

Mine Free Sri Lanka



KILINOCHCHI: Over twenty years of conflict in Sri Lanka had has taken a heavy toll in life and property and devastated much of the North and East of Sri Lanka. Since the ceasefire in 2002, thousands of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have returned home to rebuild there lives. But, the biggest obstacle for development in the North and the East is due to Sri Lanka not been able to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty. There is no change in the government policy of non-accession due to security concerns. Anti personnel mines are largely confined to the Northern and Eastern regions. Nevertheless, International NGO's and the Engineering Units of the Sri Lankan Army conducted mine awareness projects and are involved in humanitarian demining work in Jaffna. The purpose of the mine clearance was to enable the population of the area to return to their residences as soon as possible. According to a Military spokesman, 603 LTTE mines had been cleared in one single day and another 1,000 mines were estimated to be buried by the LTTE in the same area. The sudden eruption of violence once again has brought the mine clearing activities to a halt.

Text & Pictures by Sriyantha Walpola

