

Easter commanders slate civil officers. (1993, November 14) *The Island*.

# Eastern commanders slate civil officers

THE ISLAND  
14.11.93

by Shamindra Ferdinando in Batticaloa

Military officials in Batticaloa, striving to secure the eastern region from LTTE infiltration, accuse Colombo-based civilian administrators of failing to do their part.

While government officials in Colombo were not extending adequate support, North-East Provincial Council officials were also not active enough in efforts to bring "normalcy" to the East, Major General Lucky Algama, general-officer-commanding army units in the East said in an interview in Batticaloa on Thursday. Security coordinating officer for the Batticaloa District, Brigadier Lohan Gunawardena echoed these sentiments.

Brig. Gunawardena disclosed that in its efforts to prevent LTTE

activity in the Batticaloa District, the army plans to issue special identity cards to all people living in the district.

"Every person would be required to carry identity cards issued by the army", he said. He indicated that the issue of the identity cards would commence late next month.

Those found without identity cards would be held for interrogation, he said. However, those entering Batticaloa for business and official work would not be required to obtain temporary permits, he said.

Major General Lucky Algama, General Officer Commanding (GOC) army troops in the East told 'The Island' that current efforts were aimed at creating peaceful conditions in the area to allow the government to hold

local government elections next year.

However, security forces could not improve the conditions in Batticaloa alone, he said. Both Major General Algama and Brigadier Gunawardena accused a section of the state officials of failing to help the Army in its efforts to restore normalcy in the district.

Army officials said efforts to improve health, educational, agricultural and fisheries sectors have been affected as a result of unclear official policies. Brigadier Gunawardena said at least Rs. 35 million is needed to boost the fisheries and the agricultural fields alone.

However, state bank officials have declined to give any more loans. Bank of Ceylon and People's Bank officials have indicated that

they could not provide fresh loans to farmers and fishermen as funds for that particular purpose were not available.

Brigadier Gunawardena said that without bank loans the farmers could not purchase 45 four-wheel tractors, and 200 water pumps.

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