged U.S rescue operations in Galle, Amparai, Trincomalee and Jaffna coasts is also equipped with five small scale hovercrafts, the officials said in the press conference. The hovercrafts will engage in point to point rescue operations along the coasts, the officials added. A C-130 cargo carrier aircraft will also be supporting the rescue effort, the Ambassador said during the press conference.

Ambassador Lunstead added that the death toll in Sri Lanka due to Tsunami waves was nearly nine times the total US suffered in the 9/11 incident. He said that initially the operation would begin in worst-hit Amparai, Trincomalee, Jaffna and Galle districts and the US Marine and the Joint Task Forces (JTF) would engage in "point to point distribution" using the Hovercrafts and Marine Helicopters to carry the relief items to the needy areas. He said that the number of the Marines in Sri Lanka may go up or down depending on the requirements and the co-operation they get from the Sri Lankan armed forces on the ground.

Asked whether US relief operation would cover the areas controlled by the LTTE, Ambassador said that the US Embassy "will make sure that the relief items reach all tsunami affected areas including the North-East". "It is not about the ethnic conflict, but a urgent humanitarian assistance. We will serve all who had been affected," he said, indicating that the US humanitarian relief items would flow into the LTTE-held areas as well. Bush administration has already allocated US \$ 350 million as tsunami relief to the South-East Asian region.

UNICEF Official visits Mullaitivu: Jan 3 - Ms Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), arrived in Killinochchi on January 3, met with and consoled the 38 children who escaped death in the Tsunami which wiped out the Senthilir Illam with 113 children in Mullaitivu. Senthilir Illam is run by the Women Rehabilitation Organization (WRO).

Thereafter she went to Mullaitivu town and witnessed the

destruction. She later told local journalists that most of the victims of the previous week Tsunami that hit the coastal areas of South Asian countries were children. "Irreparable damages had been caused to children and women. UNICEF would assist all affected areas," she told the local press. She commended that the rehabilitation work and the management of refugee camps in the northeast areas were being carried efficiently. UNICEF would also contribute its part with the Task Force in the government and LTTE controlled areas. She inspected the refugee camp located at Mulliyawallai Vidiyanantha College and the office of the Task Force.

UK naval ship also arrives: Jan 3 - A naval ship of the British naval fleet, HMS Chatham, has arrived in Colombo harbour with a group of sailors and two light helicopters. The ship has been sent to Sri Lanka following a request made by the government of Sri Lanka. The arrival of the UK ship has come a couple of days after the arrival of a top UK defence team to explore how best British assistance could be utilised for tsunami hit Sri Lanka. The UK is the second foreign country to have sent its naval ships to Sri Lanka followed by neighbouring India, while the US Marines ship and two Pakistan ships are also scheduled to arrive with men and material before the end of this week.

LTTE receives Italian relief: Jan 4 - Italian Foreign Ministry handed over a consignment of medical equipments, medicines and tents for temporary shelters to Mr. S. P. Thamichelvan to be distributed through the rescue and relief mechanism that have been set up in Tamil areas. Thanking the Italian government and the Italian people for the kind gesture of humanitarian at a time

of distress, Thamichelvan explained to the officials how the rescue and relief operations were being conducted.

Mr. Stefan Zanini, Counselor, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Alessandro Rubino, Medical Doctor, Department of Civil protection, Government of Italy, Massimo Darchini, First Secretary, Italian Embassy in Colombo expressed their condolence to the Tamil People who have suffered immensely during the two decades of war and now again subject to the tsunami devastation, said a news release from the LTTE's Peace Secretariat.

Task Forces for Rescue and Rebuild: Jan 5 - President of Sri Lanka has announced the setting up of three Task Forces for Rescue and Relief - TAFRER, to Rebuild the Nation - TAFREN and for the Logistics and to ensure Law & Order - TAFLOL.

The Treasury Secretary and the Foreign Secretary will handle matters relating finance and donations from overseas. Accepted fiscal procedures and foreign policy will be followed in all instances. According to a press release of the Presidential secretariat the 'Authority for Rebuilding the Nation' will be established under an urgent Parliamentary Act. The press release further adds that the empathy displayed by the world community and our own citizens from all walks of life has been magnanimous. Assistance both solicited and unsolicited continues to pour in to help Sri Lanka's 26/12 disaster victims.

The Presidential Secretariat pointed out that the task now before the nation is to rebuild a shattered society and to restore the destroyed infrastructure. It is also imperative to continue the development activities planned for in other areas, largely unaffected by the disaster in order to sustain the country in the next three to five years. Therefore the press release emphasised: "On Monday 3rd January President Chandrika Kumaratunga in consultation with other political parties instituted three apex bodies made up of both state and private sector professionals to oversee all aspects of restoration. The three professional groups are tasked with accelerating Rescue and Relief, Rebuilding, and Logistics and to ensure Law & Order. The three Task Forces will be accountable to the President via the Secretary to the President."

Papal delegate visits affected coastal villages: Jan 5 - Apostolic Nuncio His Excellency Mario Zenari, Papal Delegate in Sri Lanka Tuesday paid a visit to Jaffna district and witnessed the destruction caused to coastal villages in the district due to Tsunami and shared the shock and grief with the victims, according to local sources.

Accompanied by Jaffna Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Soundaranayagam, the Papal Delegate toured all the affected coastal areas and met with the victims and offered the sympathies of the Pope. Papal delegate witnessed the destruction caused to the St Xavier Church in Sakkotai, Kudaththanai St. Peter's Church and Manatkadu St. Antony's Church in the Jaffna district. Papal Delegate also visited welfare centres where Tsunami victims have been given shelter. Papal delegate also toured LTTE controlled Vadamradchchi east division and Mullaitivu district on 5 January.

Ranil welcomes foreign troops: Jan 5 - Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, former Prime Minister and the leader of the main opposition United National Party (UNP) paid a visit to Jaffna and witnessed the destruction caused to several coastal villages in the last year Tsunami. He held discussion with local leaders at

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the office of the Tsunami Disaster Rehabilitation Task Force in Vadamardchchi division. Talking to presspersons later, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe said he would discuss with the government the question of providing provisions needed for one month to all victims and thereafter the assistance in regard to the rehabilitation of them.

