

# Peace force hails NE agreement

The Peace Task Force for the establishment of the National Peace Council has welcomed the decision of the Government and the LTTE to cease hostilities from today.

In a statement issued by Fr. Oswald Firth, the Task Force said:

"The Peace Task Force for the establishment of The National Peace Council takes recognition of the fact that both the Central Government and the LTTE have remained true to the aspirations of the people to establish a negotiated democratic settlement to the civil war in the North-East". In this context we welcome the most recent decision by both parties to establish a cessation of hostilities as the first step towards a ceasefire.

"We also welcome the agreement reached on the reconstruction and rehabilitation programme, since it will directly ameliorate the suffering faced by the people in the North-East and will also lay a firm and solid foundation for forging ahead with the peace process".

The EPRLF has welcomed the cessation of hostilities in the North-East and called for a comprehensive political solution to be discussed at the next round of talks.

K. Ketheeswaran, spokesman

The Government said that during the discussion with the

LTTE last Tuesday, the Tigers had demanded that the Pooneryn camp be removed, but the demand was rejected.

However the "Eelanatham" newspaper published in the North on Wednesday claimed government had agreed to the demand.

The EPRLF spokesman also said a comprehensive package including a political solution to the ethnic issue should be discussed immediately.

"If the peace process is to continue, a cessation of hostilities only will not be sufficient. Our party is encouraged by the openness and the transparency of the government, and is confident that the government would be able to make the right decisions on the issue," Mr. Ketheeswaran said.

for the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front however questioned the LTTE's motives in seeking the dismantling of the Pooneryn Army camp along with the opening of the Sangupiddy route to Colombo.

"The opening of the Sangupiddy route and closing down of the Pooneryn camp cannot be connected," the spokesman said.

He said people would not object to passing an army camp or checks being carried out on them. Thus the LTTE's calling for the removal of the camp implied military objectives by the Tigers.