

Sri Lanka Deploys Thousands of Troops as Flood Toll Hits 177



Colombo, May 29 (RHC)-- Sri Lanka has deployed thousands of troops to supply aid to nearly half a million people dislodged by the island country's worst flooding for more than a decade, which has so far claimed nearly 180 lives.

Military sources said on Monday that aircraft, boats and ground troops had been deployed to evacuate people from flooded areas, deliver essentials and recover bodies following a lull in the torrential monsoon.

Military spokesman Roshan Seneviratne said the let-up had allowed 1,800 soldiers along with 1,100 naval personnel to access cut-off villages and ferry food as well as other essentials to the affected areas.

Official figures indicate that nearly 2,000 houses have suffered structural damage or been completely destroyed and more than 100,000 Sri Lankans have taken shelter in 339 relief camps set up in the country's south and west.

The Disaster Management Center declared that the death toll rose to 177 after soldiers discovered the bodies of a woman and a child from under tones of mud following a landslide in Ratnapura, the island's gem district east of Colombo. It added that another 109 people were missing.

Sri Lanka's Health Minister Rajitha Senarathna said special medical teams had been dispatched to the vulnerable areas and that medicine had been sent by air to hospitals unreachable by road.

Reports said some areas in the southern coastal district of Galle, which is popular with foreign tourists, had received no aid or relief materials over the past days due to lack of access.

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