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Troops in final push

FORCES CAPTURE FARAH III AND VADUVAKKAL BRIDGE:

TROOPS POISED TO COMPLETELY SEAL OFF ENTIRE EASTERN COAST:

Ranil WIJAYAPALA

Ground troops engaged in their final push against LTTE are poised to completely seal off the Eastern coast within the next 24 hours as 58 Division troops advancing towards Mullaitivu from the Northern direction reached closer to Mullaitivu front after capturing the grounded Jordanian ship Farah III in the Mullaitivu seas by yesterday evening, Military officials told the Daily News.



Jordanian ship Farah III

The 58 Division which commenced its military operations from Mannar and liberated the entire North Western coast, is going to reach this historic moment after marrying up with the 59 Division troops now advancing from the South to North direction from the Mullaitivu front, the official added.

"By yesterday evening, less than two kilo metres stretch of beach front was under the LTTE control and it would soon be captured by the troops once 58 and 59 Division troops marry up in the North

of Mullaitivu completely denying the beach front to the LTTE," the official added.

As troops closing in on the last terrain of the LTTE, many explosions were heard inside the safe zone and from Tiger hideouts as they blew off their ammunition dumps and other weapons before being captured by the advancing troops.

The 58 Division troops under the command of Brigadier Shavendra Silva last evening captured the Jordanian ship Farah III which was used by the LTTE to fire upon the ground troops of both 58 and 59 Divisions advancing on the ground and also towards Navy boats patrolling in the sea off Mullaitivu.

The 11 Sri Lanka Light Infantry battalion under the command of Lt. Colonel Kithsiri Ekanayake captured this ship which was made use by Sea Tigers as their operational centre.

In December 2006, the Jordanian ship Farah III had engine trouble and was awaiting rescue from Colombo when Sea Tigers entered the ship and abducted the crew and its captain to Mullaitivu. Later they were released to the International Red Cross.

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The 150 metre cargo ship with a crew of 25 Jordanians and Egyptians captained by an Iraqi was carrying 14,000 tons of rice from India's Andhra Pradesh to South Africa when it developed mechanical problems.

Holding a press conference in Colombo, the crew said later that evening on the first day, every removable communication equipment in the ship and the crew's personal effects were looted by the Sea Tigers.

The LTTE later looted the 14,000 metric tonnes of rice from the ship.

According to military officials the advance on the beach front would be much easy with the capture of this ship. As 58 Division troops advanced further southwards the 59 Division now under the command of Brigadier Prasanna Silva captured

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Vaduvakkal bridge that link the A-35 road into the Mullaitivu town through Nanthikadal lagoon.

“With the capture of this bridge, 59 Division troops have opened up a land route to facilitate the civilians reach the south of the Safe Zone,” officials added. According to military officials more than 3,000 civilians have reached the 59 Division area after crossing the Nanthikadal lagoon using tubes and floating equipment.

“Hundreds of civilians were still flowing into military controlled areas by yesterday evening and thousands are waiting to flee towards the military controlled areas,” the official added.

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