Arrival of foreign troops would not undermine the sovereignty of the country or the ceasefire agreement currently in force, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe said in reply to a question at the press briefing. Wickremasinghe talking to press, later, said he would discuss with the government the question of providing provisions needed for one month to all victims and thereafter the assistance in regard to the rehabilitation of them. Wickremasinghe accompanied by UNP parliamentarian Dr. Jayalath Jayawardene toured the coastal areas affected by Tsunamis escorted by army officials.

Galle port cleared for operations: Jan 5 - The Galle harbour in southern Sri Lanka which was severely hit by the Tsunami is back in operation. It was cleared for work on Tuesday 4 January following a joint clearance operation undertaken by Sri Lankan and Indian navies. A senior Navy spokesman said the southern key port Galle was cleared after an extensive operation, which was one of the major tasks launched by both countries.

Several large ships, including 'Weligowwa' and a war ship belonging to the Sri Lanka navy were also damaged as they were drifted towards the coast by the Tsunami waves.

The spokesman also said soon after the renovation of the harbour, Indian navy ships 'Sarvekshak' and 'Sutlej' entered and anchored in the harbour. By clearing the Galle harbour for work, the war ships from the United States and India, providing relief will be able to enter the harbour easily to carry out relief distribution.

Though the other affected ports including Colombo and Trincomalee have resumed operations, the navy said that the Kankasanturai and Point Pedro ports had not resumed functions, since they were badly damaged. Meanwhile, British war ship HMS Chatham, which anchored off the Sri Lankan coast on 5 January made its first aerial survey of Sri Lanka's coast, affected by the Tsunami waves.

Docs on round the clock duty at B'caloa: Jan 6 - The Batticaloa branch union of the Government Medical Officers Association said it had taken preventive and curative measures in all internally displaced camps of Tsunami survivors. Branch Union Secretary, of the GMOA Dr. Manivannan said that they had taken action as soon as the tidal waves hit the shores Batticaloa.

According to the Batticaloa Government Agent, V. Shanmugam, by January 6 the number of missing had risen from 750 to 1,081. The recorded number of deaths were around 2,731, the number of families in the 66 IDP camps were around 18,148. Another 9,399 are presently living with friends and relations.

The Secretary pointed out that the GMOA branch union had stepped into assist in the aftermath of the December 26 tidal waves. Preventive and curative measures were taken in every IDP camp from Vakara to Kalmunai. He pointed out that their quick action had enabled the GMOA branch union to minimise the morbidity and mortality rates. "We would like to thank all those including the international and local NGOs, nurses, pharmacists and volunteers for the assistance they rendered," Manivannan said.

The Batticaloa GMOA with the assistance of the Batticaloa

Medical Association opened an account at the Bank of Ceylon BMA Disaster Relief Fund - 0012988. 'D3 They urged the public to contribute generously for the rehabilitation of the affected people in Batticaloa. Those who want to provide medical help in the Batticaloa district can contact the branch union on 065-2222931 or Dr. Navalogithan on 065-2222054. The Secretary pointed out that those who needed medical assistance too could contact the above mentioned number.

Second Japanese medical team: Jan 6 - The second Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) medical team to replace the first JDR medical team which had been providing medical services in the welfare camp set up at Al Hilal pre-school at Sainthamaruthu in the Ampara district since December 30, arrived in Sri Lanka on 5 January.

The 23 member team comprising one team leader, four doctors, seven nurses, one pharmacist and 10 logistics staff, plans to carry out medical services at the temporary clinic till January 16. The team has a capacity to take care of about 200 patients per day. The first team has been treating more than a hundred patients every day.

Tsunami affects 169 schools: Jan 6 - The tsunami waves have left 169 schools islandwide damaged or destroyed bringing to a halt the schooling of thousands of students. According to the latest data available, 59 schools have been completely damaged and a further 100 schools are partially damaged.

A total of 3,304 teachers and 80,354 children from these schools are affected. The largest number is from Ampara where 14 schools are completely damaged and 24 schools are partially damaged. In Batticaloa, 15 schools are completely damaged and 18 schools partially damaged. In Trincomalee, seven schools are completely damaged and 20 schools partially damaged. The Ministry is making arrangements to use the schools that are not damaged or not used as refugees camps, for common academic activities. The Education Ministry has estimated that the rebuilding and restoration of these 169 schools will cost approximately Rs. 1,164 million. Several foreign Governments, local and international NGOs as well as individuals have made offers to reconstruct all schools affected by the tsunami.

Death toll of academics and students: Jan 6 - The Inter University Student Federation (IUSF) said in an announcement that 21 female students and five lecturers had died in the December 26 tidal waves. The Federation pointed out that 215 students were missing. The numbers of the missing students from the universities are: Ruhuna University 12, Peradeniya University 4, Colombo University 28, Moratuwa University 7, Eastern University 3, Buddhist and Pali University 10, Kelaniya University 13, Jayawardanapura University 10, Sabaragamuwa University 6, Open University 121, Sri Pali University 1. The IUSF also said that three lecturers and two non-academics too were missing following the tidal waves.

Three die in grenade attack on Batticaloa: Jan 9 - Three persons were killed and thirty eight persons were injured in a grenade attack on a tsunami funeral house in Vahaneri, a village 38km northwest of Batticaloa town. The incident took place on 8 January around 9 PM when several people were gathered to attend a funeral of tsunami victims. An eight year old boy was among the three people who were killed, sources said.

The three persons who were killed were: Mr. P. Nahenthiran

(38), Mr. T. Tirusan (8), and Mr. N. Ananthan (24). Thirty five persons with injuries were admitted to Valaichenai Hospital and 3 persons with injuries were admitted to Batticaloa Hospital, Police sources said. The attackers came in a 3-wheeler and threw two hand grenades at the funeral house and the reason for the attack is not known, Police sources said.

USS Duluth arrives in Sri Lanka: Jan 10 - The United States Ship "Duluth" arrived off the coast of Galle on 9 January carrying equipment and personnel to aid in the U.S. government's humanitarian relief operations in the tsunami-affected areas of the island.

