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Landslips in Kalimpong, Kurseong

OUR BUREAU

Kalimpong/Kurseong, Sept. 7: Mounds of earth rolling down the hills after incessant rain over two days swamped many kutcha homes today, burying alive at least five persons who were inside.

Kamal Tirwa, 45, and his 20-year-old daughter Sheetal died in their Mongbolbustee home and Shanti Chhetri, 35, at Chota Bhalukhop, both places being within walking distance of Kalimpong town.

Some 18km from Kurseong town, Manmaya Tamang, 40, and her 11-year-old son Susan died in sleep around noon when debris from a landslide buried their Bagora home. Her husband Bhakta was away on work at the air force base. Her elder son was in school.

The serial landslips that have been striking the north Bengal hills at random also claimed couple Tirtha Bahadur, 57, and Sukmit, 47, in the Seokbir gram panchayat.

The weather forecast for tomorrow is grim. "The monsoon has been active in the sub-Himalayan region since Wednesday. More rains are expected in the next 24 hours," said Subir Sarkar of the weather station at the North Bengal University in Siliguri.

Nearly 500 houses, including 300 in the Kalimpong municipality, have been damaged. "We have shifted 15 families to three camps set up within the civic area. Another 34 families have moved in with relatives. In the rural areas, about 180 families have been moved to safer places," said Shakeel Ahmed, the outgoing sub-divisional officer of Kalimpong.

The mudslips have blocked and cut off several roads, including national highway 31A, the main road linking Sikkim and Kalimpong with Siliguri.