

Testimony of Imane, on holiday in Sri Lanka on 26th December 2004

On Sunday morning, at 9:25 exactly, my aunt knocked very hard at my door and yelled: "Run! The sea is submerging the hotel!" Within a short time, the hotel was flooded. There was no noise, no warning sign, no alarm. A few minutes after, the water withdrew and the staff of the hotel started to clean up.

We went onto the terrace, and the sea was very far, it was unreal. Then the sea rose up, very quickly, even higher. In one minute, water had flooded everything and devastated everything up to the 2nd floor. Then the sea withdrew again and, 20 minutes later, a third wave arrived, even higher. We were lucky to be in elevated area. All those who were outside died. The sea went up too quickly to be able to flee. I've heard that the waves arrived at 40 km/h!



Withdrawal of the sea before the arrival of the third wave of the tsunami of the 26/12/2004.

Review of the tsunami of the December 26, 2004 (Planet science, 17/01/2005)

At the last count of the disaster that struck South Asia, the earthquake and the tidal wave which followed it in the Indian Ocean: at least 280 000 victims...

On the 26th December 2004, at 0:58 universal time (7:58 standard time), the American geological Institute detected an earthquake of exceptional magnitude in the Indian Ocean, 9 on the Richter scale. Its epicentre was located off the coast of the island of Sumatra, 250 km south-south-east of the town of Banda Aceh.

Very fast waves (500 to 800 km/h), but relatively low, were formed on the surface of the ocean. For many boats sailing on the open sea, the phenomenon went completely unnoticed. It is only on approaching the coast that the tsunami was formed: the height of the waves increased suddenly, reaching up to 15 m in some areas. According to last assessments, the number of deaths or missing exceeds 280 000.

Eleven countries around the Indian Ocean were affected by the tidal wave. At 1:38 UT, the first waves struck the coast of Sumatra and, a little after that, Malaysia.

One hour later, Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka were struck as well and, around 3:28 UT, the tsunami reached the coasts of the north of India and those of Bangladesh.