Bonhomme Richards, a wasp class battleship with more relief assist hardware and supported by up to 1000 U.S marines, which was to be sent to Sri Lanka, was later diverted to Sumatra where it was considered that more help was required. The Duluth, whose home port is San Diego, California, belongs to the Amphibious Transport Dock class of ships, designed to transport landing forces for a variety of missions, including humanitarian aid. The Duluth is carrying three CH-46E Sea Knight Helicopters, engineering and earthmoving equipment and over one hundred Marine personnel. The ship is also carrying a landing craft capable of carrying 180 tons of equipment, which will be used in supporting the aid mission. The Duluth will lay off the coast of Galle for approximately one week before continuing on its course. An Austin-class ship, the Duluth is 173.4 meters long, and was commissioned on December 18, 1966. The Duluth is part of the Navy's Expeditionary Strike Group-Five.

Seven abducted children rescued: Jan 11 - Seven tsunami children survivors in age ranging from 6 to 12 years were found in a house in Karuveppankerni, 2 km north of Batticaloa, Police said. Police investigations have disclosed that the children have been in the custody at the house since 1st of January. One suspect believed to be the owner of the house was arrested and accused of allegedly kidnapping the children in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster. Head Quarter Inspector of the Batticaloa Police, Harischandra Bandara, is conducting the investigations.

SLBC News Director removed: Jan 12 - Mr. Raja Katukampola, News Director of the Government owned Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) has been removed from his post and he is being replaced by Mr. Somapala Perara. SLBC ran a story on 8 January, Saturday morning, quoting Vice Admiral Daya Sandagiri as the source person, saying that the leader of the LTTE and the Intelligence Chief of the organisation, Pottu Amman, were among the dead or reported missing consequent to the Tsunami tidal wave attack.

HRC to monitor aid distribution: Jan 12 - The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) has decided to set up a Special Task Force to monitor all relief and rehabilitation works to Tsunami victims in the country to ensure equal distribution to all affected parties. A decision to this effect was taken at top-level meeting held at the headquarters of the HRCSL presided by its Chairperson Ms Radhika Cumaraswamy.. The HRCSL

Special task Force would monitor the flow of foreign aid to the country and disbursement of such aid to the people.

The HRCSL has also empowered its regional offices in the country to entertain complaints from people who are deprived of their relief and other assistance in the Tsunami disaster and forward them to the Colombo headquarters for further action..

World Bank, ADB officials meet Thamilchelvan: Jan 13 - Worldbank Country Director, Peter Harold, in a meeting with Head of LTTE Political Wing, S.P.Thamilchelvan, in Kilinochchi, expressed his condolences to people over the loss of their loved ones and added, "the institutions we represent, would continue extending solidarity in the reconstruction efforts," said the LTTE's peace secretariat website.

Associated with Mr Harold in the meeting was Alessandro Pio, Country Director, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Brian Smith, Post Conflict Specialist, ADB, Jeremy Carter, Sr. Resident Representative IMF, Tomoyuki Kimura, Director, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Ueshima Takumi, Resident Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Mitsuo Kawaguchi Counsellor, Embassy of Japan and Mr. Naresha Duraiswamy of the World Bank.

Thamilchelvan briefed the bank officials on the current status of on-going relief and rehabilitation programmes for the displaced people in the welfare centres and stressed the importance of a coordinated effort at the district level. He also added that the international community had a moral responsibility to take stock of the situation in the context of the devastation already caused by two decades of war and the cease-fire having failed to deliver normalcy. This Thamilchelvan said, necessitates innovative modalities to ensure that the affected people get the benefits according to their local needs and reconstruction plans formulated at the local level, the website said

Army search for buried weapons: Jan 14 - The government security establishment has deployed its men to salvage weapons buried in the coastal areas of Vadamradchchi east from Manatkadu to Kudathanai when the Tsunami deadly waves destroyed its naval and army bases last month, according LTTE sources..

The salvaging operation has been going in a big way along the coast of Potpathi area in Manatkadu village and Kudathanai where big naval and army bases were functioning till Tsunami hit the coastal areas on December 26, sources said. but not the arms and ammunitions stored in those bases. The areas where naval and army bases were functioning till December 26 are still under seawater, they said.

Indian medical team in the east: Jan 14 - A fifty member medical team of the Indian Navy took charge of the Kuchchaveli government hospital located about thirty km north of east Trincomalee to serve the people of the area affected by Tsunami disaster, health authority sources said. The medical team comprising Indian doctors, nurses and other workers who arrived in Trincomalee harbour in an Indian Navy vessel with adequate medicines and medical equipments, was sent to Kuchchaveli

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hospital. Indian volunteers cleared the debris surrounding the hospital and cleaned the wells in the area and started providing assistance to the affected people.

Annan's Special Envoy visits Mullaithivu: Jan 15 - Margareta Wahlstrom, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Relief Operations, met with the Head of the LTTE's Political Wing, Mr. S. P. Thamilchelvan and expressed condolences and solidarity to the Tamil people affected by the tsunami on behalf of the UN Secretary General.

A report in the TamilNet website, Mr. Thamilchelvan, urging the UN not to allow political considerations to deter its participation in the rebuilding efforts in the Tamil homeland, told UN Envoy that the Sri Lanka government had "acted in bad faith" by bringing the military into the humanitarian equation.

Ms Wahlstrom expressed regret that Kofi Annan "could not personally visit these areas for reasons beyond UN's control" said LTTE Peace Secretariat website. "UN with its experience in working jointly with local structures would definitely take the initiative and extend its fullest cooperation in the efforts undertaken by the LTTE" the website of the LTTE Peace Secretariat quoted Mr. Miguel Bermeo, Country Director UNDP, who was associated with the special representative, as saying. Colonel Soosai escorted the UN team to the badly affected areas in the Mullaitivu district and showed them the nature of relief operations taking place there. Col. Soosai explained to the team the plans for rebuilding the fishing villages in Mullaithivu.

