

A Roof Over Their Heads: 100 Houses To The Heroic Armed Forces



One by one they came and accepted the keys to their new homes. A momentous occasion for those who had sacrificed much for the country. President Mahinda Rajapaksa handed over 100 houses to Security Forces personnel in the Matale district, which were built under the Api Wenuwen Api programme.

A total of 70 Army, 20 Navy and 10 Air Force families received houses under the Api Wenuwen Api housing project. The houses were built on the land owned by the Armed Forces personnel, which were spread throughout the Matale district. President Mahinda Rajapaksa ceremonially handed over the first house to Corporal Udayasiri Kumara Wanasinghe, in Yaya II, Ihalagama, Bathgampola in Wilgamuwa and presented the keys to 99 other house owners at a ceremony held at the Negegolla School ground in Matale. Household utensils to the spouses and educational gift packs for children were also presented on this occasion.

Additional stationery packages were presented to students of the Nugegolla Dharma Pradeepa School and Nugegolla Maha Vidyalaya.

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The Api Wenuwen Api programme was launched by the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development to elevate the living standards of the heroic Armed Forces and their families by supporting them with the construction of their houses. It is a recognition and acknowledgement of the sacrifices that they have made for the peace and freedom of this country. The Api Wenuwen Api programme is implemented under the direction and guidance of Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the untiring efforts of Ioma Rajapaksa, Chairperson of the Seva Vanitha Unit of the Ministry of Defence.

The keynote address was given by Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to the President, while Minister Janaka Bandara Tennekoon, Minister of Lands and Land Development and Lakshman Wasantha Perera, MP spoke on the occasion.

Minister of Lands and Land Development Janaka Bandara Tennekoon, delivering the opening address appreciated the efforts undertaken by all parties involved, reflecting, “today is a special day for the people in the Matale District. Under the guidance of our leader President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ended the 30 year war in this country, houses have been built for the war heroes who dedicated themselves for us, our country and our nation. This efforts was undertaken by Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Ioma Rajapaksa and the officers of the three forces.”

Delivering the next address □Lakshman Vasantha Perera, Member of Parliament, added his appreciation by saying, “Madam Ioma Rajapaksa called us and asked us to come because they have chosen this area to host the Api Wenuwen Api initiative. She inquired if we can provide the facilities necessary for this area and for the future of these children and this area through development ventures. We have fulfilled this duty responsibly together with the □Sri Lanka Navy and the Sri Lanka Army.” He further went onto say, “on behalf of all the people of this country I would like to extend my appreciation to everyone who has contributed to making this vision a reality. We pledge to support this endeavour in the future

to our fullest strength.”

Lalith Weeratunga, Secretary to the President who delivered the keynote address said, “a soldier risks his life when he stands in the front lines, a soldier is not someone who can go to work in the morning and come home in the evening. He doesn’t know if he will come. Whenever he leaves the bunker it could be his last trip. There might be many fortunate ones but there have been thousands who lost their lives. In memory of them, to realise their dreams, to build that house they always dreamt of. This is the thinking behind Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s patronage and Ioma Rajapaksa’s vision. That’s why this endeavour is a charity and an appreciation.” Speaking about the commitment of President Mahinda Rajapaksa, he said, “these soldiers we talk of today, His Excellency the President spoke about much earlier. When he was a Member of Parliament and when he participated as a Presidential candidate, he very clearly made this speech in front of the public.” Lalith Weeratunga further added that, “in his Mahinda Chinthana vision, he (the President) says this, “The soldiers who fought and died or were disabled in the war against terrorism do not belong to one ethnic group, they didn’t fight against a nationality or an ethnic group, they fought to save the people of the North from the hold of terrorism.”

The layout of the house consists of a spacious sitting room, three bedrooms, kitchen, bathroom and outdoor bathroom. All houses are of the same layout, it is only the extent of the land that differs as the houses are built on their own land.

In the case of Corporal Udayasiri Kumara Wanasinghe, his house was built on family land by Api Wenuwen Api programme and the landscaping of the garden as well as the preparation of the home garden was done by his regiment - Gajaba Regiment. Having been stationed in the Northern sector during the war, Corporal Wanasinghe was injured in 2001 during Operation Agni. This house will provide a home to his family of four.





