

Ultimatum to LTTE ends
Hindu, 1 February 2009

COLOMBO: With the expiry of the 48-hour ultimatum served on the LTTE by Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa for allowing safe passage of civilians out of the battle zone, the government on Saturday announced that it would continue to adhere to a 'zero civilian casualty policy' in its effort to eradicate terrorism. The Tigers ignored the ultimatum on the plea that they were not holding civilians forcibly in the territory under its control and would not facilitate 'exodus of reluctant civilians' into the military zone

Military strategy to change with breaking of LTTE's back
Island, 1 February 2009

With the Sri Lanka's most successful ground offensive on the Vanni front rapidly coming to a close, an appraisal of overall military strategy is on the cards. Authoritative military sources asserted that once the army liberated an area of less than 300 square kms. east of the A9, the basic strategy will have to be changed. The transformation will see giant multiple Division-sized operations replaced by a mix of operations by the infantry, Special Forces and Commandos targeting isolated LTTE units which may take refuge in the dense jungles of the northern and eastern provinces

Colombo: we will destroy LTTE shortly
Hindu, 2 February 2009

COLOMBO: Amid claims by the military of further advances into the last two remaining settlements of the LTTE, Sri Lanka Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Sunday asserted that the forces would shortly "destroy" the Tigers. A report posted on the Defence Ministry website quoted him as saying that the LTTE's refusal to pay heed to the 48-hour ultimatum issued by President Mahinda Rajapaksa to the outfit to release civilians should be an eye-opener to the NGOs and the international community

President calls LTTE to surrender
Daily News, 2 February 2009

President Mahinda Rajapaksa renewing his call to LTTE terrorists, urged them to surrender or face grave danger of being captured by the Government Armed Forces. This renewed call was made by President Rajapaksa when he addressed a mammoth rally at the Rikillagaskada playground yesterday in support of the UPFA candidates contesting the Central Provincial Council election, scheduled for February 14

Forces advance further; Capture LTTE camp complex, weapons, assets:
Daily News, 2 February 2009

The Security Forces engaged in the final phase of the Vanni liberation operation continued its military thrust against the LTTE recovering large hauls of weapons as the 48 hour ultimatum given to the LTTE to allow civilians to reach safer areas ended on Saturday night with around 300 civilians arriving in Security Forces controlled areas, Military sources said yesterday. "Around 300 civilians arrived in the Government controlled areas in Visuamadu and Pulmudai and to Omanthai within the 48 hour period," Military Spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara told the Daily News

President asks clergy to return

Daily News, 3 February 2009

President Mahinda Rajapaksa yesterday requested members of the clergy in the conflict areas in the North to return to Government controlled areas along with the trapped civilians as the Government has taken all measures to cater to their welfare. The President made this appeal when the Papal Pro Nuncio in Sri Lanka Monsignor Mario Zenari called on him at Temple Trees yesterday. The President who requested Monsignor Mario Zenari to convey this message to members of the clergy in the conflict areas said that if they heeded this request and returned to the Government controlled areas it would greatly help the Government to succeed in its efforts to liberate the people in the North from the clutches of terrorism

Give up hostilities, India to LTTE, SL Govt

Indian Express, 5 February 2009

New Delhi: Voicing concern over the loss of lives in embattled Sri Lanka, India on Wednesday asked the LTTE to lay down arms and come to the negotiating table while urging Colombo to suspend hostilities. "We are deeply anguished at the loss of lives. We are not happy that the Sri Lankan Government has resumed hostilities. It is for both sides to cease hostilities," Union Home Minister P Chidambaram said

52 dead, 80 injured in Sri Lanka

Hindu, 5 February 2009

COLOMBO: Amid confirmation by a United Nations representative here that at least 52 people were killed and 80 wounded in continued fighting between the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE and a cluster bomb targeted the only functional hospital in the fast shrinking area under the control of the Tigers, Sri Lanka Co-Chairs on Wednesday appealed to the government and the LTTE to declare a 'temporary no-fire period.'

Base of Tiger chief's bodyguards captured

Island, 7 February 2009

Army's 57 Division yesterday afternoon captured a building complex in Visvamadu East from where the Radha Regiment, which provides LTTE leader Prabhakaran with personal security, had operated. The LTTE leader's bodyguards had left the place a long time ago. Army sources said there were over one hundred weapons of all types used for training Prabhakaran's bodyguards

Prabhakaran feasted, others ate crumbs

Asian Age, 7 February 2009

Feb. 6: A "menu card" seized by the Sri Lankan Army from LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran's hideout offered a rare glimpse into the Tiger chief's dietary preferences. It revealed, the Army said, that while the regular Tiger cadres were poorly fed, Prabhakaran and his confidants enjoyed sumptuous meals. The Sri Lankan Army recovered the menu card from a palatial mansion reportedly frequented by Prabhakaran at Visvamadu, in the jungles of Mullaittivu

Sri Lanka told of India's concern, says Pranab

Hindu, 9 February 2009

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Sunday urged "friends" in Tamil Nadu to draw a distinction between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) and the Tamil civilians of the island nation. The Minister was elaborating on the government's policy vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan Tamil issue at the one-day national convention of Block Congress Committee (BCC) and District Congress Committee (DCC) presidents here

Bomber kills 28 in Lanka
Asian Age, 10 February 2009

Feb. 9: An LTTE woman suicide bomber posing as a civilian blew herself up at a checkpoint for refugees fleeing Sri Lanka's war zone, killing at least 20 Army personnel and eight civilians. About 24 soldiers and 40 civilians sustained injuries. The suicide bomber had mingled with the civilians to arrive at a refugee camp at Surantharapuram, north of Visvamadu in Mullaittivu, on Monday morning. The soldiers were to screen the civilians before sending them to camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) further south

