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## New 24 hr ultimatum to LTTE

MILITARY OFFENSIVE CONTINUES:

Ranil WIJAYAPALA



Defence Secretary

The Security Forces will continue their military operations until it rescues the last civilian held hostage by the LTTE and the last LTTE leader is killed or surrenders to the Security Forces, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa told the Daily News yesterday.

He said it is high time for the LTTE leaders to let the remaining civilians arrive in the Government controlled areas and surrender to the Security Forces as a 24- hour ultimatum has already been issued by the Government for them to surrender.

"They should either surrender to the Security Forces or see their end at the hands of the troops," Rajapaksa added.

He said the Security Forces displayed their professionalism to the entire world by successfully rescuing the civilians in the biggest ever hostage rescue mission in the world.

The Defence Secretary said the Government did not agree to a Ceasefire with the LTTE as it was aware that the Security Forces would be able to carry out its mission successfully.

"If we had agreed to a Ceasefire with the LTTE the LTTE would not have allowed these civilians to arrive in military controlled areas as they did today," the Secretary added. He said the United Nations and the international community should at least realize the ground realities now and exert maximum pressure on the LTTE to release the civilians.

He said it was high time for the international community to realize the true nature of the LTTE as everybody was given a chance to view what was happening inside the No Fire Zone. "There is no need to speculate about the situation as all had the opportunity to witness what was happening there and the way the LTTE was keeping those civilians under their detention," he added.

"The Tamil Diaspora also can understand that the LTTE is not the savior of the Tamil community but the destroyer of the Tamil community. Therefore they can understand the true nature of Prabhakaran who had no love for the Tamil community," Rajapaksa added.

"Therefore, the Tamil Diaspora who are urging the United Nations and the international community to exert pressure on the Government should now pressurize the LTTE to release the civilians," he added.

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