

NEWS



Sri Lanka demolishes LTTE cemeteries

SRI LANKA government has begun clearing all Liberation Tigers' landmarks in the North including Heroes' Resting Homes of fallen Liberation Tigers in an attempt to wipe out any trace of the Tigers.

Sri Lanka Army (SLA) occupying Jaffna peninsula is actively engaged in demolishing the Heroes' Resting Homes of Liberation Tigers in Uduppidi, Kodikaamam, Koappaay and Vealanai in the islets of Jaffna, sources in Jaffna said.

Foreign media persons now visiting Jaffna peninsula in large numbers who show a keen interest in visiting the HRHs are shocked to witness the systematic demolition of war heroes' memorial monuments which are given due respect all over the world.

SLA which invaded the peninsula in 1996 had then ploughed down the HRHs in the peninsula with bulldozers but during the 2002 peace accord between the government and the Liberation Tigers they had been restored.

The people in the peninsula are not allowed to visit the HRHs

and now the news of SLA demolishing reaching them has enraged them.

Tourism Ministry Secretary George Michael confirmed told the media, on Thursday March 18, the government had begun clearing LTTE landmarks in the north in line with the government's policy.

"The official government policy is not to highlight former LTTE landmarks for tourism purposes.

The government has already begun to clear some LTTE landmarks inline with the government's view that terrorism, the LTTE and the violence which affected the public during the war should be forgotten," Michael said.

According to media reports, LTTE landmarks have now become a popular tourist spot in the north as people flock to these areas to view the buildings and houses which once belonged to the LTTE leaders.

Nearly 300,000 local and foreign tourists have visited Jaffna, since the opening of the A-9 road to Jaffna, sources in Jaffna said.



The Kopay Maaveerar cemetery (left) and the Thileepan memorial (above) have been demolished

Thileepan memorial in Jaffna destroyed

A GANG of Sinhalese army soldiers and hooligans went on a rampage Monday March 22 night, demolishing the memorial pillar of Lt. Col. Thileepan (Rasiah Parthipan) located behind the historic Nalloor Kanthasuvami temple placing five demands to the Indian government but died as India failed to meet the demands, on September 26, 1987.

Lt. Col. Thileepan began his fasting on 15 September 1987 in front of the Nalloor Kandasuvami temple placing five demands to the Indian government but died as India failed to meet the demands, on September 26, 1987.

The thugs who demolished Thileepan's memorial pillar the previous night took the premises into their possession and used the memorial pillar to dry their washings. Later they took the remnants of demolished memorial pillar and the remaining structures in

vehicles and dumped them in Jaffna Municipal Council garbage dumping ground in Nalloor.

People of Jaffna already grieved and enraged by the defilement fear similar fate befalling the memorials of Tamil personalities in the peninsula, local press reports said.

The JMC garbage dumping ground in Nalloor is around 300m from where the Thileepan memorial pillar had stood.

The people of Jaffna peninsula are in grief over this vandalism of the government in removing traces of freedom fighters who fought to liberate the Tamils, in the North.

Meanwhile, a large number of Sinhalese traders and vendors have encroached the surroundings of Nalloor temple, with the blessings of Jaffna Municipal Council,

where they have erected small stalls and shops.

Though local media and traders had repeatedly complained about this to Jaffna Municipality, but its administration being in the hands of ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA), nothing had been done to evacuate the Sinhalese encroachers.

Thileepan's statue first erected in 1988 was completely destroyed by Sri Lankan Army (SLA) when it moved in to occupy Jaffna in 1996. When Cease Fire Agreement was implemented in 2002, the statue was reconstructed by the public.

However, when clashes erupted between SLA and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Thileepan's photograph and decorative lamps were damaged the by SLA troops on 26 October, 2006.

Refugees and resettled: Lanka's nowhere people

Sutirtho Patranobis
Hindustan Times

A SCORCHING March heat is sweeping the Menik Farm camps for the internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In Zone II, tattered UN tents helplessly flap against the strong breeze as red dust swirls up like a thousand tiny tornadoes. Inside the 16 feet by six feet tents where a dozen would stay, the heat takes your breath away; outside, the temperature and dust makes it difficult to breathe.

UN and government officials admit that the shelf-life of the IDP tents is long over though they still shelter about 20,000 displaced Tamils in Zone II.

But it's unlikely that their tents would be replaced. From December, the government's focus has shifted from displacement to "resettlement" of those released from the camps.

"Distribution of ration has become irregular and hygiene kits are no longer available. Many of the (communal) toilets cannot be used anymore," a public health inspector, said.

"In Menik Farm (Vavuniya)...

funding shortages will affect humanitarian operations starting the end of February. This includes, among others, complementary food distribution, water bowsering, toilet maintenance and healthcare provision," an UN report recently said.

The remaining IDPs are, however, putting their heads down and living their hard lives in the hope of getting released from the camps, soon.

But how different is the life of a 'resettled' IDP?

HT met few resettled families in Kilinochchi last week. They have been given Rs 5,000 (Sri

Lankan) in cash and promised another Rs 20,000 and some basic provisions like tarpaulin sheets and cooking utensils. A weekly ration of rice, flour and sugar is given as well.

The families of Kanikarasa and Kamaladevi were standing on the rubble of their former homes in Kilinochchi.

"Our homes were destroyed in the fighting. We have to rebuild from scratch. But first, I have to look for a job," a family head said.

Nearby, S Silvasadan and his two neighbours of 22 years were tightening the poles of their three

adjoining tents - where there homes once were.

"There is nothing left. But we are happy to be out of the camps," he said.

On the stretch of the A9 highway between Vavuniya and Jaffna, hundreds of released IDP families have put up flimsy tents or taken shelter in broken houses. After months in camps, they now have the freedom of movement. But little else.

In government statistics, these families have been resettled.

In reality, it will take years for their uprooted lives to be anchored.