UN Envoy Wahlstrom visits Jaffna: Jan 16 - Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy visited the Jaffna district. Accompanied by Ms. Miguel Bermieo, UNDP Country Director UN and representatives of Fisheries

Co-operative Societies she visited Tsunami destroyed coastal areas from Point Pedro to Valvettithurai.

Ms Wahlstrom held discussions with representatives of fishing communities from Thondamannaru to Kudathanai and officials of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Point Pedro. Ms Wahlstrom agreed to waive loans provided by the UNDP for the development of fisheries industry as the entire coastal areas have been destroyed by Tsunami on an appeal by the representatives. They requested the UN special envoy to help modernize fisheries industry when rebuilding it after Tsunami. She said she would be forwarding a comprehensive report to the UN headquarters shortly. However before implementing a long-term plan to rebuild the devastated the fisheries industry, action should be taken to provide temporary relief to the fisher folk, she added. She told the fisheries representatives that action would be taken to establish a modern boatyard in Jaffna district.

Pirapaharan meets disaster management planners: Jan 17 - Leader of the LTTE, Mr. V. Pirapaharan, met with disaster management planners who are currently participating in relief and reconstruction planning and praised them for their services to the people of Northeast. Pirapaharan told the planners that all resources available have to be utilized to ensure a swift and sustained recovery from the tsunami disaster that has brought destruction and grief to the community. The meeting took place in Kilinochchi on Monday, 17 January.

TamilNet quoted the Tiger leader as saying, "Although our people have suffered through severe hardships, we are shocked by the scale of destruction and loss of lives tsunami inflicted on our community within a short period of time. Our people were displaced several times and suffered losses to their property by the actions of the Sri Lanka Army during the past several years. While this period where the destruction to the Tamil homeland was inflicted silently without the knowledge of the international community can be called tsunami-1, December 26th disaster, tsunami-2, has brought additional destruction.

22 Mullaitivu schools used as Welfare Centres: Jan 18 - Out of the twenty three welfare centres in Mullaitivu district, all except one are located in schools in areas unaffected by the tsunami, and there is an urgent need to relocate these centres to allow schools to function normally, said Emelda Sukumar, Government Agent of Mullaitivu district, the TamilNet website quoted her as saying.

"A total of 3314 families consisting of 11,993 individuals are being looked after in the welfare centers, and a further 2507 families with 10,576 individuals are staying with friends and relatives who also need additional support and help. An additional 186 families with 936 members have lost their means of livelihood making up a total of 6007 families that require urgent help in Mullaitivu district," the GA said.

"With the assistance of the TRO we have been able to attend to health issues, food, drinking water and clothing adequately to the people affected, but relocating the affected to other welfare centres remain our immediate pressing challenge," she added.

US medical team in Point Pedro: Jan 18 - Twenty - member US medical team has commenced its services at Point Pedro government base hospital in Jaffna district. Dr. Ton Davis, Head of the US medical team addressing a press briefing said his team would be in Jaffna for two weeks adding that the Government of Sri Lanka and the USA Embassy in Colombo would decide on the question of extending the period of stay in Jaffna. He said his medical team would provide treatment for fracture and other

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ailments. Surgery would also be undertaken. A consignment of urgently needed medical equipments has been handed over to the Point Pedro Hospital, he said.

At present US medical team has been allowed to conduct medical camp from the Point Pedro base hospital although the team is interested to visit welfare centres where Tsunami victims are sheltered, he said in reply to a question by a journalist. The possibility of providing medical services to the people of LTTE controlled area is solely depending on the decision of the Sri Lankan US embassy, he said.

'Lanka has a very capable Govt' - Wolfowitz

Jan 17 - Sri Lanka has a very capable government and the health system is very strong, said visiting US Deputy Secretary of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz. He said the tsunami crisis has proved that Sri Lanka is a very capable country and has responded very well during the crisis after meeting and having discussions with President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. The US Deputy Secretary said that the government and the people have positively responded during the tsunami crisis. "Sri Lanka is now in the recovery stages and a great deal of effort has gone in to it. Sri Lanka is now moving very rapidly in reconstruction," he said.

Wolfowitz who toured the tsunami affected Galle said the LTTE was responding positively and this is a good sign for the country. There have been moves by the LTTE in the positive direction. "The LTTE is now cooperating in relief efforts as well," he said. He said unlike in the conflict in Indonesia, the Sri Lankan scenario has been more violent. "When one analyses the tsunami crisis one would have felt that people have been fighting for trivial things."

The attitude of the US marines too is very positive and they are committed to their rebuilding work in the South. The marines are also happy with the response they are receiving. "There are over 700 US marines and engineers in Sri Lanka and they would be in Sri Lanka until they are needed," he said. "I asked some children in a school which is being re-built by the US marines as to what they think on the presence of the US marines and the smiles I received showed that they were very happy." He said that US first had their experience of disaster management after September 11, 2001 and learnt many lessons from it.

Official death toll soars to 38,195: Jan 17 - The officially confirmed death toll in Sri Lanka's tsunami catastrophe soared to 38,195 by 17 January and a top official warned that the eventual figure could exceed 40,000 as more dead bodies were being recovered daily.

Essential Services Commissioner General and Public Security Ministry Secretary Tilak Ranaviraja gave the new figures at a news conference though the coordinating centre in the President's office still maintained the death toll was 30,925. Mr. Ranaviraja who is also Chairman of the Presidential Task Force on logistics, law and order said the government had decided to introduce a ration card scheme from this week for the tsunami victims. Each person with a ration card would be able to obtain essential items to the value of Rs. 375 a week.

TNA meets ADB chief on relief to N-E: Jan 16 - A Tamil National Alliance (TNA), delegation told the chief of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) that the Northeast with its long coastline had two-thirds of the casualties and destruction to property and said that it was imperative to ensure that the distribution of international aid was proportionate to the damage caused in different areas.

The delegation comprising Parliamentary group leader R.

Sampanthan, Joseph Pararajasingham and Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam met ADB President Tadao Chino who was accompanied by Chief Advisor Y. Kanzaki, Director General, South Asian Department, K. Senga and Country Director Alessandro Pio.

