President visits Kilinochchi: 'first ever visit by a head of state'

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H.E the President and Commander-in-Chief, Mahinda Rajapaksa visited the recently liberated Northern Town of Kilinochchi today (April 16). The President made this goodwill visit during the traditional Sinhala and Hindu New Year period to meet with the troops stationed there as well as IDPs and other civilians. This is the first visit by a Head of State to this part of Sri Lanka after the first Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Mahamanya D.S. Senanayake toured the area in early 1950s.

Killinochchi was considered the headquarters and administrative centre of the separatist LTTE, until it was taken over by the security forces on January 02 this year, in the current operations to eliminate terrorism from this country. On the arrival at the proposed new hospital complex in the heart of Kilinochchi town Thursday (16) morning, the President and his entourage were received by Defence Secretary Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Chief of Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera, Commander of the Army Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka, Commander of the Navy Vice Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, Commander of the Air Force Air Marshal Roshan Goonatilake and Inspector General of Police Jayantha Wickaramratne who had arrived in Kilinochchi prior to the visit of the Presidential team. At the outset, General Officers Commanding 57 and 58 Divisions Major General Jagath Dias and Brigadier Shavendra Silva briefed the President on the tiring long march made for liberation of Kilinochchi by respective Divisions from the commencement of the Wanni humanitarian operation. During this historic visit, President shared his thoughts with valiant soldiers present at the venue while joining them to taste traditional sweetmeats during tea. A cross section of soldiers from all ranks representing Wanni-based military units received New Year gifts from the President. A large stock of weaponry including artillery and other sophisticated guns captured by the Army from the LTTE was also kept on display for President's inspection. President Mahinda Rajapaksa along with President's Secretary Mr. Lalith Weeratunge, Defence Secretary Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa and military top brass saw with his own eyes the damage caused by the LTTE to public property such as schools, hospital and the water tank before their eviction. He also visited the former LTTE Peace Secretariat and Political Headquarters in Kilinochchi town. On his return, President and the retinue landed in Vavuniya where Commander Security Forces Headquarters-Wanni (SFHQ-W) Maj. Gen. Jagath Jayasuriya received them. President Mahinda Rajapaksa as Commander-in-Chief addressed the members of tri services, Police and Civil Defence Force in Wanni and appreciated their service before he distributed parcels of sweetmeats among them. President's Secretary Mr. Lalith Weeratunge, Defence Secretary Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, Commander of the Army Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka, Commander of the Navy Vice Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, Commander of the Air Force Air Marshal Roshan Goonatilake, Inspector General of Police Mr. Jayantha Wickaramratne, Commandant Civil Defence Force Vice Admiral Sarath Weerasekara and Commandant Special Task Force Deputy Inspector General of Police Mr. K.L.M. Sarathchandra were present during the visit. Courtesy: defence.lk