



Buddhist Temple at the Turkish Village in Sri Lanka and Young monk and the Water Tank of the Village.

Turkish Village photos by: Bircan ÜNVER

Taken on December 11-13, 2006.

By Bircan ÜNVER

On February 9, 2005, the day I left Sri Lanka, after my monthly stay there, followed by the Tsunami, I was very excited to hear the news about the Turkish Village. On the very same day, Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was going to launch a Turkish Village project in Matara. I had been aware of this project while I was going to Sri Lanka over Turkey, and I had learned more about it in Colombo. I had met two representatives of the Turkish Blue Crescent in Colombo who were working for the preparations of launching of the Turkish Village project in Matara.



I read the news about the project after Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan launched it in the Turkish daily newspapers after I returned to New York, but I did not read or hear any other related news in any other media in NY. Since then I was curious to know more about this project and the process.

Later, I read in the Turkish media that Turkish Red Crescent built a Buddhist Temple in the Turkish Village in Matara in December 2005. It was very exciting for me to learn about the continuing progress of the project.



Prior to my re-visit to Sri Lanka in November-December 2006, I was thinking of visiting the Turkish Village although I didn't know much about its progress or if the project was completed or not.

I met with a gentleman named Andrew Noad from Australia at Senkada in Colombo 4, where I frequently checked my e-mails during my stay in Colombo. He was a representative of an Australian NGO's Housing project for tsunami victims. I was planning to go to Matara the next day to see the Turkish Village. This was an interesting coincidence since Australia was one of the countries who mostly built and provided housing projects for tsunami victims.

Later, I also learned from Mr. Ali Ilyas Halilibrahimbeyoglu, President of 10th Period of the construction to the Turkish Village, that the Turkish Village was the largest housing complex built after the tsunami for the victims by the Turkish Red Crescent in Midigama on Matara Road in Sri Lanka. He informed me that this complex contained 450 houses with multi-complex social units with a self-reliable economic system via organic agriculture.

There were general rumors and complaints that after the Tsunami many housing projects for victims were promised to the Sri Lankan Government by some foreign NGOs but they weren't completed or even started at all, and many of these NGO's had already left the

country. For this particular reason, I was even more curious to see the actual Turkish Village.

However, I didn't have any exact information where the Turkish Village was and whether it was completed or not. Did the villagers move in or did its construction still continue?

I left the guest house on Rose Mead Place in the morning of December 11, 2006 with these questions, took an air-conditioned (AC) bus from Peddah to Matara. AC buses are considered to be semi-luxury buses in Sri Lanka, but they are mostly packed, and are actually mini buses. The only luxury about them is having an AC in it!

I have been told that it was a 4 hours drive. When we passed the Gale Road, it was already over 5 hours, but we had still not arrived there!

Most of time, the Gale Road is very busy, with all sort of buses, trucks, three-wheeled cars, bicycles, motorcycles and sometimes animals riding in either direction, and at the same time there was construction at some parts of the road. It is a very narrow and chaotic road.







<http://www.village.html>