

# Tsunami toll feared

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was approaching 150,000, with a third or more of them believed to be children.

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

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

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

## FLOODS IN SRI LANKA PROMPT EVACUATIONS

Flash floods in eastern Sri Lanka on Yesterday forced the evacuation of 2,000 people from low-lying areas already affected by the tsunami, officials said. At least 15 camps sheltering some 30,000 tsunami survivors were hit by flash floods and evacuated in Sri Lanka's eastern district of Ampara, a regional official said.

Massive rains dumped 330 millimetres of water overnight inundating the tsunami-devastated coastal region and crippled all relief operations. Pounding rain drenched the wrecked city of Banda Aceh and aftershocks shook the area yesterday, adding to the misery of homeless earthquake and tsunami survivors and heightening fears of waterborne diseases.

## QUAKE ROCKS SUMATRA

An earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale struck under the sea off Indonesia's Sumatra Islands on Yesterday afternoon, the State Seismological Bureau of China said here.

The tremor took place at 0825 GMT, about 410 kilometres (240 miles) from the epicentre of last Sunday's earthquake, which measured 9.0 on the Richter scale and unleashed tsunamis which killed at least 125,000 people around Asia.

The tremor happened at 5.2 degrees north latitude and 92.3 degrees east longitude, Xinhua news agency, citing the bureau, reported.

The Hong Kong Observatory reported a "severe earthquake" at 0822 GMT, with an estimated magnitude of 6.5 on the Richter Scale, with its epicentre 350 kilometres west of Banda Aceh.

## AID TOPS \$1B

Aid pledges for Asia's tsunami victims topped 1.1 billion dollars yesterday on a tide of New Year sympathy, but the United Nations warned it would take weeks for help to reach many survivors.

While the confirmed death toll from the catastrophe edged towards 126,000, relief operations were stalled by flash floods that submerged at least 15 camps in Sri Lanka and worst-hit Indonesia ordered aid to be expedited to isolated areas.

"Immediately channel this aid," Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono told soldiers as he surveyed a major backlog of aid that has built up at the airport in Banda Aceh, the nearly levelled capital of Aceh province.

Washington raised its aid tenfold on Friday to \$350 million (182 million pounds), bringing global emergency relief pledges to \$1.36 billion.

President Bush, under pressure over the pace and scale of American aid to Asian tsunami victims, abruptly raised the US contribution to \$350 million on Friday.

The White House suggested US assistance could rise still higher after a delegation headed by Secretary of State Colin Powell tours devastated areas next week and reports back to the president on the needs of an estimated 5 million tsunami survivors.

"The disaster around the Indian Ocean continues to grow," Bush said in a statement that emphasised US intentions to co-ordinate immediate humanitarian relief to Asia through an international coalition including India, Japan and Australia.

"Our contributions will continue to be revised as the full effects of this terrible tragedy become clearer," said the statement released by the White House while Bush vacationed at his ranch in Crawford, Texas.

Helicopters from the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier ferried relief supplies on Yesterday to Sumatra, an Indonesian island the size of Florida, where aid workers have encountered unimaginable scenes of devastation.

Japan increased its pledge of aid from \$30 million to \$500 million, the largest single nation donation yet. Britain has pledged \$95 million, Sweden \$75 million and Spain \$68 million.

With more than 80,000 confirmed deaths, Indonesia was the hardest hit after a 9.0-magnitude earthquake less than 150 km (95 miles) off the northern tip of Sumatra triggered a tsunami that ripped across the Indian Ocean to Africa.

Officials said the Indonesian figure may soar past 100,000. Sri Lanka has reported more than 28,500 deaths and India nearly 12,000.

Trying to understand the misery bewildered many.

"The scale of human tragedy in South Asia is beyond our ability to characterise," said Thomas Tighe, head of US aid group Direct Relief

International.

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

**CANDLES AND WHITE ROSES**  
People held candles and white roses on Thailand's tsunami-hit island of Phuket at midnight on New Year's Eve, tearfully embracing as they grieved.

Celebrations -- an attempt to give life back some kind of normality -- stopped and partygoers lit incense sticks. The mournful Elton John song "Candle in the Wind" echoed through the resort.

Australia led the world in a global minute of silence, many cities cancelled festivities and trees on Paris's grand Champs Elysees, focal point of celebrations, were shrouded in black.

European tourists make up most of more than 2,200 foreigners killed in the disaster. Several thousand more were missing.

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

Hundreds of thousands sheltered in makeshift tent camps around the Indian Ocean. Thirteen countries were hit by the tsunami.

"These are clothes given to us by rich people. They came last night," said Zulkifli, a 65-year-old plantation worker wearing a sarong as he gleefully tried on a coat at a refugee centre in Banda Aceh in north Sumatra.

