



PHOTO: AFP  
An Indonesian policeman stands in front of the ruins of Ambacang hotel as the rubble is searched for victims in the Sumatran city of Padang yesterday. Inset photo shows Ratna Kurnia Sari, the lucky Indonesian woman who was rescued Friday, being taken out from the rubble of a collapsed building in the Sumatran city.

## Indonesian rescuers plead for equipment

AFP, Padang

Rescuers on the ground on the quake-ravaged Indonesian island of Sumatra said they lacked basic equipment and sniffer dogs yesterday as governments around the world pledged assistance.

As foreign rescue teams began trickling into Padang city to help pull survivors from the wreckage, those who had been struggling through the rubble since Wednesday's quake said they were still desperately short of equipment.

"We need urgently electric cutters and medium-sized excavators to remove the debris," Red Cross official Febi Dwirahmadi told AFP at the site of a collapsed school.

Indonesian Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari appealed for foreign help in digging out thousands believed trapped on Sumatra's western coast from the 7.6-magnitude quake and a series of powerful aftershocks.

The official government toll from the disaster is 777 dead, while the UN put the figure at 1,100. Those numbers are expected to rise.

"We don't have proper equipment. We don't even have dogs," said Suryadi Soedarmo, a surgeon from an emergency ambulance service in the capital Jakarta, who arrived with 10 people trained by US experts on how to enter collapsed structures.

"The command and control is also bad. It will jeopardise our rescue efforts," he told AFP.

The United States pledged 300,000 dollars in immediate aid, plus another three million dollars, as US President Barack Obama said he was "deeply moved" by the huge earthquake in the country where he spent his childhood.

"I know that the Indonesian people are strong and resilient and have the heart to overcome this challenge," Obama said.

A Swiss team of about 120 rescue workers was already on the ground Friday, bringing a dozen much-needed sniffer dogs which are seen as vital for locating survivors.

"Our team will operate at 4:00 pm (0600 GMT). We're here now for reconnaissance purposes. We're taking notes of the damage," the deputy head of the team

Matthias Pfister said.

Efforts to organise a full-scale rescue operation were also being hampered by blocked roads, broken power lines, and patchy communication networks. Some areas remained inaccessible to emergency services.

"From the aerial assessments carried out yesterday, the feedback is, yes Padang city and environs are bad, but once you go outside into the surrounding rural areas, the situation is very seriously grave," said Christine South of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society.

"There was talk of complete devastation of some villages, 100 percent devastation, and 50 percent in others," South, the federation's operations coordinator for Indonesia, told journalists in Geneva.

Oxfam's local humanitarian director, Sebastien Fesneau, said it was difficult to gauge the full scale of the disaster.

"Not knowing the extent is our biggest challenge. Some are comparing this with the Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006. There were more than 20,000 people injured and 300,000 families affected," he said.

## Teenager buried by quake rescued after 40 hours

AP, Padang

Rescuers pulled a teenager alive from her collapsed college about 40 hours after a powerful earthquake devastated western Indonesia, while elsewhere they heard cries for help yesterday from people trapped under a collapsed hotel.

The rare success reinvigorated frantic efforts to find thousands of people still missing after Wednesday's 7.6-magnitude quake that toppled hundreds of buildings in Sumatra, a heavily populated island in this impoverished nation where natural disasters are common.

The official death toll stood

at 715, the Health Ministry's crisis centre chief Rustam Pakaya told The Associated Press. One UN estimate said as many as 1,100 may have died.

Rustam said more than 2,000 people were injured and "thousands" missing based on reports from relatives, though he could not put a firm number yet on the missing.

Amid the grim landscape, rescuers found a reason to cheer: Ratna Kurniasari Virgo, 19, an English major sophomore, was found alive under the rubble of her college, the Foreign Language School of Prayoga. A conscious Virgo was pulled out Friday morning, 40 hours after the quake hit Sumatra at 5:15 p.m. Wednesday.

## Hamas tape shows 'healthy' Shalit

Israel swaps prisoners for video of captive soldier

BBC ONLINE

An Israeli soldier held by Hamas in Gaza for three years appears healthy in a video handed over to the Israeli authorities, officials say.

Gilad Shalit appeared in the video with trimmed hair holding a paper dated 14 September, Israel's Channel 10 said.

Israel has released 19 female Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the video.

Eighteen of the prisoners were handed over in the West

Bank on Friday and another was released in Gaza.

