



## **The tsunami of december 26, 2004: the Indian scene**

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K.S.Murty,101/28 Hindustan Colony, Amaravati Road, Nagpur 440033, India. The earthquake of December 26, 2004 followed by the tsunami hit the southeast. South Asian and East African countries, causing devastation of undescrivable magnitude. The relief work that was immediately undertaken is still continuing, but the effect of that nightmare is still felt. Legend has it that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands had suffered such a cataclysm ages ago when their entire tradition got separated into different tribes and languages.. but the latest cataclysm caused death of 1,50,000 people across Asia, apart from the destruction to property and infra-structure. 90 per cent of the near 100000 fatalities on Indias's southeastern coast were fishermen and their families. An estimated 35,000 locals were lost in Tamilnadu alone.The waves damaged 160 km of the national highways and 520 km of the state roads. Many towns were swamped, throwing back sewage, effluents and garbage that was dumped in the sea. The damage to ecology has been immense, while the geography of the Andaman and Nioobar islands has undergone change, with some of the southern geographical features disappearing from maps. The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) , 1991 has been more breached than observed by Human agencies. The mangroves that used to act as natural barriers of the coastal areas from natural calamities like cyclones were cut down. Grazing, reclamation and urban development, industrialisation and mining threaten their survival. The total financial loss due to this tsunami has been estimated preliminarily at Rs.53,220 million. India does not have a monitoring system of tsunamis, like the Pacific system. It is now proposed to have one early- warning system for oceanographic area in the Indian Ocean that has population of 1.56 billion. It is planned to deploy data buoys in a 100 x 100 km grid pattern. It is envisaged to be a comprehensive real time ocean observation system, developing numerical models for tsunami and storm surges, generating coastal inundation and vulnerability maps, educating masses, training volunteers etc. This system is expected to be in place by September 2007. Newspaper reported that Australia's southern state of Tasmania was

rocked by the world's largest earthquake(8.1) in three-and-a-half years when it struck between Australia and Antarctica on Friday, the 24th December 2004. Was this a precursor of the tsunami that followed two days later?