Much of the city of 400,000 people was levelled. Quake aftershocks have become a daily event since Sunday and they rattled homes and shelters overnight, sending many people scurrying outside into early morning rain.

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

## AIRPORT LOGJAMS

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

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

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

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

US Secretary of State Colin Powell will tour devastated areas next week.

"The need is great and not just for immediate relief but for long-term reconstruction, rehabilitation, family support, economic support that's going to be needed for these countries to get back on their feet," Powell told reporters in New York.

Amid all the heartache were tales of miraculous survival.

A woman from an endangered tribe in India's Andaman and Nicobar islands survived for three days after the tsunami hit by clinging to a tree and eating its leaves. The Times of India reported.

"One by one, my uncles, aunts, all the children, went past me. I was hanging from one branch, like a bat, and the tree was rocking," said Brendina, a 28-year-old Jarawa tribal woman from badly-devastated Car Nicobar island where thousands are thought to have died.

## KHALEDA MOURNS BRITISH DEATHS

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed deepest sympathies and condolences to the British Prime Minister Tony Blair for the loss of lives of many Britons in the tidal surge from Tsunami in South Asia and South East Asia.

In a message to the British prime minister yesterday she said, "I am deeply grieved to learn that many Britons have lost their lives and many are still missing in the tidal surge that resulted from Tsunami in South Asia and South East Asia."

(Reuters, AFP, AP, BSS)

## 2 navy ships

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tsunami rescue operations and relief activities in the affected areas of the two countries.

Named the BNS Turag and the BNS Sangu, the two ships will bring much needed rescue equipment, medicine and relief goods to the two countries, a press release of Inter Service Public Relations said yesterday.

This latest effort is part of an ongoing rescue operation dubbed 'Operation SAARC Bandhan,' which has already dispatched to Sri Lanka and the Maldives two armed forces teams comprising 40 and 34 personnel respectively, the press release said.

In total, the two armed forces teams comprising 96 and 61 personnel respectively are being sent in phases, as part of the government's decision to assist the affected countries, the press release noted.

## Missing docs

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Yaad and the then Soronjai UP chairman and BNP leader Moiz Mollah raped a 19-year-old woman in Tanore in April 1988.

Reportedly bribed by the rapists, victim's uncle late Sayed Ali Satari lodged a case with Tanore Police Station accusing one Muhammad Ali. Police too gave charge sheet accusing Ali of committing the rape. But later as the concerned tribunal summoned the victim to testify she contradicted the charge sheet and First Information Report. The tribunal then ordered further investigation. A supplementary charge sheet held the four BNP men guilty.

The rapists had challenged the tribunal order for further investigation in HC. In August 1995, the HC ruled in favour of further investigation, but the HC order went missing from judicial section under Rajshahi Collectorate delaying the legal proceedings for nine long years.

Another copy of the HC order reached Rajshahi on December 1 last year following the victim's petition.

Police nabbed Yaad Ali and Omar Ali, two of the four accused, following a home ministry directive on December 16 after The Daily Star published a report on the anomalies on December 13.

## PM asks JCD

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leadership of the country.

The prime minister inaugurated the function by hoisting national flag and releasing pigeons.

Party song 'Prothom Bangladesh' Amar, Shesh Bangladesh' was rendered as the prime minister appeared on the dais.

Appreciating the present peaceful co-existence among various student organisations on the campus, she said this camaraderie will have to be sustained-- and as the biggest organisation the quest of ensuring this lies with the JCD.

She regretted that the situation was reverse when her party was in the opposition and the then ruling party's student front forcefully dominated campuses and halls.

JCD President Shahabuddin Laltu presided over the function conducted by its General Secretary Azizul Bari Helal.

Our DU Correspondent adds: A new central committee of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was formed yesterday with Azizul Bari Helal and Shafiu Bari Babu as president and general secretary.

The names of the other member of the committee will be announced later, a press release of the BNP said.

## Major reshuffle

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The post of secretary to this ministry fell vacant following retirement of Lutfar Rahman Chowdhury, who went on LPR on December 31.

Additional Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture Abdul Aziz has been made Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Water Resources.

Secretary in-charge of the Water Resources Ministry Dr Omar Faruq Khan has been made secretary in-charge of Parliament Secretariat.

The post of parliament secretary fell vacant with the expiry of Khandaker Fazlur Rahman's contract period on December 31.

Secretary in-charge of Primary and Mass Education Rafiqul Islam has been transferred to the Ministry of Food, Disaster Management and Relief while Secretary in-charge of the Ministry of Food, Disaster Management and Relief Siddiqur Rahman to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.

## Saarc summit

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have no problem with the summit being held in February. He added that India prefers it in the middle of the next month and other member states have no reservations either about the proposed timing.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia passed Dhaka's recommendations to Pakistan for holding the postponed summit between February 7 and 10 to give adequate time for Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives to recover from the devastating tidal waves.

