

---

## Sri Lanka: Conditions improve in IDP camps

Friday, 03 April 2009

Last Updated Friday, 03 April 2009

Vast improvements have taken place in the conditions of the IDP camps where several steps have been taken for their welfare. The objective of the government is to provide maximum relief to ensure the well-being of the IDP without laxing security, said Hon. Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Human Rights and Disaster Management addressing a media briefing held at the Presidential Secretariat today (02).

62106 IDPs have reached the cleared area from the terrorist - controlled area at the risk of their life. Between March 30 and April (02), 2860 have arrived. Out of the 62106, 6597 were evacuated by the ICRC facilitated by the government. Out of 6597, 3257 are patients and the rest bystanders. It is clear that the majority of escapees are in normal health, Hon. Minister explained. Unification of family members separated while escaping from uncleared area is a significant achievement. 1108 IDPs who were living in 13 camps and 02 villages were unified, through proper coordination. This is a positive development and a great step forward. A visitors' centre has been set up in each centre facilitating relations among IDPs and their friends and relations and enabling them to be in constant contact with one another, Hon. Minister revealed. In Vavuniya 377 elderly persons were sent to friends or relations houses. About 100 were sent to elders' homes. Another positive development was the establishment of telephone facilities for IDPs. This has enabled them to maintain personal contacts with their friends and relations. The government sent 2332 metric tons of essential items, including food, medicine, clothing and household items by ship chartered on the directions of the H.E. the President Mahinda Rajapakse. A load of 1000 tons including 30 tons of vegetables and dry foodstuffs, 07 tons of infant milk food, 15 emergency health kits, 1000 hygienic kits, 2000 bed sheets, 2000 plastic mats, 800 plastic sheets clothing and other household items will be unloaded in next 02 days, said Hon. Minister. The government is committed to send food and other essential items to civilians living in welfare camps, the Hon. Minister stressed. Dr. Palitha Kohona, Foreign Secretary, said, UNCHR, in an independent survey, has affirmed that the conditions in the IDP camps have become much better with the unification of separated family members, supply of essential items and establishment of telephone facilities. Responding to a query, Dr. Kohona categorically denied that the government will declare a ceasefire. The government has bitter experience of LTTE regrouping and rearming during periods of ceasefire. However there will be automatic ceasefire, when the LTTE lays down weapons, Dr. Kohona asserted. Prof. Rajiva Wijesinghe, Secretary General, Peace Secretariat noted that it is significant that not a single of 60000 IDPs has made a single allegation of harassment against the security forces, not even accidentally. It is the LTTE that fired at civilians and continues to do so. Dr. Wimal Jayantha, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Health Care and Nutrition said on March 22 and 31, two stocks of medicinal items, including antibiotics, drugs needed for surgical and medical care, drugs for diabetics and 15 emergency health kits, each of which can treat over 2000 patients, were sent to IDPs camps. Mr. Lakshman Hulugalle, Director General, Media Centre for National Security and Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, Military Spokesman also participated. Courtesy: reliefweb.int