Govt. promises 'province of opportunity' in North
Island, 13 February 2009

With major ground battles on the eastern flank in the final stages the government yesterday expressed confidence that re-settlement of civilians in the war ravaged areas could start as early next month. Senior presidential advisor Basil Rajapaksa said 20 per cent of the displaced would be moved back to their villages before end of April. In an interview with The Island, the MP said that the government had launched "a cohesive four-stage plan" to restore normalcy in the Northern Province

LTTE fired at bus, says Colombo
Hindu, 15 February 2009

COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan military on Saturday accused the LTTE of attacking a bus carrying civilians with a hand grenade and small arms fire killing one and injuring over 13 at Pulliyankualam in Wannai. The Defence Ministry said the bus was transporting a group of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) — who had recently fled from the LTTE clutches in Wannai — from Kilinochchi to Vavuniya. A 60-year-old mother of two was killed while 4 children and 9 elderly people were among the injured

Government rejects British special envoy
Daily News, 15 February 2009

Conveying the Cabinet's decision on Wednesday to reject the appointment of former Defence Secretary Des Brown as a special envoy to Sri Lanka, the Government yesterday informed Britain their unilateral decision was in breach of the accepted principles governing international relations. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said the Cabinet in unison endorsed his application to reject the appointment of Des Brown MP as a special envoy to Sri Lanka, on the grounds that the Lankan side has not been properly consulted beforehand, given the sensitivity of the issue. He said: "I believe this is an unhelpful initiative in the counter terrorism activities and also amounts to the intrusion into Sri Lanka's internal affairs."

Wayamba, Central polls today

Daily News, 15 February 2009

Polling will take place from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm today, at 2,579 centres, covering all 40 polling divisions in the five districts, comprising the Central and North-Western Provincial Councils. A total of 2,247 candidates are in the fray from 16 political parties and 43 independent groups. In the Central Province 1,310 candidates are in the contest, from 14 political parties and 26 independent groups. In Northwestern province 937 candidates are in the fray from 12 political parties and 17 independent groups

Jets destroy Tiger suicide boats

Asian Age, 15 February 2009

Feb. 14: Sri Lanka Air Force fighter jets destroyed "several" LTTE suicide boats on the beach north of Mullaittivu on Saturday morning, Air Force spokesperson Janaka Nanayakkara said here.

The military has alleged that a woman was killed and 13 others sustained injuries when the LTTE attacked a bus full of fleeing civilians with hand grenades and small arms past midnight Friday at Pulliyankualam, in Vanni. A woman died in the incident and the wounded included four children, the defence spokesperson, Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara, said. The military has been accusing the Tigers of holding civilians as human shields and firing at those trying to escape to government-held territory

Big win for ruling alliance in Sri Lanka

Hindu, 16 February 2009

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's ruling combine on Sunday secured an impressive victory in the election to two of the provincial councils. In the run-up to the campaign, President Mahinda Rajapaksa had projected the election as a referendum on the war against the LTTE. The results announced by the Election Commission showed that the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), led by Mr. Rajapaksa, secured over 59 per cent of the votes polled in the Central Province and 55 per cent in the North Western Province

"Prabakaran still holed up in Wanni"

Hindu, 16 February 2009

COLOMBO: LTTE chief Velupillai Prabakaran is still holed up in Wanni and is holding an estimated 75,000 to 80,000 civilians as human shield in 140 sq km area still under the control of the Tigers, according to confessions made by two Black Tiger (suicide squad) cadre who surrendered to the military over a fortnight ago. The state-owned English weekly, Sunday Observer, in an interview with the Tiger cadre quoted them as saying Prabakaran's elder son, Charles Anthony, is among the top leaders leading the cadre in their last-ditch attempt to halt the military advance

UPFA All the way

Daily News, 16 February 2009

The United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) recorded a massive victory by obtaining more than 60 per cent of the votes cast at the polls held in Central and Northwestern provinces on Saturday. The UPFA won 37 polling divisions out of a total of 40 in the two provinces, with the United National Party (UNP) only managing two. While UPFA cantered home winning 36 (including two bonus seats) out of 58 seats on offer at the Central Provincial Council, the final results of the Northwestern Province was withheld, as the Commissioner of Elections took steps to annul the results of the Nayakkarchenai polling station in the Puttalam district, citing irregularities, in accordance with a report

submitted by the Returning Officer

Child soldiers in peril: UNICEF

Hindu, 18 February 2009

COLOMBO: The UNICEF has raised serious concern over the growing number of children recruited by the LTTE being killed or injured. It said on Tuesday it had clear indications that the LTTE had intensified forcible recruitment of civilians and children as young as 14 were being targeted. It had recorded more than 6,000 cases of children recruited by the LTTE between 2003 and 2008. It also said it was alarmed at the high number of children being injured in the fighting

Pranab upsets allies, says can't force sovereign Lanka

Indian Express, 18 February 2009

New Delhi: Government virtually turned down demands of two Tamil parties, including UPA constituent PMK, for India's intervention to stop military offensive in Sri Lanka, saying it cannot force a sovereign Government of another country to take a particular line. The assertion by External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee came after PMK and MDMK members expressed unhappiness over his statement in Lok Sabha on the situation in Sri Lanka and demanded its withdrawal. Mukherjee expressed readiness to make "corrections" in his statement if there were any "discrepancies".

LTTE aircraft attack Colombo; two killed

Hindu, 21 February 2009

COLOMBO: At least two persons were believed dead and 40 others injured as two light wing aircraft of the LTTE dropped a bomb in the heart of the national capital on Friday night. Power was switched off in the city after the radar system detected two aircraft heading towards the capital around 9 p.m. Sounds of explosions and continuous firing could be heard