



COTANZ

Consortium of Tamil Associations in New Zealand

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Media Release : Mavilaru Bombing

On the 26th and 28th of July 2006 in the eastern Sri Lankan district of Trincomalee the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) Kfir jets bombed Mavilaru, a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled region.

The Government has chosen, according to SLAF spokesperson, to bomb the area following a dispute over water supply from Verukal River. The Government peace secretariat head Palitha Kohona said "The government says categorically that it is totally committed to the ceasefire. But the most important thing is to provide water for 50,000 people [in adjacent Government controlled areas]."

Conversely, according to S. Elilan, LTTE Trincomalee District political head, the bombing occurred where protesting Tamil civilians had closed water supply running through LTTE controlled area towards the Government controlled area. The protesters were demanding the Government not to abandon the project to supply drinking water to Tamil areas.

A brief examination of the history of the water dispute reveals the underlying motives for the bombings.

Two weeks ago the NorthEast Development Ministry announced that it is going to implement the water supply scheme just for the Government controlled areas near to where the bombings took place. Civilians in the LTTE areas who were excluded from the scheme decided to protest (not for the first time) to force the authorities to address their urgent water needs.

On 20th July the protesters chose to close the sluice gate and cut the water supply to the Government areas. They also sent a letter to the Government containing three requests as conditions for reopening the sluice gate: ensure security of civilians who must travel between Government and LTTE areas; remove the ban on items imposed by the Army; and incorporate drinking water supply to their areas.

It is this protest that was met with aerial bombing by the Government on the 26th. On 27th the head of Nordic truce monitoring mission contacted the LTTE, wanting to meet the protesters. *During* this subsequent meeting the SLAF bombed the area very close to where the meeting was taking place. The Head of SLMM in an interview to the Reuters said, "We sat talking and got clearance from the government and tried to convince the LTTE to have confidence in the government. They dropped a bomb in the vicinity. That's not the right signal."

In the opinion of COTANZ (Consortium of Tamil Association in New Zealand), and as evidenced by events during recent months, while the Sri Lankan armed forces continue to operate in Tamil dominated electorates, violence against Tamil civilians and institutions will not only continue but in all likelihood increase in frequency and severity.

George Arulanantham
Coordinator
Consortium of Tamil Associations in New Zealand
+64 9 620 6200, george_cotanz@yahoo.com

Dr Siva Naguleswaran