

Government condemns LTTE attack on food ship to Mullaitivu

The Government of Sri Lanka strongly condemns the artillery shelling by the LTTE today (9th March 2009) of a ship carrying urgent supplies of food and other essential items to the civilians who are being held hostage by the LTTE in the narrow coastal strip, north of Mullaitivu.

Addressing a media briefing at the Ministry today, Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama vehemently denounced this cowardly attack by the LTTE on an unarmed vessel engaged in a purely humanitarian mission to feed the people. The LTTE is trying to starve these self-same Tamil people whom it claims to represent, perhaps with the ulterior motive of giving credence to the myth of starvation that is being circulated in some quarters internationally by the LTTE's propaganda machinery.

The Government had arranged for a vessel, "MV Bintan" through the Commissioner General of Essential Services to send 500 MT of food, including flour, dhal, sugar, vegetable oil, as well as kerosene and petrol, to Puthumattalan, Mullaitivu from the Trincomalee port last Friday (6th March).

This complex logistical operation undertaken by the Government with the help of the good offices of the ICRC is tangible proof of its profound concern for the helpless civilians, who are undergoing untold misery and suffering at the hands of the LTTE, which is preventing them from moving out to the cleared areas, resorting to its familiar brutal terror tactics, including shooting and killing those daring to flee to safety and freedom.

Although it was possible to unload 142 MT of the cargo yesterday (8th March) off the Puthumattalan coast and taken ashore in smaller boats, this humanitarian mission had to be suspended today (9th March) when the LTTE launched an unprovoked heavy artillery barrage at the ship around 8.30 am, which compelled the captain of the vessel to turn back and move into deeper waters, where bad weather conditions have further aggravated the situation.

Notwithstanding the desperate and futile attempts by the LTTE to starve the people, whom it is holding hostage and cynically using them as human shields, the Government remains totally committed to ensure that these unfortunate citizens who are innocent victims of LTTE terror will never be abandoned.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Colombo

9th March 2009