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PETER DeFAZIO

AN INVITATION TO A TOWN HALL MEETING

Due to overwhelming demand, I have scheduled
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Wednesday, March 30

5:30 - 6:30 PM

Harris Hall

Lane County Courthouse

125 E. 8th Avenue

Eugene

For more information, please call 1-800-944-9603.

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Kenyan novelist and human
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Wednesday, March 30, 2005

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Indonesia's coast rocked by destructive earthquake

BY MICHAEL CASEY
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — A powerful earthquake struck off Indonesia's west coast late Monday, killing hundreds of people whose homes collapsed on them and spreading panic across the Indian Ocean that another killer tsunami was on the way. Indonesia's vice president predicted up to 2,000 deaths.

But fears of a second tsunami catastrophe in just over three months eased within hours, as officials in countries at risk reported their coasts clear of the type of quake-spawned waves that ravaged a dozen countries in Asia and Africa on Dec. 26.

Almost all the deaths reported in the hours immediately after Monday's quake were on Indonesia's Nias island, off Sumatra island's west coast and close to the epicenter. Police were pulling children's bodies out of the rubble of collapsed houses, and a fire was reportedly raging in one town.

"It is predicted — and it's still a rough estimate — that the number ... of dead may be between 1,000 and 2,000," Vice President Jusuf Kalla told the el-Shinta radio station. He said the estimate was based on an assessment of damage to buildings, not bodies counted.

In the town of Gunungsitoli, about 70 percent of buildings collapsed in the market district, officials said.

"Hundreds of buildings have been damaged or have collapsed," said Agus Mendrofa, the island's deputy district head. He told el-Shinta radio station that at least 296 people had died in Gunungsitoli.

The MISNA missionary news agency in Rome, Italy, reported that a huge fire was raging early Tuesday in Gunungsitoli.

"From the window I see very high flames," MISNA quoted Father Raymond Laia as saying by telephone about two miles from the town. "The town is completely destroyed. I repeat, the town is completely destroyed."

Another police officer, who identified himself as Nainggolan, said rescuers were trying to pull people out of the rubble, and many were still panicking because of several aftershocks.

"We are busy now trying to pull people or bodies of children from the collapsed building," said Nainggolan, who like many Indonesians uses only one name. "It is very hard also because there is no power."

"The situation here is really messy," he said. "Aftershocks keep hitting every half hour making thousands of people flee their homes and afraid to go home."

Nias, a renowned surfing spot, was badly hit on Dec. 26, when at least 340 residents were killed and 10,000 were left homeless.

The only other deaths reported in Monday's quake happened in Sri Lanka, where two people were reportedly killed during a panicky evacuation from the coast in a Tamil rebel-held area.

The U.S. Geological Survey measured Monday's quake at magnitude 8.7 and said its epicenter was 155 miles south-southeast of Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province on Sumatra island. It struck just 110 miles southwest of the 9.0-magnitude quake of Dec. 26 — the world's most powerful in 40 years.

Monday's wallop, although very powerful, was but a fraction of the earlier quake. In explosive power, December's quake was equal to 100 million pounds of TNT; it caused the seabed to spring up as much as 60 feet.

Terrified of a disaster of equal proportions, sirens sounded throughout the region as authorities issued tsunami alerts for six countries after the quake struck at 11:06 p.m.

Women clutching children ran into the darkened streets of Banda Aceh, crying and chanting "Allahu Akbar," or "God is Great." Others grabbed small bags of clothes and fled their tents and homes for higher ground.

Another man rushed instead to the local mosque, saying "Where can I go, you can't outrun a tsunami."

The quake lasted two minutes and briefly cut electricity in Banda Aceh. Thousands poured into the streets, where flickering campfires and motorbike and car headlights provided the only lighting.

People grabbed small bags of clothes as they fled their tents and homes. Many were crying and jumping into cars and onto motorbikes and pedicabs to head for higher ground. Two women wearing prayer shawls and sarongs grabbed a fence to steady themselves.

"People are still traumatized, still scared; they are running for higher ground," said Feri, a 24-year-old aid volunteer who goes by one name.

Panic gripped at least one relief camp in Banda Aceh. An Associated Press photographer saw thousands fleeing their tents — but with nowhere to go, they milled in crowds along the road.

Police with megaphones asked people not to panic and return to their tents. After a while, many started moving back.

In Malaysia, residents fled their shaking apartments and hotels.

"I was getting ready for bed, and suddenly, the room started shaking," said Jessie Chong, a resident of the largest city, Kuala Lumpur. "I thought I was hallucinating at first, but then I heard my neighbors screaming and running out."

In Sri Lanka, President Chandrika Kumaratunga called an emergency meeting at her home with Cabinet members and went on state television to assure the country "we are taking all precautionary measures."

The quake was felt as far away as Singapore and the Thai capital, Bangkok, more than 435 miles from the epicenter.

Preliminary indications were that energy from Monday's quake might be directed toward the southwest, said Frank Gonzalez, an oceanographer with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration in Seattle.

The only tsunami reported was a tiny one — 10 inches — at the Cocos Islands, 1,400 miles west of Australia. No damage was reported.

"It seems this earthquake did not trigger a tsunami. If it had, the tsunami would have hit the coastline of Sumatra by now," said Prihar Yadi, a scientist with the Indonesia Geophysics Agency. "And if there's no tsunami on the coastline near the epicenter of the quake, there will not be one heading in the other direction."

U.S. State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said U.S. diplomatic missions in Asia and Africa went into "battle mode" to respond quickly to any contingency. Authorities worldwide had been slow to recognize the magnitude of the Dec. 26 disaster, which killed at least 175,000 people in 12 Indian Ocean nations and left another 106,000 missing.

Officials said after the December disaster that a tsunami early warning system could have saved many lives. Such a system exists in the Pa-

Second quake almost as powerful

The second powerful earthquake in just over three months to strike the west coast of Indonesia was among the strongest quakes of the past century.

Location	Magnitude
1960 Chile	9.5
1964 Prince William Sound, Alaska	9.2
1957 Andreanof Islands, Alaska	9.1
2004 Off the west coast of northern Sumatra	9.0
1952 Kamchatka, Soviet Union*	9.0
1906 Off the coast of Ecuador	8.8
2005 Off the west coast of northern Sumatra	8.7
1965 Rat Islands, Alaska	8.7
1950 Assam-Tibet	8.6

* Now Russia

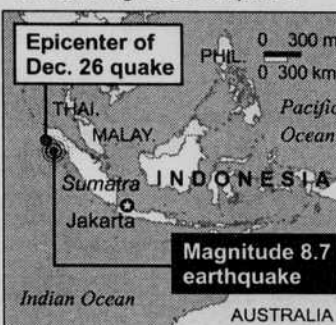
Number of earthquakes
magnitude 7.0 or greater,
1900 to 2003



SOURCE: U.S. Geological Survey AP

Indonesia hit again

An earthquake struck off the coast of Indonesia's Sumatra Island on Monday, a little more than three months since the devastating Dec. 26 quake.



SOURCE: ESRI AP

cific but has not been established in the Indian Ocean. Japan and the United States had planned to start providing tsunami warnings to countries around the Indian Ocean this month as a stopgap measure until the region establishes its own alert system.

Two aftershocks — one measuring 6.0 and another measuring 6.7 — were reported in the same region late Monday and early Tuesday, the U.S. Geological Survey said.

At the biggest refugee camp in Banda Aceh, people milled around the streets near the local television network, known as TVRI. Others huddled around television sets in cafés for news.

After some time, a voice on the camp intercom announced that people could return to their tents and that there was no tsunami.