The TNA delegation impressed upon the ADB President that, despite a three-year cease-fire, thousands in the North-East had been rendered refugees by a two-decade-long war and had not been resettled and rehabilitated when the tsunami disaster struck them. The delegation said that those most victimized were from the fishing community whose occupational freedom was severely restricted during the conflict and even during the cease-fire.

They also said that based upon their past experiences, they had every reason to be sceptical and requested the international community in general and the ADB in particular, to ensure that international aid was equitably distributed.

They expressed dismay that there was an increasing tendency on the part of the Government to centralize all activities pertaining to relief, reconstruction, resettlement and development and that there was hardly any local participation in the processes related to decision-making and implementation. They alleged that the present activities also lacked transparency and proper accountability and pointed out that the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) and the LTTE had during the conflict, and from the time of the tsunami disaster, actively worked amongst the people providing relief. They pointed out that over a period of time, both the TRO and the LTTE had evolved mechanisms to cope with such situations and that there was an urgent need to actively involve the LTTE and the TRO in the activities related to the tsunami disaster. Failure to do so would be tantamount to a refusal to come to grips with reality, they emphasized.

Japan gives biggest single nation aid: Jan 17 - The Government of Japan has given Sri Lanka 8 billion rupees, which is equal to 80 million US Dollars. This is the biggest tsunami relief aid yet by any single nation. Japanese Premier Yunichiro Koizumi personally intervened to grant this quantum of aid within 10 days as a special gesture of help, Finance Minister Dr. Sarath Amunugama said.

The Japanese aid could be utilised to purchase essential material and goods to implement the relief and rehabilitation programme of the government. Accordingly these funds will be invested in reviving and improving the fisheries, housing, health, transport, power, education and social welfare sectors on immediate as well as medium term such projects, he said. In addition to the financial aid Japan has also contributed relief material as tents, blankets, power generators, water tanks etc worth 290,000 US Dollars as immediate relief to affected areas, he said

Jaffna civilians flock to US marines: Jan 18 - Hundreds of tsunami -affected civilians in Point Pedro in northern Jaffna came to the Manthikai hospital to seek treatment from four US doctors and other medical personnel who were part of the marine contingent deployed in Sri Lanka, a military official said. He said the LTTE had told civilians not to seek treatment or cooperate with the US marines but hundreds of civilians came. He said the marines first cleaned the hospital before beginning work and there was no time frame for the stay of the marines who would remain in Jaffna as long as they were needed. Some organizations have criticized the role of the US troops and alleged they were in Jaffna to gather intelligence information about the LTTE and its activities. □

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OBITUARIES



Mahadeva, Kamalam beloved wife of (late) Mr. P.V.Mahadeva; daughter of (late) Mr. & Mrs Mohandiram Rasana-yagam; loving mother of (late) Saratha, Rabi (NZ), Raji (Aust), Shantha, Yaso & Prem (all of UK); mother-in-law of Kumara-singham (UK), Marie (NZ), Anna (Aust), Thiruchelvam, Rama-na and Yoga (all of UK); sister of (late) Thananjayan, (late) Kanagaratnam, (late) Thana-palan, (late) Thanaluxmi, Lee-lawathy (UK) and Shanmuga-palan (Sri Lanka); beloved

grandmother of Ramesh (NZ), Rebekha & Rachel (Aust), Kumaran, Sridevi, Murugan, Eason, Uma, Krishika and Rishi (all of UK) passed away in UK on 16th December 2004. The funeral took place on 23rd December in Kent. The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy and assisted them in several ways during the period of great sorrow.

- 1 Bonnington Road, Vinters Park, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5QR, UK. Tel: 01622 755076.



Mr.Muthuvelu Arumu-gam of Karainagar, retired Chief Accountant of Police Head Quarters, Colombo

passed away peacefully in Wimbledon on the 19th of December 2004. He is the beloved husband of Parame-swary, loving father of Arunt-hathy, Yogendran, Nalayini (both of Colombo), Gnan-endran and Balendran; father-in-law of Srikantharajah, Manjula, Ravendran (both of Colombo), Geetha and Nilanthi; grandfather of Lakshmi, Muk-unthan, Pavithra, Nivetha, Sar-ves, Janarthan, Laxshiya, Nitharshan, Nirupa, Ragavan and Prashanthan.

Friends, relatives and members of the Tamil com-

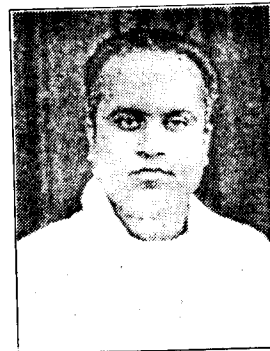
munity paid their last respects to him, at Lola Jones Hall, Tooting on the 29th of Decem-ber and thereafter the crema-tion took place at the Lambeth Crematorium, London SW17.

His family wish to thank all those who attended the fu-neral, sent floral tributes and messages of condolence. The family would also like to thank all those who helped them in numerous ways dur-ing the period of grief.

- 52 Kingsley Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8HF. Tel: 020 8543 2126.

IN MEMORIAM

Third Year Remembrance



In loving memory of Mr. Rasiyah Kandiah, Retired Princi-pal, Kokuvil Ramakrishna Saiva Vidyalyayam and Navatkuli Maha Vidyalyayam who passed away on 21st January 2002.

**A true man should not strive to be good
Nor should he aspire to try his best.
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Fifth Year Remembrance of



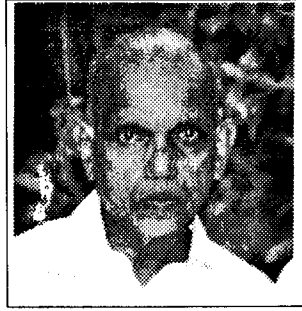
In loving memory of Mrs Sivapackiam Muthukumarasamy who passed away on 8th January 2000.

