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TIME RUNNING OUT FOR LTTE:

### End in sight

Raniil WIJAYAPALA

The public attitude towards the ongoing humanitarian operations by the Security Forces is changing very fast. They have become the keenest observers of this drama. Sometimes their observations are much advanced than those of the people who are really involved in this process and extra sensitive towards any incident taking place there.



An armoured tank bulldozes its way  
Pix: Rukmal Gamage

What they want is to see an end to the war very soon. At the same time they too are sympathetic towards the plight of the Tamil people who have been trapped inside the small territory that remains under the control of the LTTE.

Therefore, the Security Forces have to engage in a balancing game at present. From one side they want to end this battle without unnecessary delay and at the same time they have to be extra sensitive towards the growing concerns about the plight of the besieged civilians since

they are at high risk at present.

### Remaining areas

Under these circumstances the Security Forces have to address these two concerns together. They cannot expedite the process of liberating the remaining areas under the Tiger grip due to the presence of the civilians and they cannot liberate the civilians as LTTE is not allowing them to move out of their territory.

The fact remains here that the Security Forces who are acting very humanely have to face the ruthless acts of the LTTE making it a battle between a ruthless terror outfit and a well disciplined and humane Security Forces.

The civilians fleeing the Tiger grip have thousands of stories to tell the Tamil Diaspora across the globe funding this ruthless campaign, about atrocities committed by the LTTE against their own community.

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They say how they grabbed their prestigious wealth, their children from their hands and brutally killed their beloved ones when they stood against the LTTE, and how they fire at them when they flee from the Tiger controlled areas seeking refuge in military controlled areas.

But all these cries go unheard by international organizations who are compiling reports about the Sri Lankan situation. May be they are still suffering from the minority complex as it happens anywhere in the world.

What they don't realise is that the LTTE has always fooled them in the past and are trying to fool them again to obtain their assistance at this last moment to come out of this humiliating defeat.

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Peace Process of

Therefore, it is incumbent on the international community to find the truth themselves and address the issue with a true picture in their mind without being misled by false statements by pro-LTTE networks.

This week there is considerable progress regarding the arrival of civilians into the military controlled areas with over 1,000 civilians arriving in military controlled areas on a daily basis commencing from last Sunday.

Total of 1185 Tamil civilians who had been forcibly held by the LTTE terrorists arrived in Government controlled areas on Friday. The civilians reached the troops of 58 Division on offensive in general area of Puthukkudiyirippu.

Among the escapees are 326 males, 338 females, 279 male children and 242 female children. They were directed to the welfare centres established in Kilinochchi after providing them with meals, medical treatment and other necessities.

Civilians are also reaching South of Puthukkudiyirippu crossing the Nanthikadal lagoon to reach the 53 Division area.

According to statistics nearly 50,000 civilians have already arrived in Government controlled areas as of yesterday and this trend will continue in the coming days too without any disruption as the possibilities are very low for the LTTE to stop them.

Many of them are arriving in Government controlled areas from the Northern and Southern edges of the No Fire Zone as troops are confronting the LTTE from the Western part of the No Fire Zone.

Civilians are also taking the sea route to reach Security Forces controlled areas in Jaffna and the Sri Lanka Navy is taking care of these civilians once they reach towards the Northern Naval area.

The ground troops are taking an additional burden on them to look after these civilians and give them a humanely treatment at their arrival in the Security Forces controlled areas.

The most fearing factor is the arrival of suicide cadres towards the military controlled areas mingling with these civilians. Therefore, the screening of each civilian is inevitable to avoid any incident similar to what occurred in Visuamadu early this year.

#### **Hapless civilians**

The civilians who have arrived in Government controlled areas have revealed that the LTTE is taking cover of the No Fire Zone to direct fire at the Security Forces amidst protests by the civilians. But those hapless civilians cannot make any voice against them since it would be the end of their life.

But many civilians living inside the No Fire Zone are reluctant to arrive in Government controlled areas as their children have been forcibly recruited to the Tiger outfit.

The surveillance craft of the Sri Lanka Air Force collected clear evidence to prove how the LTTE has used their heavy weapons located in the No Fire Zone against the advancing Security Forces and the way the LTTE is providing weapon training to the besieged civilians in the No Fire Zone.

Day by day the LTTE is strengthening its depleting ranks after providing weapon training to the civilians. According to latest revelations they are recruiting 100 to 200 civilians between the age 14 to 45 on a daily basis and providing them weapon training to face the advancing Security Forces.

#### **Taken control**



An ever alert Commando.

Amidst the LTTE trying their best to strengthen their depleting ranks the Security Forces have already arrived in the centre of Iranapalai as of yesterday taking the control of the Iranapalai school complex.

The 58 Division under the command of Brigadier Shavendra Silva advancing from the West to East direction from the North of A-35 road have been able to recover the bodies of at least ten well trained cadres per day after killing more than 20 to 30 cadres per day.

The 58 Division has been able to capture the entire road stretch from Puthukudiyirippu to Puthumattalan with the capture of the Iranapalai centre from the Tiger grip. Iranapalai being the last build up area under their control, the LTTE is providing stiff resistance towards the advancing troops.

