

# Gerry Silva's term of office extended

# New Command set up for Jaffna

by Shamindra Ferdinando

The government has created a new combined Security Forces Command for Jaffna and Kilinochchi districts to improve security conditions there, an authoritative Military spokesman said last night.

Brigadier Asoka K. Jayawardhana has been named the first Joint Operations Commander for Jaffna peninsula and Kilinochchi districts with immediate effect he said.

The Brigadier would also function as the Jaffna Security Forces Commander Co-ordinating officer for Jaffna and the 21st Brigade Commander Jaffna the spokesman said.

Defence sources said the creation of the new Command was a direct result of the Pooneryn — Nagathevanthurai debacle where 754 Army and Navy personnel including 19 junior officers were either killed or captured by the Tigers. The Tigers had also wounded nearly 600 officers and men in that attack.

Brigadier Jayawardhana's previous command had been Welioya Co-ordinating headquarters. Brigadier Sarath Moonesinghe will replace him.

Defence sources said the government had approved these key changes in the Military Command and control structure as part of urgent efforts to meet the threat posed by the Tigers. "Heavy losses within the past two months had forced us to seek changes," one Commander said.

President D. B. Wijetunga and Premier Ranil Wickremasinghe have urged the Defence chiefs to take immediate steps to counter the continuing Tiger build-up in the north.

Meanwhile Army Chief of Staff, Major General Gerry de Silva's term of office has been extended for another year with effect from January 1st on President Wijetunga's orders. Major General Silva, one of the most experienced security forces officer would continue to serve as the Chief of Staff and would play a key role in the defence affairs of the country, sources said.

President Wijetunga had decided to seek Major General de Silva's services further, particularly in view of the current security situation, defence analysts said.

Meanwhile informed sources said further changes in the Command and control structure could be expected after the Army headquarters completes an internal investigation of the Pooneryn disaster.