

Exclusive

Japanese experts helped LTTE launch submersibles

by Shamindra Ferdinando, Island Sept 2009

A group of Japanese experts, who had been given access to the LTTE-held area shortly after tsunami in December, 2004 had helped terrorists build a channel to launch underwater craft.

The foreigners had worked on the project for some time in a high security zone in the Puthukudirippu area, well informed sources said. Responding to our queries, sources said that though the 58 Division had found a 360-foot long and 25-foot wide tunnel and a 300-foot long and 30-foot deep dock early May, the involvement of Japanese experts in this project had not come to light until recently.

Sources said that the then Brigadier Shavindra Silva's troops had captured the tunnel in the Irattavaikkal area three weeks before the army finished off the LTTE leadership on the banks of the Nanthikadal lagoon on May 19.

Sources said that the LTTE planned to float the submersible from the dock to the sea through the camouflaged tunnel. Sources asserted that the LTTE could have used the same technique to take in a submersible.

In the wake of tsunami, the then UNF government allowed experts from many countries to launch rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the LTTE-held area. According to information from LTTE suspects in custody, the Japanese team had also helped them develop submersibles though their first attempt to test the first craft ended in failure.

Divers subsequently recovered it close to Farah III, a Turkish ship which had run aground at Vellimullivaikkal.

The LTTE had smuggled in a range of items needed for this particular project from overseas before the navy cut off their supply route north-eastern coast. The LTTE had powerful Japanese built outboard mortars, radar and communication equipment among several other items recovered by the army and navy, especially in the eastern Vanni.

Sources said that a Sri Lankan Tamil probably domiciled in Japan had accompanied the experts who left the area well before the resumption of hostilities in August 2006.

Sources said that interrogation of terrorists, particularly those with specialised units would shed light on top secret LTTE operations. During the LTTE rule, the group also brought in foreign experts from several countries to boost its strength.

Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa last week said that the LTTE had invested heavily in a programme to undermine the Sri Lankan navy. The recovery of a vast amount of armaments, explosives laden boats, torpedoes and other equipment was evidence of this strategy.