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CIVILIANS DESERT LTTE:

Final influx massive

Ranil WIJAYAPALA

A huge influx of civilians once again started to flow into the military controlled areas as Security Forces were ready laying siege on the remaining Tiger controlled areas yesterday whilst ground troops uncovered huge stocks of arms and ammunition of the LTTE from the areas they captured, military officials told the Daily News yesterday.

As of yesterday evening more than 15,000 civilians have arrived in military controlled areas from Friday morning.

More than 10,000 civilians arrived by evening yesterday in the 53 division area after ground troops advanced further southward of the Vellamullivaikkal area whilst more than 1000 civilians arrived in the 59 Division area crossing the Nanthikadal lagoon, military officials added.

"Civilians are arriving in thousands into the 53 Division area along the A-35 road and troops temporarily suspended their military operations to facilitate their arrival by yesterday afternoon," a senior military official added.

According to sources from the battleground, LTTE cadres have been trapped in a tiny area outside south of Vellamullivaikkal and explosions were heard continuously from the area giving strong indications that they were destroying their arms and ammunition to prevent them being captured by the troops.

"The Security Forces once again lay siege on the LTTE terrain surrounding the remaining Tiger leaders inside as the 58 Division and the 59 Division were poised to marry up in the Mullaitivu sea front by yesterday evening," the official added.

During their advance into the Mullaitvu front the 58 Division has recovered the biggest ever arms and ammunition stock they have ever recovered within a 24 hour period, a senior military official added.

Seventy two 60 mm mortars, 36 Indian made Rocket Launchers , two anti aircraft pedal guns, one 12.7 mm machine gun, a Marine Radar, 12 suicide boats were among the recoveries. "Thousands of sea mines and huge stocks of arms and ammunitions which were being counted by the troops for hours were recovered on Friday", the official added.

Three female Sea Tiger cadres were captured whilst recovering 40 Tiger bodies during the operations conducted yesterday.

Ground troops launched a massive attack on the LTTE cadres who tried to stop the troops' advance into the area inflicting heavy damages to them.

According to military officials the next 24 hours will be very crucial as many Tiger leaders have given up hopes of their survival sending their family members along with civilians fleeing towards the military controlled areas.

Many of the Maha Veer families and Tiger cadres have also started to abandon Tiger held areas as they have realised that there is no escape for them.

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