College offers succour to residents

Zubeda Hamid

A doctor examines a senior citizen at the relief camp at Loyola College. Photo: R.Ragu

On the Loyola College campus, about 200 student volunteers and 25 staff have been formed into committees to look after the needs of the 2,000-odd flood-hit residents who have been accommodated there, there is a help desk at the entrance, and relief materials are distributed room-wise to all, said public relations officer K.S. Antony Samy.

“We have no problems with regard to food, water or bed sheets. We do require other materials such as clothes, schoolbags and books,” said B. Latha, who, along with A. Subochana, had been rescued by boats from East Namasivayapuram in Choolaimedu.

S. Chinnamma, who has a wound on her left forehead from slipping and falling while trying to retrieve a few possessions from her home, said she had consulted doctors at the daily medical camp run at the college with volunteers and Chennai Corporation doctors. “We lost everything — fridges, beds, mixers and grinders — all gone,” she said.

P. Gajjalakshmi, who worked as a salesperson at the Poorvika mobile showroom in Kodambakkam, was worried about her school certificates. “I couldn’t see my house — it was completely drowned in the water,” she said.

With schools and colleges possibly re-opening on Monday, the residents are worried as to where they will go and how they will get back to their old lives. “We are already hearing that we may have to leave on Sunday. But what will we do? We have no homes or possessions,” one resident said.

Mr. Antony Samy said the college's reopening may be delayed by a day or two as they did not want to pressure the residents to leave.

Where relief does not reach them

At Jaigopal Garodiya School in Saidapet that now houses residents who used to live along the Adyar river in huts near the area, they are unsure of what to go back to.

“Everything, including my ration card, clothes and valuables, have been washed away. We were living there for the past 13 years, waiting for our Housing Board apartments which we were allotted more than a decade ago,” said A. Kuppusamy, a 62-year-old resident.

People in the camp, which houses over 200 people from the nearby areas who fled their homes after water levels rose on Monday, say that other than food, they have not got any relief materials. “Since a large number of people have been affected in this area, they line up on the main roads and stop the relief vehicles or even get into the relief trucks and take away things before they can reach here,” said L. Kaniammal. Stating that there were many infants at the camp, she pleaded for relief workers to provide for milk and baby clothes.

Many other persons in the camp said that only on Saturday, after much pleading, had they got access to water. The camp in itself paints a picture of squalor and neglect with stagnant water and slushy grounds which, they fear, will lead to an outbreak of malaria or dengue.