

TSUNAMI INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE – MAY 18-19, 2006

HEADLINES:

NEW STRAITS TIMES (MALAYSIA)- All Set To Tackle Another Tsunami: KUALA LUMPUR: How will Malaysia fare in the event of another tsunami? The Malaysian Meteorological Department and other agencies put their resources to the test yesterday in a region-wide drill for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System, code-named "Pacific Wave '06". The department's deputy director-general, Leong Chow Peng, said the exercise went well and was timely as it tested Malaysia's readiness for another tsunami. "The exercise showed our communication channels with the emergency response units and meteorological agencies from around the region were well linked," she said. The exercise involved Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, the United States and Australia, with the first phase involving a mock alert of an earthquake of 9.2 magnitude near the coast of Chile. Malaysia was involved in the second phase of the test, where an 8.3-magnitude "earthquake" was to have hit the northern Philippines. The test began at 10am yesterday with a mock tsunami warning message from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii transmitted to the Malaysian Meteorological Department and the Japan Meteorological Agency. The department exchanged data with other countries, and with the scenario of a one-metre wave affecting coastal towns in Tuaran, Sabah, an evacuation drill was held.

THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD- Neighbour Will Need To Help Neighbour In The Event Of Disaster: The room was hushed as Civil Defence controller Eric Newman stood to brief his troops. "The ETA (estimated time of arrival) of the tsunami is one minute after midnight," the retired policeman told a roomful of emergency service and council representatives in Tauranga yesterday. High on the walls of the Western Bay of Plenty District Council chambers were two large screens showing the Pacific Ocean, red marking the area closest to the epicentre of a magnitude 9.2 earthquake in Chile. Lines resembling isobars showed a tsunami generated by the earthquake, at 10.14am NZT, would take about 12 hours to reach New Zealand. The chambers, built to withstand earthquakes and volcanic ash, become the district's Civil Defence headquarters in an emergency. Yesterday, they were the scene of a regional response to an international real-time tsunami exercise. "Intel" staff monitoring advisories from the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management in Wellington had marked low-lying coastal areas likely to be swamped by a giant wave on a map. Based on the latest advisory, the staff told Mr Newman at 3.15pm that a tsunami had passed Easter Island and measured 3m. They calculated 53,000 people from Mt Maunganui to Pukehina Beach would need to move themselves out.

THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD- Auckland Warning System Passes Test: Auckland Civil Defence chiefs are sure they can give the public adequate warning of an approaching tsunami after their organisation's response was tested yesterday. In a Pacific-wide exercise, Civil Defence groups throughout the country had to respond to the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii alerting them to a possible tidal wave. As the imaginary wave crossed the Pacific from Chile, the task at the Auckland Emergency Management Group headquarters yesterday afternoon was to urge people to evacuate low-lying areas and get at least 35m above sea level. They were told to expect a wave hitting the Auckland coast at 1.30am today. Wave wash would be 8m high when it reached Great Barrier Island and 5m at Waiheke Island and the Auckland isthmus.

BAY OF PLENTY TIMES- Survival Key Is Self-Help: IF A tsunami occurs because of a major seismic eruption at the many subterranean volcanoes near New Zealand, your own actions will be the main factor in deciding your survival. According to Barry Low, Manager, Emergency Management, for Tauranga and Western Bay, in this worst-case scenario there would be little time to issue a warning and people would initially have to take responsibility for themselves. "We all need to be aware of the hazards of where we live," he said. "If you live in a flood-prone area you know what to expect, and need to pre-think your options; this is no different. Families, schools, businesses need to sit down as a group and discuss their safety, come up with a plan." Local Civil Defence staff are continually adding to their knowledge and strategies, and in the event of an emergency would go into immediate action.

AFP - First Phase Of Pacific Tsunami Test Successful: Official: Dozens of countries across the Pacific on Wednesday took part in a test of a regional tsunami warning system, officials said, calling the first phase of the exercise a success. "It's gone very, very well so far," a spokeswoman for the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration told AFP from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii. "They've contacted each country that is participating -- there's over 30 countries participating -- and just about every single one of them have received the bulletins," Delores Clark told AFP. Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and American Samoa were staging partial evacuations "but every country is playing a little bit differently and there are various levels of participation," she said. The exercise began with a mock alert about an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 striking near the coast of Chile and sparking a tsunami across the eastern Pacific. The second phase of the test -- codenamed Pacific Wave '06 -- would involve a fake earthquake north of the Philippines later Wednesday.

