

# THE TRUTH

A Press Release issued by



THE HIGH COMMISSION FOR SRI LANKA

I wish to bring to your kind attention the Government's position on the following events that took place in Sri Lanka in recent times, in view of certain media reports appearing in pro-LTTE websites distorting the truth and thereby damaging the image of the country.

## The Uthayan Newspaper office in Jaffna has been attacked on 2nd May:

A group of armed terrorists attacked the 'Uthayan' newspaper office in Jaffna and killed two persons who were employed in the office. The Government of Sri Lanka considers this with utmost importance and believes this attack was intended to harm the Government's image as a nation with freedom of expression and media independence.

The UNESCO has selected Sri Lanka as the venue for the international conference to mark the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day from 1<sup>st</sup> - 3rd May 2006. The Government of Sri Lanka attaches importance to protect the rights of journalists, freedom of expression and media independence. Hence, it has given priority in its policies to uphold these norms to protect the independence of media. It is clear that the motives behind the attack are to tarnish the Government's image internationally at a time the Government is hosting the World Press Freedom Day.

The Government takes a very serious view on this attack and will take every possible step to bring the culprits to book. Meanwhile HE the President has directed that an immediate and comprehensive

investigation be held to apprehend the perpetrators who no doubt wished to discredit the Government and to disrupt the Press Freedom Day events as well as the resolute efforts of the Government to advance the peace process.

A Press Release issued by the Government says:  
"The Government of Sri Lanka unreservedly condemns the senseless attack on the Uthayan Paper Office in Jaffna today (02.03.2006). This assault on the freedom of expression, a long cherished right in Sri Lanka, is all the more deplorable as it comes at a time Sri Lanka is hosting the World Press Freedom Day events.

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Sri Lanka soldiers alleged involvement in Welikanda LTTE confrontations:

Pro-LTTE websites including the Tamil Net alleged that five Sri Lankan Army soldiers were involved in an attack on three LTTE Karuna faction camps in uncleared areas off Welikanda on 30th April and have publicized several names said to be killed in the confrontation.

The Ministry of Defence vehemently denies this allegation as totally false and fabricated story.

A Statement issued by the Military spokesman is appended below:

"The Sri Lanka Army categorically denies media reports in pro-LTTE websites including Tamil Net that stated involvement of five Army soldiers including a Captain, in an alleged attack on three LTTE Karuna faction camps in un-cleared areas off Welikanda on Sunday (30th).

Those website reports, with sinister and carefully orchestrated moves further went on to say that one Army Officer identified as "Captain Lloyd Fernando" of the 5th Vijayabahu Infantry Regiment (5 VIR) from Kurunegala was among the killed by LTTE Prabhakaran faction men in the confrontation

with four other soldiers identified as "Upul, Jayakody, Tissanayake and Anura". These reports are far from truth.

This totally false and meticulously fabricated Tamil Net story, picked by other websites naively, is nothing other than another media machination by LTTE propagandists to tarnish the image of the Army and convince its readers that the supporters of the anti LTTE Prabhakaran faction continue to receive patronage of the Security Forces of Sri Lanka.

The Army while categorically denying contents of all those pro-LTTE reports further reiterates that the Army has in no manner had anything to do with those alleged confrontations, nor had the Army ever enlisted any of those alleged personnel, as mentioned in their reports.

The Army, as a professional military outfit, has no whatsoever reason to hide identities of its valiant soldiers, nor has it ever made any attempt in this direction".

## Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Revises its situation on Air strike:

A Press Release issued by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) on 29th April stated that the air strikes that were conducted by the Sri Lankan Government in Trincomalee district on LTTE targets in Sampur area on 25 and 26 April had been a clear violation of the Ceasefire Agreement. The SLMM has expressed fear that the Government Security Forces have, in the North and the East, been involved in extrajudicial killings of civilians.

The Government has already explained its position that these attacks were not retaliatory acts by the Security Forces following the suicide bomb attack on the Sri Lanka Army Chief that killed a large number of security personnel. The security forces operation was an act of deterrence limited in time and scope. Following the Government's objections over the SLMM statement, the SLMM has clarified its position as follows:

"After consulting with the Sri Lankan



Government the SLMM has decided to make the following statement:

With reference to a press release sent out by the SLMM on 29 April 2006 we would like to clarify the issue regarding our concerns over certain unexplained violent deaths of civilians.

SLMM monitors on the ground have expressed some concerns over the last few weeks and months regarding the behaviour of some on the ground that might have been directly or indirectly involved in clandestine activities against civilians. It was not the SLMM's intention to generalise or pass judgements on the Sri Lankan armed forces and police. The Sri Lankan Government has conveyed to us that they are not aware of any such activities within their ranks. We believe that the Sri Lankan Government is sincere in this respect and are committed to prevent any such clandestine activities from taking place. Should any such cases arise again the SLMM will bring such cases immediately to the attention of the Sri Lankan Government for their action". The Government of Sri Lanka has not given up its expectation for a negotiated settlement for the conflict. It has shown utmost restraint and determination, despite numerous violent acts committed by the LTTE, for a peaceful solution that is acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka.

It has to be emphasised that the unwavering determination of the Government of Sri Lanka is the strongest weapon rather than bullets for a lasting solution.



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