*Life is the most precious gift that we are given,
A wonderful miracle, a breeze, too swift.
To truly live we must heartily embrace this gift
For every moment is a dream yet to be dreamt,
And every sunrise, a blessing.*

A wonderful woman who truly lived her life, she is now and forever missed and remembered by her loving husband Mr. Muthukumarasamy, children, grandchildren and in-laws.

-2 Raybell Court, Linkfield Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 6QJ

First Year Remembrance



In ever loving memory Mr. Sithamparanathan Vadivetpillai of 45 Chetty Street, Nallur, Jaffna on the first anniversary of his passing away on 6th January 2004.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving children Satchithananthan, Sithamparanathan and Damayanthi; sister Kamaladevy; sons-in-law Elango and Kuheswaran; daughters-in-law Kesari and Uthaya; brother-in-law Kandiah; and grandchildren Sutharshini and Sujeevan

- 120/3 Galle Road, Dehiwela, Sri Lanka.

Fifth Year Remembrance



In ever loving memory of Mr. Gregory Joseph, formerly of Cement Corporation (Kankesanthurai and Puttalam) and of Nigeria on the fifth anniversary of his passing away on January 18, 2000.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Erin, children Dr. Eugene, Enakshi and Hyacinthe; daughter-in-law Dr. Sharmini; son-in-law Paul Wood and daughter-in-law Noeline.

- 338 Meadowood Lane, Vadnais Heights, Minnesota 55127, USA.
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Tenth Anniversary Remembrance



21 June 1931 to 6 February 1995

Nagaretnam Shanmuganathan of Karampan West, Kayts, Jaffna loving husband, father, retired teacher is fondly remembered on the tenth anniversary of his passing away on 6th February 1995 by his wife, Varathaledchumy (Malar); children Sutha, Ambalanath, Priya and Rupa; daughter-in-law Kathy; sons-in-law Greg and Clive and his grandchildren Jasmine, Brianna, Nathan, Trent and Krishnan. We remember the guideline with which he led his life and the legacy he left us by quoting: 'It is not life that matters, but the courage you bring into it'. He lives in us all.



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Anniversary Remembrance



In loving memory of **Mrs Ganeswary Tharmalingam** of Kondavil East, Jaffna on the twelfth anniversary of her passing away on 21st January 1993.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her loving husband Tharmalingam; children Brabalini, Bremjit and Ranjit; son-in-law Dr. W.N.Linganandhan; daughters-in-law Dr. Vani Bremjit and Shamini Ranjit; grandchildren Abhirami, Sathya, Praneeta, Prasheeda, Prashoban, Praveen and Anjana.

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FORTHCOMINGS EVENTS

February

- 2 Feast of the Presentation of Lord Jesus Christ
- 5 Krishna Eekathasi; Feast of St. Agatha
- 6 Pirathosam
- 8 Amavasai; Feast of St. Jerome Emiliani

- 10 Feast of St. Scolastica
- 11 Sathurthi; Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes
- 13 Shashti
- 15 Karthigai
- 19 Sukkla Eekathasi
- 21 Pirathosam; Feast of St. Peter Damian
- 23 Fullmoon; Masi Maham; Feast of St. Polycarp
- 27 Sankadakara Sathurthi

My Home, the Divine Pendant

*Skirted by ocean, cogent and clear
Proudly stands Sri Lanka dear,
In verdant green under sunny shimmer
Hills, valleys, fields in elegant flair.*

*My land is not an Indian tear,
Nor a hanging luscious pear;
Neither 'twas a beastly lair
In fables told eons unclear.*

*Abode of ancestors far and near,
Many a faith they did savour,
Diverse richness their lot to revere
But unity, in all they did ensure.*

*Evil times came upon to bare
My land to terrible times of fear
Bigoted politics ripped us in tear
Nature too had its tragic share.*

*One day, my folks will surely hear
The voice of reason and justice fair
My prayers today for my God's ear:
"Hear me Lord, for my land so dear."*

*My land is not an Indian tear
Nor a hanging luscious pear.
But a divine pendant that adorns a wear
On the Himalayan range heavens afar.*

-Victor Karunairajan

Australian Newsletter

Eelam Tamil Sangam's Muthamil Vizha is an annual event in Melbourne and the most remarkable performance on the occasion was from none other than the winners of the annual oratory and vocal competitions. Muthamil Vizha competitions are held for children living in Australia and competition in short story writing and poetry are open to participants from all over the world.

A fund raiser musical night in aid of the Kunrathu Kumaran Kovil was held in Melbourne. Bharathy Academy in Victoria, an independent educational network pioneered by Mavai Nithiananthan celebrated its tenth anniversary in a grandiose style. Dr A Kandiah's two literary works were ceremoniously launched in Perth.

Alan Carpenter, West Australia's Minister for Education launched "Tamil

Community in Australia", while Mayor Katherine Jackson launched "Hindu Temples in Australia". Tamil Australian Friendship Society celebrated the Tamil Art, Drama & Literature. On the Christmas day, Tamil Rehabilitation Organization together with Eelam Tamil Sangam in Melbourne, Inbathamil Oli 24hour Tamil Radio in Sydney organised mammoth nine hour fundraising on radio in aid of the Pre-School Project in the North and East Sydney Tamil Catholic Association celebrated a cultural evening.

Pillayar Kathai as well as Thiruvembavai was observed in most of the temples across Australia with apt religious ceremonies. Homebush Study Centre & Mt Druit Tamil Study Centre in Sydney and Glen Waverley Tamil School in Melbourne conducted their annual dinner.