It was on Tuesday troops attached to the 58 offensive Division advanced further into LTTE hiding areas with the falling of strategically vital Iranapalai junction in Puthukkudiyirippu.

Infantrymen of 11 Sri Lanka Light Infantry (11 SLLI), 7 Sinha Regiment (7 SR), 10 Gajaba Regiment (10 GR), 9 Gemunu Watch (9 GW), 12, 8 and 20 Gajaba Regiments continued the advance and strengthened their defenses in Iranapalai east amidst heavy LTTE resistance.

However, troops were able to inflict maximum damages to the LTTE, battlefield sources confirmed citing intercepted terror communication channels.

Following the clashes ensued since last morning troops found 10 bodies of LTTE cadres, 25 T-56 rifles, 01 Light Machine Gun and 12 radio communication sets. Further, the snipers deployed in the forward defences confirmed 3 LTTE terrorists were killed during this battle.

Such stiff resistance is coming towards the Security Forces as many of the LTTE's top rung Tiger leaders, operational centres including that of Pottu Amman the Second-in-Command of the LTTE and Sea Tiger leader Soosai are located there in Iranapalai.

Troops have recovered large number of military equipment and Tiger bases during their operations to capture Iranapalai from the Tiger grip.

It was amidst troops conducting operations in Iranapalai, one of the hideouts of the Intelligence Wing leader Pottu Amman came under Security Forces attack on March 16 during day time.

Though there is no proof to indicate that Pottu Amman was there inside that hide out the impact of this attack was evident on Wednesday when as the driver of Pottu Amman who managed to survive from this attack arrived in Government controlled areas mingling with the civilians.

He had divulged that the LTTE is still maintaining a considerable strength with them and top rung leaders who used to travel in super luxury vehicles are now using motorbikes as their mode of transport.

He has told the interrogators that Pottu Amman is still living with his wife Vathsala and his three children. Vathsala is also attached to the LTTE and acting as a Tiger cadre.

He has divulged that the Tiger leader Prabhakaran and his son Charles are still living there and the Tiger leader is sending a vehicle once he wants to meet Pottu Amman personally.

#### **Body**

According to him even Pottu Amman cannot reach Prabhakaran using his personnel vehicle. Security Forces have also observed that the LTTE had made use of disabled cadres to man their defences as troops attached to the 53 Division have found a body of a female Tiger cadre who was with an artificial limb and a hand.

The 53 Division under the command of Major General Kamal Gunaratne and Task Force VIII under the command of Colonel G.V. Ravipriya are also making headway towards the Southern edge of the No Fire Zone having advanced to the Northern edge of the Nanthikadal lagoon .

The LTTE is strongly defending this terrain as they are aware that its loss will be the end of their journey. But the troops attached to 5 Gajaba Regiment, 5 Gemunu Watch, 6 Gajaba Regiment, 18 Gemunu Watch, 15 Sri Lanka Light Infantry Regiment and 1 Gemunu Watch Battalions are heading towards this terrain.

Amidst troops advancing towards the last terrain held by the LTTE, which is nearly 28 square kilometres in size including the no fire zone the Security Forces are strengthening their positions in all fronts expecting a worse type of attack from the LTTE at the last moment.

Army Commander Lt. General Sarath Fonseka during his visit to Vanni Security Forces Headquarters on Thursday alerted all the field commanders about possible options the Tigers might resort to at the last moment.

So far the LTTE has made several attempts to breach the Security Forces defences. The first major attempt was on February 01 and it came using large number of Tiger cadres in the Western edge of the Nanthikadal lagoon.

During this counter attack troops of the 59 Division had to readjust their defences as their defences were breached by the LTTE using explosive laden vehicle. It was only Friday the Task Force VIII and 53 Division troops managed to reach the original defences the 59 Division was holding in the West of Nanthikadal lagoon as of February 01.

#### Foil

But Security Forces were able to foil a major attempt by the LTTE to recapture Mullaitivu and extend their defences upto Oddusudan and Mankulam on February 04 at the time Sri Lanka was celebrating the Independence Day.

The second and third attempts were made a month after their first attempt to breach the Security Forces defences towards the 58 Division from the North of Puthukudiyiruppu.

The 58 Division supported by the Commando and Special Forces troops were able to foil this attempt killing more than 200 well trained Tiger cadres. During this attack a number of top and middle rung leaders were killed among the 200 Tiger cadres killed at the hands of the Security Forces.

There is no indication what so ever about Tiger leader Swarnam after this attack. Security Forces believe he was either badly injured or dead after this attack.

Army Commander Lt. General Fonseka is also concerned about a possible major suicide attacks by the LTTE at the last moment of their defeat and has reportedly advised the field commanders to be prepared for the worst kind of attack at the last moment.

Therefore, what is left for the Security Forces at this moment is to take defensive actions and move further into the LTTE territory until they let free all the civilians besieged in the No Fire Zone and ensure that the last inch of land under LTTE is taken under Security Forces control.

But there are strong indications that the LTTE would give up the battle once the last terrain under their control outside the No Fire Zone is captured by the troops. Yet it is a decision yet to be taken by Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran considered to be the most ruthless terrorist in the world.

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