

Another blow to villagers

UPHILL STRUGGLE:

Mudslides have destroyed houses, river life and vegetable farms

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THOSE living at the foot of Mount Kinabalu have the odds stacked against them as they continue to struggle with the after-effects of the June 5 earthquake.

The latest to hit the community are mudslides flowing down the mountain from three rivers, carrying with them tonnes of fallen trees and boulders the size of cars.

The muddy flow in the last three days left a trail of destruction and forced villagers to evacuate their homes.

At Kampung Sungai Mesilau, a three-storey house yesterday collapsed and another was left suspended on a newly formed cliff caused by massive erosions at Sungai Mesilau, which used to be 80m from the houses.

In **Kota Belud**, villagers on the upper side of Sungai Kadamaian found dead fish in the murky rivers.

Among the worst affected are farmers in the sub-district of Kundasang, the largest producers of highland vegetables, who feed the



*The nearly completed home of **Jahili @ Haili Salim** that came tumbling down due to mudslides near Sungai Mesilau in Kundasang, Ranau. Pic courtesy of reader*

demand in the state as well as neighbouring Sarawak and Brunei.

Kampung Sungai Mesilau farmer Jainah Yassin, 57, said an average grower, with about a hectare of land like hers, could produce about 10 tonnes of cabbage per season (three months).

"Depending on the price, if it's RM1 per kg, we will be able to make RM10,000 in one season.

"Since the massive earthquake, I have only checked my plot in Kampung Monteki (located above Mesilau) once before experiencing more tremors.

"I don't know how long I will have to wait, but I can forget about har-

vesting my vegetables," said the grandmother, who was among the villagers who had to evacuate their homes.

The earthquake, measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale, killed 18 people on Mount Kinabalu and left a trail of devastation.

Also from the same is village Jahili @ Haili Salim, 48, who lost the home he was hoping to move into soon.

"It was 95 per cent complete, but it's gone now," said the SK Timbua teacher, who was at school when the Fire and Rescue Department called to tell him his house had collapsed into the river.

"That river was at least 80m away

down a slope, but now, because of the huge boulders and debris that came with the mudslides, it has widened."

At Kampung Kaung Ulu, village chief Bernard Ropotoh, 60, said dead river life, which had surfaced in Sungai Kadamaian, had the villagers worried over the quality of the water source.

"This river flows down to Kota Belud town.

"I am sure the water supply there will be affected."

A water-rationing exercise was conducted here yesterday after a massive shortfall in production at the Bayayat water treatment plant.