

Far Before 2004, Aceh Has Experienced Giant Tsunami

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The tsunami that hit Aceh in 2004 is believed to be the biggest tsunami ever to hit the region. However, recent research suggests other facts. Large-scale tsunami had occurred in Aceh before 2004. "From the research I did in Meulaboh, Aceh, based on paleo-tsunami deposits, it can be seen that there had been a giant tsunami in Aceh about 600 years ago," said Dr. Eko Yulianto, a researcher at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), Monday (25 / 7), at the UGM Centre for Disaster Studies (PSB). The data dismissed the belief that previously in Aceh a great earthquake above 9.0 on the Richter scale has never occurred. Tsunami in 2004 that devastates Aceh is the evidence that large earthquakes and tsunamis can happen anywhere. "Unfortunately, this finding was found after the earthquake in Aceh. If it could be found early on, actually the number of the earthquake and tsunami victims can be minimized," he explained.

Eko is also conducting research on the cliffs of Cikembulan River, Pangandaran, West Java. From his study, four layers of sand are found that became early evidence that in the region tsunamis had occurred several times. One of them is a thick layer of sand deposited on top of the mangrove mud and covered with flood deposits. In the sand layer there is Foraminifera shells. Above that layer there are several layers of about 1-3 cm thick; one of them is the remains of 2006's tsunami in Pangandaran. "This shows that at a time, approximately 400 years ago, this region is estimated to have a tsunami in much larger scale than the 2006's tsunami," said the expert in paleo-tsunami.

Similar opinion was also expressed by Dr. Brian F. Atwater of U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) who estimates the tsunami in Aceh in 2004 was not the first tsunami disaster. He estimated that at around 1800s, the same disaster happened in Aceh.

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