

Eastern theatre war keeps Jaffna safe. (1995, September 10). *The Sunday times*.



Meting out justice: Kangaroo court in session

Eastern theatre war keeps Jaffna safe

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When the LTTE brought a crafty cessation of hostilities to an abrupt end, more than 40 per cent of the Army's strength was operating in the east. And the LTTE, quite naturally, expected the military to focus on the east - during the Eelam War III, for as long as it lasts.

Today, many battalions are preparing to pack up and leave the province which they had once liberated from the enemy. These battle-hardened battalions will be returning to where they came from - the northern province. A worse-case scenario for the LTTE, one that Tiger Supremo V. Prabhakaran hopes, would never happen.

The LTTE had been quite content with the way the war is fought in the east. Keeping the army busy in the east meant guaranteed security in the north for the LTTE.

In the aftermath of the death of Denzil Kobbekaduwa, the military focus was shifted to the eastern province to facilitate a political pledge to people that the east would be liberated and civilian administration restored. Under this scheme, battalion after battalion - then deployed in the north for a mass-scale amphibious assault on the Tiger stronghold - arrived in the east,

This signalled an era of almost uninterrupted freedom for the LTTE to run its own police state in the Jaffna peninsula, with the army barricading itself in several areas in the middle of enemy territory.

Prabhakaran was soon convinced that the government would be bragging about its heroics in the east - and be committed to spend money and dedicate manpower to maintain the status quo in the liberated east. He also knows that the government, in such a situation, could do little in defeating the LTTE in the 'real' theatre of war - where the LTTE's very existence would be at stake.

So much so, that Prabhakaran boasted to the civilians in Jaffna that the government troops would never be able to set foot in the Tiger controlled areas.

With that he went about the task of constituting his own administration, commissioning a police force, a kangaroo court, a foreign office (for visas) and many other features of a jack-boot government.

The freedom Prabhakaran enjoyed has, however, come to an abrupt end, in the same way it began when a Jaffna military push was halted by the then government. Now, the armed forces are threatening to bulldoze their way through the LTTE defences. A military showdown is imminent - and would in all probability rain down on the Tigers be-

The military top-brass now expressed optimism that the planned offensive will be a success. The officers who campaigned to postpone the offensive are expected to throw in their full weight to get the ground prepared.

As this column has reiterated, the rank and file involved in defending the country would do well to understand that it is a crucial point in time for the country. An un-coordinated logistic back up, a half-hearted approach to the problem not to mention a few pitfalls, will undoubtedly jeopardise the interests of the country.

The men carrying the future of this little country on their shoulders must unite in this hour-of-crisis and safely take the country through this storm of terrorism. The country expects no more.

Meanwhile, pulling out troops, as discussed at top-level security meetings, will leave the east vulnerable. Prabhakaran has already ordered a contingency plan be implemented to divert the attention of the army back to the east.

All brigade commanders have already been told of the troop withdrawal and the security lapse it would create as a result. Specific guidelines and a military strategy tailor-made for the east have been conveyed to the eastern commanders with a view to