The foreign minister said Khaleda yesterday discussed with her Pakistani counterpart Shawkat Aziz the process of fixing the date for the summit when he called her. Pakistan will formally propose the dates before the member states.

The summit was originally scheduled for January 9-11, but postponed due to the December 26 tidal waves that hit the coastlines of the three Saarc member states.

Morshed said Pakistan would make the decision upon detailed consultations with the other South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) member states, especially the three affected states.

"It (summit) should not remain in uncertainty," said Morshed and termed the second week of February "an ideal time." "We will not insist or force ourselves, but 7, 8 or 9 February will be fair enough."

Morshed added that the other member states had underscored the importance of holding the summit, as they have all recognised Saarc to be important.

# Giant of the deep falls

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Rubaiyat Mansur of the Guide Tours, who took part in a whale survey in the Bay of Bengal back in February, guessed, "The whale probably got stuck in a fishing net and drowned. It seems, its pectoral fins had been cut off to release the animal."

About the missing tail fin, Rubaiyat had something else to say, "We have heard of a fisherman in Bagherat who is offering to sell a whale's tail fin for 10,000 taka."

Without the tail and the fins, it was hard to pinpoint what kind of a whale it is. However, Rubaiyat surmised it might be a Bryde's Whale. "But the coloration under the lower jaw is not supposed to be black, it should be white," he added.

The colour of the carcass most likely has changed, as it died quite sometime ago. For an accurate identification, the skeleton has to be measured or a DNA test done.

Most of the 80-plus known species of whales show up in the list of endangered species. Scientists still know very little about the whales' ways of living and the impact of human activities on them. It is one of the reasons why a group of environmental organisations launched a world-wide survey of whales two years ago.

The first such survey in the Bay took place in February last, jointly sponsored by Wildlife

Conservation Society, Convention on Migratory Species and Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

The surveyors spotted a few species of whales, including the Bryde's, of the family known as Rorquals in a deep-sea canyon called Swatch-of-no-Ground in the western part of Bangladesh's Bay of Bengal, Rubaiyat said. They had to abandon their plan to conduct further surveys in the western part of the Bay, as India refused them the permission, he added.

Although the Bay of Bengal is not known as a whale migration route, the latest research reveals that the earth's biggest mammal does pass by this region. But increased human activities in the Bay are now posing threats to this giant.

The 2002 report of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on dolphins and whales says: Synthetic offshore fishing net, as the stranded whale demonstrates, will directly lead to the mammal's death. Indirectly, the extensive industrial fishery will harm the ocean giants, as it yearly extracts tonnes of non-target species, which are -- afterwards -- missing in the food chain.

The pollution, both environmental and acoustic, will affect the whale's health, reproductive abilities and sense of orientation. This, again, may lead to the ocean mammals' stranding.

## Charge sheet

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The charge-sheeted accused include former chief whip and district AL Secretary Abul Hasanat Abdullah and Bangladesh Chhatra League city unit's former president Md Jasimuddin.

Mashiul Alam Sentu, president of city unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), filed the case on January 6, 2002. He accused the AL leaders and activists of looting over Tk 2 lakh from his house, setting fire to it and beating up a driver of the fire brigade on May 26, 2000.

When asked, Sentu told The Daily Star that he did not dare file a case immediately after the incident as the AL was in power.

## French firm

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and staged demonstration. They kept the company project manager's office under siege for two hours.

"Our project completed a week ago, we don't have any employees now," Grants Project Manager Claudio Garcia told The Daily Star over telephone last night.

He said he cannot recall how many people worked for his company. "For further information, you may talk to our head office," he said declining to give details.

Grants, which works for various oil and gas companies including Petrobranga started working in the four districts in March last year for seismic survey. The findings will be handed over to Cairn for oil and gas exploration in these areas.

The company had hired 40 public relations officer, two safety officers, 10 assistant safety officer, and three medical officers and officers to run the management and accounts.

It also hired technical crew as foreman, recording officer, drilling foreman, surveyor, co-ordinator and other staff. In total there were 1,500 operations crew and 200 officers and employees.

"Although as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention we are supposed to work eight hours a day, the company forced us to work for 12 hours from 8:00am to 8:00pm," says crew Abul Kalam.

The employees say the company in most cases did not even allow them to enjoy weekly holidays.

"They did not serve us any notice before firing us," said a medical officer. "We came to work this morning and found ourselves jobless."

An official of Cairn last night claimed ignorance about the demonstration in front of Grants local office or the termination of its staff.

## Witness says

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and found them running. Later, he came to know that Ahsanullah Master and Ratan were killed and the people whom he just saw running, had committed the offence, the witness said.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 recorded statement of the witness. Later defence lawyers cross-examined Zakir. The court fixed today for the next hearing of the case.

