

Tigers agree to ceasefire, peace talks?. (1994, August 30). *Daily news*.

## Tigers agree to ceasefire, peace talks?

COLOMBO, Monday (AFP) — Sri Lanka's separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas have agreed to a ceasefire following a peace offer by the new Colombo government, Tamil residents today quoted a rebel leader as saying.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) announced they were willing to open unconditional talks with the administration of Prime Minister Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga who offered a "hand of friendship" to end ethnic bloodletting.

LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham told reporters in the Jaffna peninsula over the weekend that the guerrillas were willing to talk peace but expected "goodwill gestures" from the government.

Premier Kumaratunga assumed office by offering a "hand of friendship" to the LTTE to end the protracted guerrilla war which has claimed over 30,000 lives since 1972.

Tamil residents in the government-controlled northern Vavuniya town said travellers from LTTE-held territory had seen Tiger posters saying that they were prepared for a ceasefire.

Tamil residents said that newspapers in Jaffna had given wide publicity to Balasingham's remarks which marked the first Tiger reaction to the peace offer.

Balasingham had called for the lifting of an economic embargo on the Jaffna peninsula. The new government had unilaterally announced its intention to dismantle the embargo but has not yet done so.

Junior defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte told reporters last week that the new People's Alliance (PA) government was keen to restore supplies to Jaffna and that they were prepared to buy the produce of Jaffna farmers.

Defence sources said they expected a firm decision on the embargo at Wednesday's cabinet meeting. The new premier was also due to discuss the matter with military commanders.

The previous government had banned the transport of some 42 items, including sweets, toys, medicines, fertiliser and plastic-ware to rebel-held territory.