

Defeated Tigers turn on public

(By William de Alwis)

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The LTTE's resistance to the Indian peace-keeping forces has been rapidly on the wane in the last 48 hours, during which more than 300 guerillas were captured in an intensified operation north of Vavuniya, military reports to Colombo said yesterday.

The operation, launched in the forested triangle with Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya at its points, met with absolutely no resistance from the bulk of the LTTE, which had been regrouping there for the past six months, reports said.

But as the operation continues, military officials of both armies have warned that terrorism, of the type witnessed in Tuesday morning's bomb explosion in the heart of Trincomalee town, is very likely to escalate.

The explosion killed 10 and seriously wounded 20. The IPKF recorded two casualties — one soldier killed and another injured. The other victims were all civilians of Trincomalee.

The explosion, which security intelligence now has no doubt was set off by the LTTE, was obviously aimed at disrupting the effort to resurrect the administration of the district. The kachcheri, which resumed business on Monday, was reported yesterday to be fully operational with a high rate of attendance by its workers.

Military observers also said this could well be the final stages of the conflict, as far as the LTTE and its allies are concerned.

The Vavuniya forests, according to Lankan military intelligence, had been the scene of a major regrouping by the LTTE. This area, very thinly populated by civilians, has proved ideal ground for the mopping-up operation now in progress, officials said.

The offensive by the Indian peace-keeping forces was launched ten months ago, to disarm the LTTE, after the group rejected the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord and took to arms. More than 2,000 fighters of the group and nearly 600 Indian personnel have died in the fighting since then, according to official sources.