Of the 30 accused in the case, 12 were present. Kabir Hossain, Pappu, Nurul Amin and Ayub are out on bail, while Dipu and 17 others are still at large.

Special Public Prosecutor Abdul Latif Talukder and advocates Mohammad Ali, Mahub Ahmed, M Sajwar Hossain, Sahara Khatun and Momtazuddin Mehedi appeared for the state. Advocates ABM Sharfuiddin Khan Mukul, Nazrul Islam, Jasim Uddin, Sanaullah Miah and Emdadul Haq Lal defended the accused.

# Joy still thinks over joining active politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's son Sajib Wajed Joy has said he is yet to decide whether he will join the active politics.

"Have not yet decided, but I am still thinking about the matter. My mother is now at the helm of politics and I am by her side," he told reporters at the National Memorial at Savar, which he visited along with his wife Christine amid a tight police escort.

They placed wreaths at the National Memorial in honour of the martyrs of the War of Independence.

Replying to a query about the widespread speculation that he would join politics soon, Joy said, "I will do everything for establishing democracy and the ideals of my maternal grandfather (Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman)."

Joy and his US-born wife made the visit yesterday after cancellation of their tours of Tungipara and Rangpur, the homes of Joy's maternal and paternal grandfathers, on security reasons.

A large number of leaders and activists of local Awami League and its front organisations gathered on the National Memorial premises to welcome the couple.

Senior leaders of Awami Jubo League, Chhatra League, Krishok League, Sechhashebak League and Jubo Mahila League accompanied Joy and his wife during the visit.

Later, the couple visited the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) in Savar and exchanged New Year's greetings with the physically challenged. Centre's Co-ordinator Valerie Taylor welcomed Joy and Christine.

## CHIEF'S KILLING BY RAB

## PBCP kills 1 for leaking information

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alliance government that came to power failed to take it seriously.

After three years, Delhi has raised the issue again. On Tuesday, the Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka called on the communications minister and suggested restoration of the agreement.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, recently returned from India, told journalists that Bangladesh might give transit to India by rail instead of by road.

Bangladesh railway officials, meanwhile, do not see any problem in introducing passenger services between the two important cities as the necessary infrastructure for it already exists.

"The goods carrying trains often come inside Bangladesh from India through Darshana border in Kushtia, so there is no problem in running the service through this border," said a high official of Bangladesh rail way.

The passengers who often go to Kolkata for medical treatment would feel much more comfortable on a train journey instead of a road journey, he pointed out.

# Bloodshed greets

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denouncing the polls highlighted the stark difference in the paths Iraq could venture down over the coming year.

In a somber beginning to the New Year, 15 ambulances, their sirens silent, one carrying a black banner, drove through western Baghdad, with the corpse of an ambulance driver struck down Friday when a random bullet whizzed into his vehicle.

Sabih Katta had been traveling central Baghdad's treacherous Haifa street to pick up injured Iraqis from a shoot-out when he, himself, was shot dead, his mourning colleagues told AFP Saturday.

He had already whisked away three injured children to Karkh hospital before returning to the deadly street, a haven of insurgents, one final time.

The middle-aged men carried Katta's plain wooden coffin to the cemetery, some of them crying and others shouting "God is Great" as they buried their fallen colleague.

Violence kept up its blistering pace in the Sunni Muslim heartland, north and west of Baghdad, the breeding ground of former regime loyalists, Islamists and criminals said to be driving the insurgency forward.

Two national guardsmen were killed and six wounded in a mortar strike at 6:00 am (0300 GMT) on their base in Isaki, 20 kilometres south of Samarra, Captin Mohamed Qassem of the national guard told AFP.

Near the oil refinery town of Baiji, one Iraqi civilian was killed and four others wounded, including a woman and a child, when insurgents and national guards-

## Minor tremor

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the magnitude of the quake at 3.56 on the Richter scale at 44 seconds past 12:32 p.m. yesterday, with its epicentre some 101 kilometres away, said an on-duty meteorologist at the met office seeking anonymity.

The shock lasted for 12 seconds, he said.

"With the lone observatory station, we can at best determine the distance of the quake's epicentre but we need at least three observatories to determine the direction or the location of the epicentre," he said.

Asked whether the tremor has any correlation with the Sumatra quake of December 26, the meteorologist said it is very difficult to determine.

Samarendra Karmaker, another quake expert and deputy director of the met office, said the two quakes are unrelated. "The tremor is unlikely to have a correlation with the devastating Tsunami, as the latter occurred several days ago," he said.

A number of tremors may occur before and after a severe earthquake, but it is difficult to ascertain whether the present one has any correlation with the recent Tsunami, said another deputy director of the met office seeking anonymity. He added the yesterday's earthquake might have been caused by any of number of geological factors.