

Batticaloa town returning to normal. (1993, December 19). *The Island*.

THE ISLAND

Sunday 19th December, 1993

Batticaloa town returning to normal

by Zackie Jabbar

Batticaloa town is fast returning to normal as more people go back to their traditional occupations such as fishing

not as fortunate as us or maybe I am wrong. It is good to be interested in your studies, but as I said things have changed."

He smiles thoughtfully "You see there is a saying now in Batticaloa, that if

security forces stationed here say that eight of the twelve AGA divisions in Batticaloa are under its control, while in the other four divisions there is an LTTE presence. They claim that Kalavanchikudy, Arempathi, Kathankudy, Mattakalapu, Sengaladi, Eravur, Valaichenai, and Otamavadi have been "cleared" while LTTE resistance still remains in Ellavali, Pattipala Vavunadivu and Vahara.

However only just two weeks ago a group of organisations involved in refugee rehabilitation work who visited Batticaloa were advised by the government agent Batticaloa R. Monakurusamy, not to move out of Batticaloa town because the security situation in the other parts of the district was "uncertain".

Of the 17 refugee camps in the Batticaloa district only one is situated in Batticaloa town.

Mr. Monakurusamy explained that he had been informed by the security authorities that pockets of LTTE resistance still remains in the Batticaloa district.

Tamil political sources



Fishing Expedition

here say there are nearly 500 LTTE cadres in the Batticaloa district.

What then are the chances of holding democratic elections in the Batticaloa district and Eastern Province as a whole?

Mr. Monakurusamy says that though the civil administration in Batticaloa town is functioning the LTTE threat was very much prevalent in other parts of the district "of course right now IPKF style elections can be

held, but we have to wait till the situation improves to hold free and fair elections" he added.

However the Army, STF and the Police stationed in Batticaloa are confident that democratic elections can be held. They point out that nearly seventy percent of the population in the Batticaloa district live in the "cleared" areas which are controlled by the security forces.

Tamil political parties

here who support the government in its effort to overcome the LTTE threat are sceptical about the possibility of holding any election in the district in the near future.

"Holding elections in this region is easier said than done. It is not impossible, but at what cost? If a democratic election is to be held in the East then the security prevalent right now will have to be in the least tripled. Doing that would

leave the North exposed," a Tamil politician who did not wish to be identified said.

Meanwhile the Batticaloa Government Agent, Mr. Monakurusamy, says that at least Rs. 300 million is needed to resettle the refugees in the Batticaloa district in their own houses.

"However only Rs. 50 million has been allocated and of that amount have so far been spent Rs. 25



mainly done after dusk.

Business establishments are open to the public until around 8 p.m. The "cadiu women" are a familiar sight once again, feated by the Batticaloa lagoon in close proximity to the main bus stand selling their goodies. A packet of 100 cadiu nuts costs just Rs. 40.

Private tutorials have sprung up all over Batticaloa town. The proprietor of one of the few guest houses of repute in Batticaloa a retired police officer, says that times have changed. "You see" he recalls with a distant look in his eyes "when I was young in addition to our studies we took part in a lot of sports activities.

My friends and I used to go to the parks in the evenings to play cricket, football or some other sport or simply have a good time. But now the young ones spend their evenings in private tutorials. I suppose they are