

Govt. relaxes embargo on goods to North. (1993, June 24). *The Island.*

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COLOMBO, June 23 — The government on Wednesday prepared to send previously-banned supplies of fuel and medicines to Tamil rebel-held northern Sri Lanka, which political analysts said marked a new phase in the ethnic conflict.

"We have already placed orders for fuel and will begin loading a ship with medicines and other items on Friday," a rehabilitation ministry official said on Wednesday.

The government last week agreed to partially lift an economic embargo on the northern Jaffna peninsula in exchange for the release of 38 policemen and a soldier who have been held for three years by the

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The first five policemen were freed on Monday and the rebels said the rest would be released once the previously banned items begin arriving in Jaffna.

"This deal reveals a readiness on both sides to alter basic policies on the conduct of the war," political commentator Hector Abhayawardhana said.

The five were freed after the army agreed to some of the Tigers' demands and said it would lift a ban on items such as medicines, fuel, oil, fertiliser and transistor radios being supplied to Jaffna.

The army has refused to allow the shipment of a

they could be used to help the battle by the rebels for independence in the north and east.

"Lifting the ban means the government is ready to risk these items being used by the Tigers for their war effort," Abhayawardhana said. "It means things are now being seen differently."

He said the rebels would have found it awkward to continue detaining the 39 prisoners after they began a hunger strike on June 13 to demand their freedom.

The government also came under heavy pressure locally and internationally to ease the embargo which made conditions difficult for people in Jaffna, he