



News and Views from Myanmar

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Press Conference clarifies the recent Tsunami hit in Myanmar

YANGON, 1 Feb.— Information Committee of the State Peace and Development Council held a press conference on 1-2-2005 on relief works for Tsunami in Myanmar caused by earthquake at sea west of North Sumatra on 26-12-2004.

In its clarification, the aftershocks and Tsunami were felt by Myaybon and Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State; Pyinsalu, Labutta, Ngaputaw and Kaingtaung in Ayeyawady Division; and Palon-tonetone in Taninthayi Division. Only some buildings were affected. Tsunami arrived in Myanmar only with the height of 3 to 7 feet.

As Myanmar is affected by weak Tsunami, loss and casualties caused by the Tsunami were much less sustaining lower casualties and damages than other Tsunami-hit countries.

A significant point along Rakhine coast was that water level declined for about eight feet before Tsunami. However, no effects were found at Chaungtha and Ngwehsaung beaches as well as at Cocogyun north of Andaman Islands.

The recent Tsunami hit strongly and the impact was great in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Maldives which suffered great loss and casualties. Myanmar sustained less impact due to particular geographical conditions and having unspoilt mangroves and coral islands as well as having uninhabited islands. Another factor was that the wave moved to the East and West strongly but slowly to the North and South. Myanmar is located in the North.

Due to three points mentioned below, Myanmar suffered less losses and casualties.

- (1) There is a seismic gap between north of Cocogyun to south of Rakhine State. There is less chance for strong earthquake to occur.
- (2) The Tsunami sent strongest waves to the east and west parallel to Myanmar coast. In addition, Myeik archipelago serves as a natural barrier to the harbour wave.
- (3) The geological condition and shoal (shallow sea bottom off the coast) of Myanmar stretching 15 to 20 miles weakened the wave.

UNICEF has also expressed that it was sorry for issuing inaccurate information.

The impact of Tsunami in Myanmar and relief works were explained at the workshop held in Beijing, China, on 25 and 26 January 2005 and officials of regional and international organizations and world's experts approved them.

After the occurrence of the natural disaster, the Myanmar Natural Disaster Relief Committee has been formed and relief and resettlement works were carried out actively by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement and the Ministry of Health in affected States and Divisions. Donations of cash and kind were also received and they were being sent to the affected regions.

According to press conference, the natural disaster left 31 people dead, 41 injured, 517 homes destroyed and 2,145 persons homeless in Ayeyawady Division; eight dead, one injured, 83 homes destroyed and 447 persons

homeless in Taninthayi Division; 22 dead but without damage to homes in Rakhine State; and one home damaged in Yangon Division. Totally, Myanmar lost 61 lives, while 42 people were left injured, 601 homes damaged, and 2,592 persons homeless, with a total loss of property valued at about 1,585.56 million kyats. The relief group provided relief aids for the victims and 50,000 kyats each for the dead.

The value of cash assistance amounted to 2.455 million kyats in Ayeyawady Division and 60 million kyats in Taninthayi Division respectively. The relief items provided amounted to 5.198 million kyats in Ayeyawady Division and 1.54 million kyats in Taninthayi Division and 1.1 million kyats in Rakhine State respectively.

The relief works and latest data on damages were informed to the public through newspapers and TV and radio broadcasts. Myanmar did not request any aid or help for Tsunami victims. However, it receives voluntary contributions and donations. Up to 28 January 2005, donations amounted to US\$ 200,000, Myanmar currency 8.1294 million kyats, including 1 million kyats donated by the Venerable Shi Fa Zhao of the Golden Temple of Singapore. The others are foodstuff worth K 1.14 million, clothes and medicines worth K 9.43 million, household goods worth K 0.96 million, and 2000 corrugated iron sheets with estimated value of K 4.44 million. People's Republic of China donated US\$ 200,000 on 5-1-05.

In the press conference, UNICEF Resident Representative Ms Carrol C Long and Representative of World Vision International Mr Roger Walker explained matters on the donations of cash and kind worth US\$ 1,358,942 including UNDP's cash donation of US\$ 150,000; WHO's cash donation of US\$ 78,797; UNICEF's cash donation of US\$ 94,963; World Food

Programme's cash donation of US\$ 500,000; Humanitarian Service International's cash donation of US\$ 30,000; World Vision International's cash donation of US\$ 505,000; and medicines donated by Support Fund Myanmar. These cash and kind donations are being sent directly to the victims by well-wisher organizations themselves in coordination with local authorities.

The Tsunami victims have now returned to normal life due to relief works and donations of the Government and local and international well-wishers.