
Complete takeover of north soon: Army

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B. Muralidhar Reddy COLOMBO: An International Committee of the Red Cross worker died on Thursday from a shrapnel injury in the war-torn north even as informed sources in the government indicated the military was hopeful of taking total control of the north in the next few days.

With the LTTE now believed to be confined to 45 sq. km., these sources are of the view that the military should be able to gain control of the area in the next four to five days. They are hopeful that an estimated 70,000 civilians trapped in the war zone would come out safe. A statement from the Defence Ministry quoted Army Chief Sarath Fonseka as telling senior commanders at Vavuniya that offensives inside the remaining area, including the "Safety Zone" for fleeing civilians, should be carried out taking all possible safety precautions and with utmost precision since the number of civilians thronging the area was now swelling. The statement quoted him as saying that LTTE infiltrators would try their maximum to inflict injury on both civilians and ground troops after mingling with fleeing civilians, as they have already done on several instances. He told commanders that LTTE fighting ability had drastically diminished and the terror outfit had been badly affected by lack of manpower and replenishments. "They have now resorted to storming the "Safety Zone" and abducting children of the escapees. Our progress from now onwards should be made meticulously, taking maximum precautions, keeping the civilian factor in mind at all times," Lieutenant General Fonseka told the commanders. Killed Separately, the ICRC said its staff member Vijayakumar, who was severely injured by a shrapnel just north of Valayanmadam, on the coastal area of LTTE territory, succumbed to his injuries at the makeshift medical facility in Putumattalan. Mr. Vijayakumar was married with three children and been working for the ICRC since 1997. Recently he was involved in ICRC-facilitated medical evacuations, helping to bring patients from the makeshift medical facility in Putumattalan to the beach and then on to the ICRC ferry for evacuation to Trincomalee. Courtesy: Hindu.com