ANTARA - Rp15.5 Billion For Tsunami Detection Program: The Marine and Fishery Affairs Ministry has allocated Rp15.5 billion for the early warning system under the tsunami detection program. The Director General of Coastal Waters and Small Islands, Widi Agoes Pratiskto said here Wednesday that the program is aimed at reducing the destructive impact of the tsunami, like that which had devastated Aceh province and Nias island on December 26, 2004. The program includes the detection, prediction and early warning of a tsunami disaster as well as the dissemination of information about the disaster and the dispatch of an early warning, he said at a training course on the mitigation of the destructive impact of the tsunami. The tsunami detection program of the Indonesian Marine and Fishery Affairs Ministry is part of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOWTS) drawn up by the five countries badly hit by the huge tsunami, namely Indonesia, India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The Rp15.5 billion will be used to finance training courses on tsunami detection and early warning system in six areas prone to the disaster, namely Padang in West Sumatra, Pangandaran in West Java, Pacitan in East Java, Bali, Mataram in West Nusa Tenggara and Ambon in Maluku. Marine and Fishery Affairs Minister Freddy Numberi also said that several coastal areas in Indonesia are vulnerable to a tsunami, like Aceh, which is prone to even a disaster of a bigger scale. He cited the west coastal areas of Sumatra and southern coastal areas of Java, Bali, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, West Irian Jaya and Papua as areas vulnerable to the disaster from the Indian Ocean.

New Straits Times (Malaysia)

KUALA LUMPUR: How will Malaysia fare in the event of another tsunami?

The Malaysian Meteorological Department and other agencies put their resources to the test yesterday in a region-wide drill for the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System, code-named "Pacific Wave '06".

The department's deputy director-general, Leong Chow Peng, said the exercise went well and was timely as it tested Malaysia's readiness for another tsunami.

"The exercise showed our communication channels with the emergency response units and meteorological agencies from around the region were well linked," she said.

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Malaysia was involved in the second phase of the test, where an 8.3-magnitude "earthquake" was to have hit the northern Philippines.

The test began at 10am yesterday with a mock tsunami warning message from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii transmitted to the Malaysian Meteorological Department and the Japan Meteorological Agency.

The department exchanged data with other countries, and with the scenario of a one-metre wave affecting coastal towns in Tuaran, Sabah, an evacuation drill was held.

Tuaran assistant district officer Celestinus Lawanding convened a mock Natural Disaster Relief Committee with district police chief Deputy Superintendent Suhaimi Wiro named to lead the evacuation operation.

By 11am, a team comprising the police, firefighters, Rela members, a medical unit and the civil defence corps arrived at Kampung Entulon to start the evacuation process.

Within 20 minutes, some 800 people were moved to a hillside area in Kampung Gayang, and the drill ended at 1pm.

Neighbour Will Need To Help Neighbour In The Event Of Disaster
May 18, 2006 Thursday
The New Zealand Herald

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about 12 hours to reach New Zealand. The chambers, built to withstand earthquakes and volcanic ash, become the district's Civil Defence headquarters in an emergency. Yesterday, they were the scene of a regional response to an international real-time tsunami exercise. "Intel" staff monitoring advisories from the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management in Wellington had marked low-lying coastal areas likely to be swamped by a giant wave on a map. Based on the latest advisory, the staff told Mr Newman at 3.15pm that a tsunami had passed Easter Island and measured 3m. They calculated 53,000 people from Mt Maunganui to Pukehina Beach would need to move themselves out.

"A big emphasis will be on neighbours helping neighbours," said operations and police area commander, Inspector Murray Lewis. Mr Lewis said people unable to move out themselves could use a signal, such as a towel out the front window, to show they needed help. Police, fire, fisheries and customs staff would assist with the evacuation, as well as independent contractors. A priority was informing residents of three islands - Motiti, Mayor and Matakana - and ordering large ships at the Port of Tauranga out to sea. Said Mr Newman: "Our experience tells us that the harbour will rise, almost empty, and come in again. "Traffic plans, including turning main roads into one-way escape routes to higher ground, were also discussed. Public information officer Peter Hennessey said half-hourly updates would be issued to the media and people needed to turn on their radios as soon as they heard sirens. A new tsunami warning system installed along the Bay of Plenty coast between Waihi and Pukehina beaches is to be tested today. Mr Newman ended the meeting by ordering his staff to convene again at 4.45pm and saying he wanted the evacuation completed by 10.01pm, two hours before the tsunami's ETA. Afterwards, he said if a tsunami was generated closer to New Zealand, planning and response would happen faster. "We wouldn't have the luxury of this time," he said.