No doubt, the death and incomprehensible destruction caused by Tsunami sent shock waves around the globe. Tamils in Australia like their brethren

elsewhere were particularly at pains to learn the devastation caused in the North and East of Sri Lanka, a region that endured enormous sufferings during the last several decades as a result of hostilities and more recently due to downpour and floods. Tamil Rehabilitation Organization together with Tamil Coordinating Committee and Tamil Community Groups are gearing up a massive fundraising campaign across Australia in support of Tsunami victims in North and East. Cloths, Consumables etc. are also being organised for distribution in the affected areas. People gathered around Australia to commemorate the victims of Tsunami and the tributes were overwhelming. Kokila Mahendran, an eminent literary personality was touring Australia and while addressing a gathering in Melbourne she painfully described the psychological predicament of ordinary people in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

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Shri Kadirgama Kanda Kuravanji



On the 30th October 2004, a unique dance drama - Kadirgama Kanda Kuravanji - by the late Yalpanam Brahma-Sri N Veeramani Iyer was staged at the Logan Hall, London to a packed audience, who were captivated by the beauty and elegance of his composition portrayed in dance form by the Bharatanatyam students of Guru Prakash Yadagudde of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. This dance drama is one of many composed by the great Veeramani Iyer. Colourful imagination, rhythmic lyrics and brilliant story-telling are highlights of all his compositions. In this composition, we are taken to Kadirgamam, a holy place in Sri Lanka, where an ancient temple of Lord Kanda (or Muruga), reputed to have been built some 2500 years ago, is situated. The story depicts the grace of Lord Muruga and the fortunes of Atmavalli, the princess of the forest, whose boundless devotion and love for Lord Muruga initially set her in the path of anguish, despair and ridicule but finally joy and marriage.

The curtain opened to a pushpanjali of soothing music competing with beautiful abhinaya and aduvus of many styles. The formations of the dance were exceptionally smooth and well executed as they changed regularly. The dancers numbering eight were so graceful in their movements blending in beautifully with the music. Even after the piece was completed, the unforgettable melody and rhythm seemed to be still lingering on your mind. The stage transformed without curtain, as it did throughout the drama, to give us an introduction to Lord Muruga. The dancers vividly described the story of his birth - how Lord Siva emitted six sparks from his third eye, which after falling in a lake became six babies. When Goddess Parvati gathered these six babies into her arms, their bodies merged into one powerful and attractive god we refer to as Lord Muruga. The dancers co-ordinated very skilfully with each other and took advantage of the length and breadth of the large stage. The formation at the end of this piece was particularly elegant. The dancers progressively worked into single file and then instantly transformed to different poses to portray Lord Muruga holding different objects in his arms, representing different virtues.

The setting changed effortlessly for us to meet Atmavalli, the princess of the forest. She asks, "Who is the handsome one with attractive eyes riding on the peacock?" the one who has captured her heart. She becomes embarrassed by being teased by her friends. This sequence was packed with captivating abhinaya. We see Atmavalli playing a ball game with her friends where she displays great skills. While throwing it to each other they suddenly lose the ball, and as they go searching in different directions, Atmavalli suddenly stops, spotting Lord Muruga watching them play from one corner. The brilliance of the choreography is so convincing that you actually imagine the ball being there, and the friends playing with it watched over by Lord Muruga.

The stage transforms, we now seem to be travelling through a realistic forest, where we see peacocks dancing in one spot, deers jumping and joyfully playing around and a snake slithering across the floor towards a different part of the forest. The snake dance was especially amazing as it was full of cartwheels, the splits, back flips and other spectacular moves. The colourful costumes enhanced greatly the postures displayed by dancers as birds and the animals. Moving on through the forest, we find Atmavalli telling her sakhis about the sweet dreams about Lord Muruga. Her friends continue to tease her and question how the mighty Lord Muruga who was a teacher to his father could be a match for her. Her friends taunt how his mother transforms into ferocious Kali; his father performs vigorous dance raising one leg and travelling on a bull; his brother has a big belly and cannot walk properly; his uncle Lord Krishna, the one who steals butter from Gopis. Is this the kind of family you want to be married into? - they ask. The lyrics were harmonious, the scene was very enjoyable and the dancers' expressions were outstanding. A solo performance by Atmavalli follows, in which she expresses the feelings of her inner most heart. The absence from Lord Muruga has led her to depression. She is angry with the moon, birds and animals because they are not helpful in her cause of finding Lord Muruga. The creativity displayed in the choreography gave an immense boost to this scene. The abhinaya expressed by the dancer was so persuasive that our hearts almost touched the feeling of Atmavalli. A contrasting scene followed announcing the arrival of kuratti or gypsy, one who will tell your fortune and then ask for money. Kuratti was portrayed as a cheerful character, who seemed to start laughter with her variable attitudes and moves. She comes to Atmavalli to read her palm and tells her good things about her fate and that she would be with Lord Muruga. Atmavalli was overwhelmed and showers kuratti with necklaces and bangles. The Kuratti dance was excellent to watch, which added some light-heartedness to the drama.

The split stage at the back made way for a procession of Lord Muruga and his entourage, and was followed by the Kavadi dance, where the devotees carry a pole mounted shrine decorated with palm leaves, peacock feathers and flowers. This symbolic and ecstatic trance-inducing dance ritual, where the devotees endure physical hardship and pain to seek forgiveness and mercy, contained many complex movements of the knees and feet. The final item was the Tillana portraying the marriage of Lord Muruga and Atmavalli. The music gathered momentum and the dancers kept up their unrelenting display of dazzling poses and scintillating footwork. The dance reached the climax and ended with a beautiful tableau of Lord Muruga and Atmavalli with animals of the forest, and all the people praying with overwhelming devotion. It was a magnificent sight.

The music was composed by Rajkumar Bharati, the great-grandson of Mahakavi Subrahmanya Bharatiar, a creative writer, philosopher and a great prophet of immense sharpness. Bharatiar was also one of the most prominent leaders of the India independence movement in South India. The success of this dance-drama can be attributed to many elements that fused together on the day. The story-line, close to the heart of many people was colourfully composed and delivered with soothing music and outstanding choreography. Although music for the dance was pre-recorded, the stage never lacked liveliness. The dancers achieved near perfection in their display of foot rhythm, sculptural poses and graceful movements of arms and body. The costumes were lively and blended well with each character. The stage decor as well as the lighting was just apt to suit the theme. To conclude, it was a memorable evening, I really enjoyed the performance, and have greatly benefited by being present.

By Lakshmi Kuhendran (Age 14)
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

M.S. Subbulakshmi passes away, aged 88



India mourns the exit of a legend, their doyen of Carnatic Music

We regret to announce the passing away of Bharata Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi, legendary Carnatic musician in Chennai on 17 December 2004. She was 88 and merges into the music of eternity.

