



## **AROUND 200 MISSING IN THE MEERIYABEDE ESTATE EARTH SLIP, KOSLANDA SRI LANKA**

Whilst many, caught in to an earth slip which took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, 2014 about 7.30 am on Haldumulla, Meeriyabedda Estate in the Koslanda Police division of Badulla District, Uva Province, Sri Lanka over 100 children, women and men are missing. It is feared that most of them are dead. 9 dead bodies were taken out and 9 injured were admitted to Badulla and Bandarawela hospitals. Rescue operations are carried out by army men engaged towards finding if anybody is surviving. The entire Meeriyabedda estate has submerged in to mounds of earth due to the earth slip.



Several buildings including 7 sets of line with 70 houses, temple, 3 staff quarters, 2 shops a milk collecting centre and estate dispensary are reported to have sunk in to the earth. More over the playground have completely vanished. 200 acres of land and directly 64 Families in the area have been affected due to the earth slip with no trace of any building of living being.

With 9 dead bodies already taken out, the operation continues. Haldumulla, Koslanda and Meeriyabedda areas are in a mourning mood due to the

lives lost to the earth slip. According to the eye witnesses, the lines and temple disappeared in a matter of seconds and some lines are 30 feet under earth. The disaster has put the parents losing children, children losing parents and husband or wife losing the spouse in grief.



Meeriyabedde has been inundated and all that remains of it is mounds of earth. It is claimed that warnings were given to the people in 2005 and 2011 after the area experienced intermittent earth slips to leave the area. It is also

claimed that the National Building Research Centre authorities had duly warned the management of the danger, and that even two or three days before the tragedy, the Haldumulla D.S. officers had warned the management to heave the area.

Unfortunately, however, the estate management had taken no notice of the stale warnings and thus, they shirked their responsibility for the lately of lives of around 100 odd workers and children although the authorities claim to have warned the people and the management of the impending disaster and then neither of them took any serious notice it seems to have been forgotten that. The government Authorities and Maskeliya Plantation Company told that the people were informed about this tragedy and requested to move from the area. However, the affected people argued that they were not properly informed about the tragedy. The serious problem is right to land and housing of the plantation workers were not respected. Only some families were given alternative land many of the families were not given authorization for alternative secure land and facilities for housing construction. The issue of providing secure land and housing



is the responsibility of the Divisional Secretary (Local Authority) and the Plantation Management & Plantation Human Development Trust (Trust). The responsibilities of the Authorities are forgone. Due to this the right to safety, land and housing is denied.

Affected families have been evacuated from areas prone to landslides had been housed at 2 Welfare Centres located at Schools in Poonagala and Koslanda. At present around 1632 children, women

and men are camped in above Welfare Centres.

**One of the victims said**“ I was milking the cow when I heard the noise which I mistook for that of an aero-plane. I came out o see and I found the earth slipping covering a large area. I escaped running. By grace of god nothing happen to my family.”

**Another victim said** “I heard a sound similar to a helicopter. When I came out, I found the lamp post about 50 yards away shacking and a huge bunyan tree sliding. I felt there was an earth slip”. Mahendran injured in the incident said: “I heard a big noise. When I came out, the lines were missing and I saw a great mound of earth.”

Relief activities have been started. Many well-wishers , individuals, NGOs and government authorities involve in relief actions. Victims are complaining that they were not received proper assistance from the government authorities in Poonagala Welfare Centre. The victims also complained that the government authorities irregulating relief activities of private instruction and individuals.



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