Auckland Warning System Passes Test
May 18, 2006 Thursday

The New Zealand Herald

Auckland Civil Defence chiefs are sure they can give the public adequate warning of an approaching tsunami after their organisation's response was tested yesterday. In a Pacific-wide exercise, Civil Defence groups throughout the country had to respond to the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii alerting them to a possible tidal wave. As the imaginary wave crossed the Pacific from Chile, the task at the Auckland Emergency Management Group headquarters yesterday afternoon was to urge people to evacuate low-lying areas and get at least 35m above sea level. They were told to expect a wave hitting the Auckland coast at 1.30am today. Wave wash would be 8m high when it reached Great Barrier Island and 5m at Waiheke Island and the Auckland isthmus. "The high energy involved even in a 1m wave would be devastating and would carry up to 1km inland," said management group chairman Neil Morrison. The group declared a state of emergency shortly after 3pm and emergency services worked with Civil Defence officials to determine which streets should be evacuated and ensure radio and television stations would broadcast warnings if required. The police liaison officer with the group, Inspector Mark Hall, said the problems included people trying to reach higher ground at a time when Auckland streets were clogged with traffic. He said the exercise showed

that most residents of the islands and isthmus would have moved to the 35m level well before the evacuation goal of 11pm.

Local decision-making in activating warnings was tested but the exercise did not include the response after a tsunami had hit, said emergency management officer Jim Stephens. He said the test showed good team work and warning systems performed well. Mr Stephens said the region's Civil Defence plan had taken on board all the criticisms made about Exercise Jaffa in December. That was to deal with a cyclone with wave run-up levels of 8m on Auckland's eastern bays and the Firth of Thames, 4.5m in the Waitemata Harbour and 6m in the Manukau Harbour.

Survival Key Is Self-Help
May 17, 2006 Wednesday
Bay of Plenty Times

IF A tsunami occurs because of a major seismic eruption at the many subterranean volcanoes near New Zealand, your own actions will be the main factor in deciding your survival.

According to Barry Low, Manager, Emergency Management, for Tauranga and Western Bay, in this worst-case scenario there would be little time to issue a warning and people would initially have to take responsibility for themselves.

“We all need to be aware of the hazards of where we live,” he said. “If you live in a flood-prone area you know what to expect, and need to pre-think your options; this is no different.

“Families, schools, businesses need to sit down as a group and discuss their safety, come up with a plan.”

Local Civil Defence staff are continually adding to their knowledge and strategies, and in the event of an emergency would go into immediate action.

“Part of the plan we are updating at the moment with police and roading authorities is a very comprehensive traffic management plan to ensure that people from low lying and highly populated areas like Papamoa will be able to get to safety.”

Mr Low points out that the amount of warning given about a tsunami could vary enormously.

Local troublespots such as White Island are closely monitored and any increase in activity would immediately be noticed. Other threats lie much further afield.

“Our furthestmost tsunami risk - the Aleutian Islands or the coast of South America - we would have 14 or more hours' warning.

“If a tsunami was generated in the Kermadecs or somewhere in the Pacific between there and here, we would have four hours or less.”

He wants everyone to ask themselves the question: what would we do in an emergency?

First Phase Of Pacific Tsunami Test Successful: Official
May 17, 2006 Wednesday

Agence France Presse -- English

SYDNEY, May 17 2006- Dozens of countries across the Pacific on Wednesday took part in a test of a regional tsunami warning system, officials said, calling the first phase of the exercise a success.

"It's gone very, very well so far," a spokeswoman for the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration told AFP from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre in Hawaii.

"They've contacted each country that is participating -- there's over 30 countries participating -- and just about every single one of them have received the bulletins," Delores Clark told AFP.

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The exercise began with a mock alert about an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 striking near the coast of Chile and sparking a tsunami across the eastern Pacific.

The second phase of the test -- codenamed Pacific Wave '06 -- would involve a fake earthquake north of the Philippines later Wednesday.

The exercise is part of an effort to beef up tsunami defences following the December 26, 2004 killer waves that swept countries in the northern Indian Ocean, killing around 220,000 people.

"The main objective is to test the communications, the dissemination of the bulletins from the warning centres to the countries and internally another objective is to test the communications inside the country," said Clark.
