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## ARMY DESTROYS LTTE EARTH BUND AND ENTERS PUTHUMATTALAN:

### Human Avalanche

OVER 35,000 CROSS OVER TO GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED AREA:

AROUND 20,000 MORE AWAIT EVACUATION:

Ranil Wijayapala

Troops attached to 58 Division engaged in the biggest ever hostage rescue mission in the military history, yesterday ended the months' long forcible detention of tens of thousands civilians by the LTTE, after entering the No Fire Zone in the early hours of yesterday with the capture of the three km long Tiger earth bund in Puthumattalan and Ampalavanpokkanai, military sources told the Daily News.

With the gates to the No Fire Zone in Puthumattalan and Ampalavanpokkanai were opened by the troops attached to 58 Division along with Commando troops and Special Forces troops, an avalanche of civilians started to flood into the Security Forces' controlled areas through the Security Forces' defences in Ampalavanpokkanai and Puthumattalan yesterday morning.

"The Security Forces witnessed civilians exceeding 35,000 flooding into the military controlled areas in Ampalavanpokkanai at day break yesterday soon after LTTE defences were breached by the 58 Division troops," a senior military official told the Daily News.

"Troops attached to 58 Division under the command of Brigadier Shavendra Silva were able to open the gates of the No Fire Zone without shedding a single drop of blood of the civilians which was totally an unexpected situation for the international community who were fearing a blood bath in the No Fire Zone," military officials added.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa who arrived at the Air Force Headquarters last morning witnessed the freedom march of the civilians (which was one of the dreams of the Security Forces in their two and half year long march to liberate Vanni) from the Operations Room through the visuals of the Unman Aerial Vehicle of the SLAF flying over the skies of the No Fire Zone.

Even the international media had the opportunity to witness what was happening inside the No Fire Zone through the UAV visuals to get a clear picture of the situation and present it to the international community.

The visuals of the No Fire Zone which were made available to media personnel by the SLAF very clearly indicated the way thousands of civilians lined up to arrive at the cleared areas.

"More than 35,000 civilians trapped inside the No Fire Zone were able to reach the Security Forces' controlled areas through military check ups by yesterday afternoon whilst another 20,000 to 30,000 people awaiting to enter Security Forces controlled areas through Ampalavanpokkanai and Puthumattalan," military officials said.

Civilians were checked and welcomed by the troops both at Ampalavanpokkanai and Puthumattalan whilst providing them with drinking water and fresh meals on arrival.

Aerial visuals also displayed civilians gathering at the coast expecting to be rescued by boats whilst another section of civilians crossing the Nanthikadal lagoon and Puthumattalan lagoon to reach military controlled areas.

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At some point Security Forces ran out of capacity to check the civilians in thousands and reinforcements and medical teams were airlifted to the area to attend the welfare matters of the civilians.

The Sri Lanka Transport Board too deployed additional buses to meet the demand of transporting the exodus of civilians arriving in the Government controlled areas.

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