She was a nightingale of Carnatic Music, an angel without parallel, epitome of bhakti expressing with the

grandeur of the music, her humility, her simplicity, her humane nature and other numerous tributes that she was not merely a musician but a devotee ordained by divine decree. Her mesmerising music flowed into the hearts, senses and minds of millions of rasikas from the age of 10. Queen of music, a musical

Queen of music, a musical genius, songbird of spring time, a divine being were the emotional outpourings of devoted rasikas.

Over seven decades, three generations of music lovers have experienced the same exaltation in Madurai Shanmugavadivu Subbulakshmi popularly known as M.S.'s vocal music. They have seen her Goddess incarnate. She always reached out instead of sinking into the elitist classicism of the purists. She sang in ten languages and was a stickler for perfect enunciation, always checking and re-checking the diction before taking the stage. Her art was beautiful, sublime, serene, aesthetic, humorous, full of bhava and her music always reflected a myriad of moods – joy, contemplation, anguish, acquiescence but mostly surrender to his almighty. Her repertoire was prodigious, full of songs of every genre high classical, devotional folk music, bhajans in Hindi, abhangs in Marathi verses and many more.

She was born in Madurai, Tamil Nadu on September 16, 1916 to Subramaniya Iyar and Shanmugavadivu, her brother Sakthivel and sister Vadivambal grew up in an environment of classical music. Her mother was an established veena player, her brother played the mridangam and the grandmother was a well-known violinist. The nadaswaram players on the temple procession stopped by Shanmugavadivu's house and played their carnatic music.

In 1930 Madras (Chennai) became the capital of carnatic music. Shanmugavadivu shifted quarters living in a garage in Georgetown trying to establish M.S.'s musical

career. In 1940 she married Thyagaraja Sathasivam a well-known S.Indian freedom fighter of the Gandhi-Nehru era. It was the meeting of the minds. Her father was a lawyer living in an adjacent street and was exceedingly fond of his Rajatippa (princess). She was made to ride with him in the open carriage bearing the portrait of Lord Rama through the streets on the day he offered bhajanai to the deity. It is he who gave Kunjamma, as M.S. was called by those close to her, the serene features and made her see that bhakti was everything. Her father had shown her the ardour of devotional singing.

M.S. was initiated into music by her mother Shanmugavadivu and appeared on stage at the age of 13. She cut her first disc at the age of 10 and was regarded as a child prodigy. In a career spanning more than six decades M.S. accomplished more than anyone in her generation to enrich and popularise India's music tradition. She was the only carnatic musician who was liked and widely admired in North India as well where Hindustani music displaying Arabic and

Iranian influences is practised.

Wherever there is music, melody and modulation she will live on, said Balamurali Krishna, the famed vocalist. D K Pattamal and M L Vasanthakumari of the famous trio of her time who made inroads into the essentially male dominated carnatic music became close friends of her at that time and D.K.P mourned the loss of a towering fellow musician.

M.S. sang in ten languages but never one word without internalising its meaning. She strode like a colossus in the world of Indian classical music and for 80 of her 88 years it had been sadhana with music. And her repertoire spanned pure classical music, light music, soulful bhajans and slokas from the scriptures. How does one describe her music – sublime, serene, harmonious, mellifluous, impressive. None of these superlatives would adequately portray or do justice to her singing that helped a rasika enjoy the bliss of communion with the Lord. The benefit of guidance from a Guru of the distinction of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyar must have been due to the divine favour bestowed on her by the Lord of wisdom and learning. It should be emphasised that she had no parallel in the firmament of carnatic music in terms of achievement, monumental popularity, charisma and as a saviour of noble courses. Her revered Guru taking her into deep raga and kriti realised her to be the best to revive the forgotten 72 melragamalika which demands a hair's breath swara precision. A life long learner until the last concert she acquired compositions in several languages from a host of well known musicians and composers including Piano Vydyanathan who set to music Vaishnava Janato and Hari Com Haro for Gandhi. Siddeswari Devi who spent six months with M.S. in Kalgi gardens, taught her tumri, bhajan and even Chota Kayal. Rousing nationalist songs were part of her repertoire. Both M.S. and Sathasivam remained close to the national leaders from the Gandhi – Nerhu era.

Semmangudi Srinivas Iyer sharing his thoughts with Gowri Narayanan, writer, in 1986: "Shanmugavadivu M.S.'s mother a good veena player gave concerts with M.S. accompanying her in vocal. The voice and veena made an agreeable blend. M.S. was 12 to 13 years old at that time. M.S. became popular after cutting records with HMV. At that time there was N.C. Vasanthakokilam another vocalist who had a similar voice to M.S. People often mistook one for the other. It was difficult to weigh them on scales to determine which voice was better. N.C. Vasanthakokilam died young. However M.S. had a good voice with clarity, sharpness, sruti alignment and the rare attribute sounding strong and clear at any distance. M.S. is a gnanavasti (Cognoscenti) who relishes what she sings. Later she went into the Bakhti tract. This is what her husband wanted and whole world wanted but now as then she is capable of high serious classicism. Technically said her guru among the women of her times she was the best tanam exponent. Naturally isn't her a Vainika Vamsham (veena heritage). Mind you tanam is not easy for women. It needs strong powerful enunciation which she had. Her chauka kala (slow) niraval is excellent. She has the unusual reach in her vaksuddam (pure diction) which is rare among musicians. It is not acquired through effort but is a gift from Devi.

One has to listen to her songs in the film Sakuntali. Her duet with G.N. Balasubramaniam another master vocalist was delightful. So is her "Bavayami Gopalabalam" in Yamamkalyani. It can move you. So is her "Krishna nee beggane". Subbulakshmi's voice merges into the sruthi inseparably. All reflect continuity of thought and form. It is true Sathasivam, her husband controlled her in everyway and control is not easy on creativity. He was an intelligent man and ensured M.S. reached the peak and stayed there.

Timeless and priceless of M.S.'s music would always remain in the chapter of Indian music. The Lord most certainly has lived in the sanctum sanctorium of Sangitha Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi's heart.

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