The prisoners were not to be freed until officials had seen the video.

Israeli radio reported that the country's chief of staff, Gabi Ashkenazi, viewed the tape before it was delivered to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

These would be the first images seen of the 23-year-old since he was captured by Hamas militants three years ago.

## Asia needs to boost disaster prevention: UN body

AFP, Geneva

More investment in prevention is needed in disaster-prone Asia, a UN body said Friday, as the battered region struggled with an onslaught of deadly storms, earthquakes and a tsunami.

The UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction underlined that the continent was highly exposed with its potentially deadly combination of earthquakes and extreme weather events amplified by climate change as well as population growth.

"The tragic deaths in Indonesia, American Samoa, the independent state of Samoa, Philippines and Vietnam highlight the need for governments to invest more in mitigation and prevention measures and early warning mechanisms," the ISDR said in a statement.

They needed to ensure that "all countries can be safer against more frequent and severe weather-related events and earthquakes," it added.

In the Philippines, President Gloria Arroyo put the entire nation under a "state of calamity," as millions of people braced for fast approaching Typhoon Parma, with gusts of 230 kilometres (145 miles) an hour.



PHOTO: AFP  
Residents ride on makeshift rafts as they go along with their daily business in the town of Taytay, Rizal province east of Manila yesterday. President Gloria Arroyo on Friday placed the entire Philippines under a "state of calamity," as a powerful typhoon threatened more devastation following deadly floods.

## 76 die in flash floods in southern India

AFP, Bangalore

Flash floods and heavy rains sweeping southern India have killed at least 76 people over the past 72 hours, officials said yesterday.

Sixty died in Karnataka state and 16 were killed in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, officials said.

There has been "incessant rainfall," RP Jagdish, a senior Karnataka government aide, told AFP by telephone.

Army troops and air force helicopters were rescuing marooned villagers and distributing food packets and

medical aid in areas cut off by flood waters.

"At least 25 villages are inundated and standing crops are completely destroyed," Andhra Pradesh disaster management officer YRV Sharma told AFP.

Authorities were shifting hundreds of people living in low-lying areas to school buildings and temples on higher ground.

The monsoon season, which began in June, withdraws from the Indian sub-continent by the end of September.

## Scientists find path to fountain of youth

AFP, Washington

The fountain of youth may exist after all, as a study showed Thursday that scientists have discovered means to extend the lifespan of mice and primates.

The key to eternal -- or at least prolonged -- youth lies in genetic manipulation that mimics the health benefits of reducing calorie intake, suggesting that aging and age-related diseases can be treated.

Scientists from the

Institute of Healthy Ageing at University College London (UCL) extended the lifespan of mice by up to a fifth and reduced the number of age-related diseases affecting the animals after they genetically manipulated them to block production of the S6 Kinase 1 (S6K1) protein.

Scientists have shown since the 1930s that reducing the calorie intake by 30 percent for rats, mice and -- in a more recent finding -- primates can extend their lifespan by 40 percent and have



PHOTO: AFP  
Sham Lal Gandhi raises his fist after garlanding a statue of Mahatma Gandhi during celebrations on his 140th birth anniversary in Amritsar yesterday.

**Gandhi was a 'very violent man'**  
Claims Tom Alter

ANI, Ahmedabad

Bollywood actor and theatre personality Tom Alter has said that Mahatma Gandhi was a "very violent man," but only in thoughts.

Alter said this during a function in Ahmedabad wherein he and danseuse Mrinalini Sarabhai read out the letters exchanged between Mahatma Gandhi and freedom fighter Sarojini Naidu during the era of India's freedom struggle.

The letters tell the tale of a freedom struggle and a deep probing relationship between the two. He scripted the 15-minute performance was adapted from the book "The Mahatma and the Poetess" compiled by ES Reddy and edited by Sarabhai.

## 4 Isaf soldiers killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Four foreign soldiers, three of them American, have been killed in Afghanistan, Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) said yesterday.

Two soldiers were killed in separate incidents "as a result of enemy activity in southern and eastern Afghanistan in the last 24 hours," Isaf said in a statement.

One of the US soldiers died after a grenade attack in the east of the country. Another soldier was killed by an improvised explosive device in the south.

Isaf did not disclose the

nationality of the latter soldier. But Britain's defence ministry said an airman from 34 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment was killed by an explosion while on patrol near Britain's Camp Bastion in Helmand province on Thursday.

