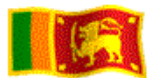


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Troops advance further

CAPTURE ANOTHER EARTHBOUND:

RANIL WIJAYAPALA

The 58 and the 53 Divisions cleared their paths towards the remaining five km stretch of the No Fire Zone after 53 Division stormed another heavily fortified earthbund built across the Paranthan-Mullaitivu A-35 road after close quarter fighting that continued for long in the early hours of yesterday, military officials told the Daily News yesterday.

The 53 Division which is operating in the narrow land stretch between the Nanthikadal lagoon and the A-35 road captured this earth bund which is located South of the the key junction that links the A-35 road with the Puthumatalan-Mullaitivu road.

Earlier on Saturday the 58 and the 53 Division troops captured the key junction that links the Puthumatalan-Mullaitivu and Paranthan-Mullaitivu roads North of Vellamullivaikkal. According to senior military officials, during yesterday's battle to capture the heavily fortified earthbund LTTE made desperate attempts to hold onto it bringing reinforcements to the earth bund from a number of Tiger vehicles.

"The LTTE suffered heavily during this battle that ended with the troops capturing this heavily fortified earthbund by the early hours of yesterday braving the heavy mine fields of the LTTE," the official added. It has also been reported that senior Tiger leader Thamilendi who was in charge of the heavy weapons of the LTTE was also killed during this battle.

With the 53 Division moving into the Puthumatalan - Mullaitivu junction the 58 Division under the command of Brigadier Shavendra Silva is now operating in the beach front of the No Fire Zone East of the A-35 road whilst 53 Division under the command of Major General Kamal Gunaratne is advancing towards the south between the Nanthikadal lagoon and the A-35 road.

"The LTTE is now trapped in a five km stretch of land along with the civilians and the troops are slowly but steadily advancing to that terrain amidst all obstacles posed by the LTTE," military officials added.

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