

## NEWS

# Remembering April 2009

*Continued from p9*

zone with the aim of forcefully subjugating them.

■ Death in most brutal form has become common within the Safety Zone. The area littered with mangled bodies, torn limbs, and blood soaked soil appears more horrific than what one finds inside a butchers shop," a lady medical staff working out of a school-building converted into the temporary primary surgical care centre at Puthumaaththalan, told TamilNet. She also pointed out that a great number of small children have died in the last few days because of the SLA's ceaseless shelling and firing. The number of people coming to the hospital with bullet injuries has dramatically increased in the past few days, she said, and noted that a similar increase has also occurred of civilians who are admitted with shrapnel and shell injuries. Even as the Tamil civilians in the safe zone go about their routine daily activities, they are hit by bullets. By the time they are brought to the hospital, they die. The lady pointed out that the casualties were highest on Sunday morning as continuous shelling on the roads near the hospital had prevented the injured from being taken to the hospital sooner. "We were directed to drive to the injury site and bring the wounded to the hospital in our vehicles, but we simply couldn't leave because of the continuous shelling," she said and added that as a result of the delay several children had succumbed to their injuries. The injured are laid out on tarpaulin sheets and given medication that cannot often save them. "We watch them die in great pain," she said.

■ SLA artillery shells hit a child care centre and milk powder distribution centre at Pokkanai, killing at least 40 civilians and

causing injuries to more than 258 including 100 children. The SLA has stepped up indiscriminate bombardment, according to latest reports. At least 25 dead bodies have been brought to the hospital and 13 of them were identified by medical authorities at the makeshift hospital. More than 100 civilians have been killed and at least 422 wounded within 3 days between April 6 and 8.

■ One of the three Team Leaders of the ICRC in Vanni, 47-year-old Sinnathurai Kugathasan, was killed in SLA shelling on April 8, Wednesday, inside the 'safety zone'. Mr. Kugathasan, also known as Ramanan, was from Kollangkaladdi in Valikaamam North, Jaffna. At least 2 ICRC officials have been killed and three reported wounded in SLA shelling within the so-called safety zone so far. Ramanan, who joined the ICRC in 1999, was a key leader in running the ICRC activities in Vanni since foreign nationals of the ICRC were pulled out of Vanni. The ICRC in Vanni is led by Jegatheepan. Ramanan, a father of two, has served a team leader in the Water and Habitation section of the ICRC.

■ Indiscriminate shelling and gun fire by the SLA continued on safe zone Pokkanai and Valaignarmadam throughout the day on Thursday, April 9. Medical officials at Puthumaaththalan hospital told media that more than 300 wounded civilians were admitted and 47 of the victims died after admission at the hospital. Many civilians killed in the shelling and gunfire were not brought to the hospital. 296 civilians were admitted on Wednesday and more than 200 seriously wounded were transferred from the makeshift hospital on Wednesday. Many children need milk food and nutritional foods very urgently, according to the latest reports from the hospital.



## Mullaiththeevu wounded die due to lack of antibiotics

REGIONAL Medical Services Divisions (RMSD) for Mullaiththeevu and Kilinochchi received only 5% of the total allocation of monthly needs of medical supplies for the first three months in 2009, a report from Mullaiththeevu health officials received via Vavuniya District Secretariat said.

Blood transfusion bags have been depleted and at least one death occurs daily due to the inability for blood transfusion, the report added.

Several badly wounded civilians die without antibiotic treatment, health officials document in the report released.

The report listed the names of 2771 civilians admitted to Puthumaththalan hospital. The injured

include 163 under-5 years old, 205 between 6-10 years, 481 between 11-20, 579 between 21-30, 414 between 31-40, and 929 above 40 years old.

The report says malnutrition is extremely high with 69% of the 678 children randomly selected from the six areas where mobile health clinic was conducted are under weight, a 75% increase from similar study conducted last year which yielded a malnutrition of 42%.

Even amidst the disastrous ground situation the report commends the epidemiological unit for providing high coverage of immunization vaccination to children.

"About 75,000 families with more than 300,000 populations

need food ration, the report says. 4950 metric tons food needed for a month but only 1080 metric tons food were received during March 2009. Additional Government Agent Mullaiththeevu with the help of WFP, food items were brought to Puthumaththalan. Food items are distributed at 20 places. Still food shortage among IDPs is observed. Tamils Rehabilitation Organization is running places to provide kanchchi," the report says on the food supply to the IDPs.

Diarrhea is reported as a common problem among children with lack of vegetable and fruit intake aggravating the medical condition.

Drinking water is being supplied in ten different locations, the report adds.

