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Six months after landslides: Displaced still in camps

by **Ashanthi Warunasuriya**

(TheSundayLeader.lk) - About six months ago the country faced its most dreaded natural calamity in recent history. As torrential rains poured down from the skies, floods and landslides battered the people throughout the country claiming the lives of hundreds.

Among the areas that were heavily affected by the floods and landslides was Kalupahana, Bulathkohupitiya.

It has been six months since the disaster and around 100 families in the Kalupahana area are still confined to temporary shelters, engulfed in suffering inside seven camps.

During the landslide, around 20 families that had been residing at the Kalupahana estate were buried alive under the collapsing earth.

Furthermore, entire villages in the Bulathkohupitiya area including Kandawa had been named as hazardous areas due to the instability of the ground. Considering this dangerous situation, the authorities had taken steps to evacuate the villagers into temporary camps. Although at that time it was seen as a good decision, it has now become questionable as nothing has been done to improve the situation during the last six months.

The villagers who have become refugees in their own neighborhood, complain that this has dragged their sorrowful lives into further misery. Many villagers in Bulathkohupitiya complained that there had been no coordination in distributing the

aid that was received by the Assistant Government Agent's office. Some people even said that due to the lack of supervision and planning, a large quantity of food items and dry food rations such as rice, dhal, coconuts and culinary products had expired at the stores and had been discarded.

On the day we visited the Bulathkohupitiya District Secretary's (DS) office the displaced people were there to pick up their rations. Since the Divisional Secretary of Bulathkohupitiya is currently on maternity leave, the Divisional Secretary of Ruwanwella had been appointed as the acting DS for Bulathkohupitiya.

Unfortunately he too was not present at the premises on that day. Therefore the Assistant Secretary of the Bulathkohupitiya DS office stated that she could not make any comment to the media regarding the procedure.

During our observational tour in the Kalupahana estate it was evident to us that the people who had been displaced by the landslide are still living in temporary shelters.

In the Kalupahana estate alone, 16 families have

been forced make their living whilst staying inside tents. They have been forced to live in these unacceptable conditions for over six months.

Although a housing scheme has been initiated in a safe area in the estate to resettle these families

under the instructions of the President, the Prime Minister and Deputy Minister P. Digambaram in June, so far it is moving at a snail's pace and no house has been completed as yet.

The only visible mark of the scheme is the sight of some foundations that have been laid near the camp. The scheme had proposed to construct houses on 4 perch plots with the expense of Rs.

65,000 per house. But the builders have complained that without construction material, it costs at least Rs.120,000 for a house to be constructed. The scheme which is being carried out by the Ministry of Infrastructure, has been given to a private firm.

Apart from the bleak future, the residents of these refugee camps have also faced problems in their current dwellings as well. There are a few large trees in the camp which pose a threat to the tents.



Since the rains have started once again there is a risk of these trees collapsing onto the ground. Although most of the trees had been removed when preparing the ground for the camp, these trees had been spared since the initial idea had not been to keep the people in the camps for a long time, construction officials said. Furthermore they claimed that the delay in removing trees had also affected the delay in constructions.

Expressing his views regarding the housing project, Deputy Minister Digambaram says that the project would be completed by April next year. He said that the project includes 100 houses for those who have been displaced.


Meanwhile many residents of the camps complained to us that they have become fed up with the living conditions in the camp. All of them

claimed that the only thing that they want now is a house. It is obvious how these people are suffering while living in these camps as they have to earn their living as well as look after the needs of the..SEE P2

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Mathews wins big at Dialog Cricket awards 2016



Sri Lankan captain Angelo Mathews was presented the Dialog Cricketer of the Year award for 2015 on Wednesday night's colorful ceremony at Colombo. He also won the player of the year awards for ODIs and Tests.

Addressing the ceremony, Angelo Mathews and vice-captain Dinesh Chandimal announced that they were fit to tour South Africa later this month. Lasith Malinga is also set to make his comeback in Twenty20 cricket.

"My recovery process has been really good and I am feeling fit to make the tour to South Africa," said Dinesh Chandimal.

Ranil apologises for burning of Jaffna library

(DailyMirror.lk) - Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe apologised for the burning of Jaffna Library in 1981 and urged the Joint Opposition to apologize for what happened during that time as well.

"The public library in Jaffna was burnt during a United National Party (UNP) Government in 1981. We know it was wrong and tender an apology for it," he said. "You too should tender an apology for the wrong things which your Government did," he told the Joint Opposition MPs, who was heckling at him at that time. This House turned noisy when Mr. Wickremesinghe rose to answer a question posed by TNA MP M. A. Sumanthiran, who opposed the move by the Ministry of Resettlement and Rehabilitation to construct per-fabricated houses in the war affected regions.

"We want to see that 80 percent of the houses in the North are reconstructed and are willing to discuss matters with the Northern representatives," the Prime Minister added. (Yohan Perera).

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