
Desperation unlimited

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The suicide bombing — which killed 15 civilians and injured 45 others, including a Minister of the Mahinda Rajapaksa government — outside a mosque at Akurassa in the Matara district of Sri Lanka's Southern Province is yet another act of desperation by a terrorist outfit fighting for its life. Cornered by the Sri Lanka military in an area of about 45 square kilometres in the Mullaithivu district in the North, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is demonstrating afresh that there is no question of its changing its stripes.

On the night of February 20, Colombo witnessed the bizarre spectacle of two LTTE light wing aircraft, on a mission to crash land on the Air Force Headquarters and air base at Katunayake, being shot down. The government, anticipating such acts of excitative terrorism from the Tigers, has repeatedly warned the public to be vigilant. The mosque in the Deep South turned out to be a soft target because the possibility of the LTTE striking so far away from its bases was considered low. The Sri Lankan government has been quick to acknowledge the security lapses that led to the Matara carnage. It has announced special security guidelines to be followed for events that involve the participation of VVIPs in any part of the country. The Tigers are engaged in acts of wanton death and destruction even as they face elimination as a conventional military force. The Sri Lankan army's advance into the last remaining sliver of territory under the LTTE's control has been delayed entirely due to the presence of a large number of civilians the LTTE is holding as a human shield. The estimates of innocent people trapped in the war zone vary from 70,000 to 150,000, with nobody being confident about the numbers. The Rajapaksa administration is faced with an unusual challenge. First and foremost, it needs to ensure the safe passage of Tamil civilians caught in the crossfire. With reports coming in of a severe shortage of food and other supplies, the government needs to act fast and with foresight, especially considering the suicidal tendency that seems to have gripped a beleaguered LTTE leadership. The government and the armed forces have so far shown admirable restraint in the face of serious provocation. It is indeed a testing time for the Sri Lankan state, which needs all the help it can get to protect the lives and welfare of innocent citizens. Meanwhile, while justly registering concern over the fate of Tamil civilians, the rest of the world must avoid any tendency morally or politically to equate the two combatants — a legitimate government and a Pol Potist organisation that is committed to separatism and is a past master in the arts of terrorism. Courtesy: Hindu.com