An Isaf media officer told AFP later that two US soldiers were killed in an incident west of Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan, on Friday.

"There was an incident. There were casualties associated with that," the officer added. No further details were immediately available.

## Nasal spray flu vaccine becoming available

AP, Washington

The long-awaited first vaccinations against swine flu the squirt-in-the-nose kind begin early next week in parts of the country, and states are urging people to be patient until more arrives.

Just a trickle of vaccine, 600,000 doses of the nasal spray FluMist, will be divided among 21 states and four large cities by Tuesday, with more small shipments to more states later in the week.

"We're moving this out as quickly as we can," said Oregon's public health director, Dr Mel Kohn, who hopes

shipments arrive in time to begin some vaccinations on Monday. "This doesn't do any good sitting in a warehouse."

Most states are aiming their first small batches at health care workers, hoping to keep them well enough to be on the job as cases of swine flu what doctors prefer to call the 2009 H1N1 strain are rapidly increasing nationwide.

In Chicago, firefighters will share first doses with hospitals, to get some emergency responders protected, too.

Alaska wants its meagre first 4,000 FluMist doses to head directly to preschoolers, ages 2 to 4.

## Military searches for bodies, brings aid to Samoas

AP, Lalomanu

Some frightened Samoans who fled to the hills as a tsunami tore through their seaside villages vowed never to return to the coastline, while aid workers delivered water and medicine amid the growing stench of decay.

Grieving survivors began to bury their loved ones. Others gathered under a traditional meeting house to hear a government minister discuss plans for a mass funeral and burial next week.

The death toll from

Tuesday's earthquake and tsunami rose to 169 Thursday as searchers found more bodies in Samoa, where 129 were confirmed dead, police commissioner Lilo Maiava told The Associated Press. Another 31 were killed in the US territory of American Samoa and nine in Tonga.

Maiava said drowning appeared to be the main cause of death, and some bodies were still being plucked from the sea. Police dug others from sand, mud and debris. Maiava said the search for bodies

could continue for another three weeks.

A refrigerated freight container was used as a temporary morgue for the scores of bodies at a Samoan hospital.

The United States, Australia and New Zealand sent in supplies and troops, including a US Navy frigate carrying two helicopters for search-and-rescue efforts. The Hawaii Air National Guard and US Air Force flew three cargo planes to American Samoa carrying 100 Navy and Army guard personnel and reservists.



PHOTO: AFP  
Handout photo from World Without Wars shows some 400 people arriving at New Zealand's parliament building in Wellington for the start of a world march for peace that will criss-cross the globe over the next three months, passing through 90 countries.

## Potential key to curing TB discovered

ANI, Washington

Scientists from Iowa State University have discovered an enzyme that makes tuberculosis resistant to a human body's natural defence.

When most infections are introduced into humans, the body defends itself with certain cells - called macrophage cells - that kill the invading microorganisms.

The macrophage cells engulf and destroy these microbes, such as the Mycobacterium tuberculosis.

Lead researcher Reuben Peters, associate professor in the department of biochemistry, biophysics and molecular biology has found that TB bacteria produces a defensive molecule that prevents the macrophage cells from destroying them.

## Maoists gun down 16 Bihar villagers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Patna

At least 50 Maoist guerrillas attacked a Bihar village and brutally gunned down 16 people, including five children, after tying their hands and legs, police said Friday as the issue gained political overtones with demands for Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's resignation.

The incident, which appeared to be a dispute over land, took place late Thursday in Amausi village in Khagaria district, about 200 km north of Patna.

Villagers told police that the guerrillas had tied the hands and legs of the victims before shooting them dead.

Eleven people have been detained and are being interrogated.

"During raids, we have detained 11 people suspected to be involved in the incident," Bhagalpur Inspector General of Police (IGP) A.R. Kinri told IANS on phone.

Bihar police chief Anand Shankar added that the priority was to arrest those involved in the incident.

"Over 50 armed Maoist rebels attacked Amausi village and shot dead 16 villagers, including five children," Deputy Superintendent of Police Ajay Pandey said, adding that the killing appeared to be over a land dispute but that the police were still investigating.

"All senior district officials are camping in the village and security forces have been deployed. The Special Task Force along with district police have launched combing operations against Maoists in Khagaria," Pandey added.

Nitish Kumar condemned the incident and asked top officials of the state administration to investigate.

"It is a shocking incident and should be condemned by one and all," the chief minister said, while announcing compensation of Rs.150,000 to the families of each victim.