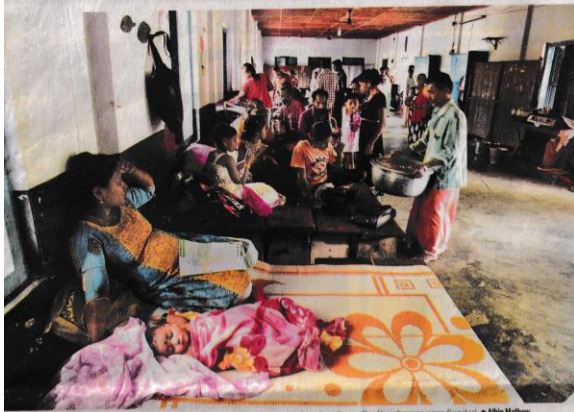


Paravoor, Muvattupuzha, Flood, Relief Camp, Flood Victims

LITTLE RELIEF HERE

Relief camps are in full swing at Paravur and Muvattupuzha but the people camping here are distressed. While their homes are flooded and valuables lost, a permanent solution seems far away. Express reporter *Gopika I S* captures their plight



Relief camp at Vayalkkara UPS. Many, including children and ailing, have sought refuge here after their homes were flooded. • Albin Mathew

Invalids and kids suffer in silence

Sayanani has her six-month-old baby with her as she waits at the corridor of Vayalkkara School. She tucks away her baby in a thick blanket so that the lingering dampness do not affect her frail body. On the far corner, Srinjesh, who was recently released from hospital after a bout of wheezing and asthma, sleeps. His ten-month-old son is asleep next to him, guarded from the dampness only by a thin blanket and his father's warmth. "A relief camp is no place for babies. But, we have no other options. There are more than 10 kids here. Most of them are below the age of 10," said Kure, an inmate at the relief camp. Construction works had been going on at the school before heavy rain led turned into a flood relief camp. The camp also has two pregnant women, Priya and Geethika, who bore the brunt si-

lently as water lashed onto their houses. "Proper bunds should be able to stop the water from overflowing onto the land. In some areas, it is made of mud while in other, it is built with rock and concrete and is too low to stop the water," said Amesh, a daily wagee and an inmate at the camp. In the camp at Chulakkka, there is an inmate who is paralysed below his waist. He was given a separate room so that his health doesn't deteriorate. "The entire area is flooded and we have a relief camp at the auditorium near Kunnu-kara civil station too. The panchayat is doing its best by visiting each relief centre and checking on their conditions," said Shanba, councillor of ward 10 at Kunnu-kara panchayat. The Revenue Department officials are also doing routine rounds in the centres.



Sayanani with her six-month-old child at the relief camp Vayalkkara UPS. • Albin Mathew

53 CAMPS IN DISTRICT
As many as 53 camps function here where 3,986 people are put up

Paravoor taluk - 20 camps (1,527 people)
Manayamur - 12 camps - 475 people
Muvattupuzha - 9 camps - 472 people
Aluva - 6 camps - 440 people
Kochi - 3 camps - 834 people
Kothamangalam - 2 camps - 154 people
Kunnathunad - 1 camp - 84 people

Water level has been rising fast for the first time in the past three years. Yesterday, we had water to our chest level
— Sivanandan, resident

Right now, it is quite hard to find where the river ends and land begins at Purappillikkavu bridge in Vayalkkara, Paravur. The house at the end of the bridge belongs to Sivanandan, whose family is now at the relief camp. His family of four, including his ageing mother, 11-year-old daughter and wife suffer everytime the water level rises above the bunds. As he navigates waist-length water with a few utensils to be used at the camp, he says, "Water level has been rising fast for the first time in the past three years. Yesterday, we had water to our chest level. It has not come down much. The rain last night did not help either. All the nearby houses suffer for the same fate," said Sivanandan. Two kilometres from there, a sombre mood lingers all over the relief camp. Most of the inhabitants at Chalakkal LP School are daily labourers. If they don't find work, their families will starve. The camps remain their only hope. Officially, only 19 families live in the area. However, there are close to 61 people who rely on this small LP School compound. More than 1,927 people live in the various camps in Paravoor taluk. "Most of their houses are flooded. Some are leaking. The roads to their houses have been submerged. We are visiting the affected areas and taking necessary precautions and steps to rehabilitate them, given that the water level is not going down," said Hussain, village officer, Putharvelikkara. Food and medical care are being provided, but a permanent solution is what the residents are looking for. Apparently, every time the dam shutters are opened, flooding happens. The Chalakkudy river and Periyar river runs parallel around most of the affected areas here in Paravoor. A few kilometres away from Chalakkka at Panjipalla, a bridge, which was under construction, had collapsed. Almost five people were injured and are recovering in hospitals. However, a detailed investigation shows the construction of the bridge did not have a permit. "The construction was unlawful and unscientific. We have issued a notice and the Putharvelikkara police have registered a case in this regard," said Hussain. With close to 19 relief camps functioning here, Paravur has seen a lot of damage in the incessant rains for the past few days.



The house which got submerged in the heavy rain. • Albin Mathew