



# Myanmar News Release

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*The view from the Embassy of the Union of Myanmar, London*

## **The Impact of Tsunamis in South and South-East Asian Countries**

The devastation caused by the boxing day earthquake off the coast of Sumatra and its consequences have been the most catastrophic in living memory. The extent of damage done, however, has varied from country to country depending on geological, geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the areas involved.

The effect on Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand has been particularly apocalyptic but certain countries like Myanmar, Malaysia and Bangladesh suffered significantly less in terms of fatalities although they seem to be physically closer to the epicentre of the quake than those nations on the far side of the Indian ocean.

In the case of Myanmar, the approximately 800 islands of Myeik Archipelago unlike Phuket for example, are still very sparsely inhabited and are not yet the haunts of large-scale international tourists. Besides, these islands have probably shielded the more populous coastal towns and villages of the southern Tanintharyi region.

Be that as it may, this certainly should not be the time for the media (The Times of London, December 30th and The BBC for example) for expressing skepticism and even making allegations such as suppression of information by the Government of Myanmar.

Regardless of mortality figures, all countries of South and South-East Asia are currently united in their sorrow and are particularly focused on the rescue, rehabilitation of the survivors and protection of the remaining populations from future catastrophes of similar nature and magnitude. So far the endeavours of the international community from both East and West have been most encouraging and admirable.

When the tabulation of fatalities are done, the number of western tourists lost could also be staggering. But what is most frightening, at present, is the major risk for development of infectious diseases in epidemic proportions if timely interventions are not made in terms of essential health measures by the world community.

This is definitely not the time to politicise any issue concerning this tragedy of gargantuan proportions that has just taken place in South and South-East Asia.

**The BBC's Radio Four, however, following an interview of a UNICEF official in Myanmar on the Today Programme, has finally admitted that the figure of fatalities in the Tsunami affected areas, as released by the government of Myanmar were close to reality.**