

Scant attendance at Black Tiger Day

The LTTE on Monday held four commemorative meetings at Nelliadi, Meesalai, Manipay and Kälinochci, in memory of seven of their fallen fighters dubbed by the LTTE as the 'Black Tigers.'

The Black Tigers are a small suicide group within the LTTE, not to be confused with the 'Black Cats.'

For the first time, July 5 this year was referred to as 'Black Tiger Day', the sixth anniversary of the day that the LTTE's self-styled Capt. Miller sacrificed his life in the attack on the army at Nelliadi, in Vadamaarachchi, in 1987.

Reports reaching Colombo say the meetings were poorly attended, although they were addressed by the Tiger hierarchy - Anton Balasingham, Yogaratnam Yogi, Karikalan, Sea Tiger leader Soosai, and the LTTE's Women's Front leader Miss Radi.

Informed sources say that although several Black Tigers have been killed, particularly in the recent past, it is significant that only seven men were chosen to be honoured on Black Tiger Day, and that LTTE leader Velupillai Prabarakan was conspicuous by his absence at the ceremonies.

"It is obviously an attempt to minimise acknowledgement of their losses," sources said.

After Capt. Miller, others commemorated last Monday were Black Sea Tigers Major Kantharuban, Capt. Collins and Capt. Vinoth, killed when they attacked a Lankan navy craft off Velvetiturai on July 10, 1990.

Next to be remembered was Lt. Col. Bork, who died in an attack on Mankulam army camp on November 22, 1990.

Finally remembered were captains Jeyanathan and Siddambaram who, on May 4, 1991, rammed the navy craft SLNS 'Abeetha' off the coast of Point Pedro in an LTTE boat laden with explosives.

Six sailors were killed and the 'Abeetha' damaged in that incident.

At the meetings their portraits were reportedly unveiled, with brief commemorative addresses.

"It was all very low-key, and nothing of any real significance was said," informed sources reported.