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EDITOR'S NOTE: The death toll from the Asian tsunami, according to the Reuters news service, which cited official sources, now stands at 145,073 and is edging toward 150,000. Sri Lanka reported at least 30,240 dead as of Jan. 5. The United States has committed an initial \$350 million to tsunami relief and has dispatched U.S. Navy and other military units to South Asia to assist in the relief effort. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Florida Governor Jeb Bush are in the region to assess the needs of the various countries affected by the disaster.

**How to help:** <http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov> The site provides a link to summaries of resources> click on USA Freedom Corps Fact Sheet from the homepage.

## Tsunami Survivors: Division 18 Mechanic Learns Family is Safe in Sri Lanka

By RICH MORALLO



Division 18 Mechanic Rohan Kandamby prayed that his family would be safe from the tsunami wave that hit Sri Lanka.

PHOTO: RICH MORALLO

(Jan. 5, 2005) Rohan Kandamby is still as stunned, today, as he was when he first learned about the tsunami that wrecked part of his brother's community on the southeast tip of Sri Lanka.

"I had just talked to my brother long distance on the phone the day before, on Christmas, and the whole family was fine," remarked Kandamby, a mechanic at Carson Division 18.

Then, Kandamby heard about the earthquake that sent giant waves crashing into the Indian Ocean coastal town of Fort Matara, where his brother lives.

"I didn't think I could get through to my brother on the phone on Sunday at 9:30 a.m., but I finally reached my mother who lives about 12 miles inland," Kandamby says. Only then did he learn about his brother's escape from death.

## Giant wave struck

Kandamaby's younger brother, Palitha, a doctor, and his wife had been shopping at the market when the first giant wave struck. Their 9-year-old and 6-year-old daughters were at home, about a mile from the coast, with a teenage niece. Palitha and his wife quickly drove back home but the roads were already flooded.

"They had to wade through a quarter of a mile before they reached their house," said Kandamby.

Palitha rounded up his daughters and niece and brought them back to the car where he left them with his wife before wading back to the

house for some important documents.

By the time Palitha reached the house the second time, the dwelling was submerged. He had to climb a tree to escape the rising waters. Army teams eventually rescued him.

**'I was so far away'**

"On Sunday, the news reported 3,000 people dead in Sri Lanka," says Kandamby. After confirming that his brother was safe, Kandamby still felt sick. "I wanted to help, to do something, but I was so far away."

Later, Kandamby prayed for the sick, homeless and the dead at his temple in South Pasadena. He also gave thanks for the safety of his mother, five sisters and three other brothers who live farther inland and were not affected by the tsunami waves.

Kandamby says the local Sri Lanka association has set up a relief fund. Monetary donations can be made at local Bank of America branches. Used clothing, canned goods and medicines can be donated to the Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple at 920 Summit Drive, South Pasadena, 91030-4351, c/o A. Dhammarama.

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