
Endgame for LTTE

Tuesday, 21 April 2009

Last Updated Wednesday, 22 April 2009

LTTE fails to meet Lanka deadline, army closes in

- Time out for LTTE, thousands flee war zone

- In Pics: 30,000 civilians flee LTTE-held areas Colombo: The rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam failed to meet the Tuesday noon deadline set by Colombo to surrender, as the terror outfit faces an unprecedented military thrust in its last stronghold in Sri Lanka's north.

"The LTTE terrorists have not surrendered during the ultimatum. But the people who were held hostage by the LTTE in a small strip of coastal land in the Mullaitivu district continue to arrive in the government-held areas in large numbers since Monday," Military Spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said. "Over 49,000 people have fled the LTTE-held areas and come into the government-held areas in Puthukkudiyiruppu since Monday morning," Nanayakkara said a few minutes after the ultimatum ended Tuesday noon. Closing in on the last Tamil Tiger stronghold, Sri Lanka on Monday ordered elusive rebel chief Velupillai Prabhakaran and his fighters to surrender by Tuesday noon or face death. "We have issued the last and final 24-hour ultimatum to Prabhakaran and his group to surrender. Otherwise, they will have to face the military course of action," defence ministry spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella told reporters Monday. The ultimatum to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) came a few hours after the defence authorities said over 35,000 civilians fled Sri Lanka's northern war zone on Monday. The mass rescue operation reached a significant phase when troops captured the three-km long earth bund built by the LTTE on the western border of the no fire zone (NFZ). Newspapers here have carried photographs of large number of people leaving the rebel-held territory. The state-run Daily News described the process a "human avalanche", while the independent Daily Mirror called it a "great escape".
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