

'Tamil Tigers too weak to launch counter attacks'

Karuna Amman, head of a breakaway faction of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has claimed that the Tamil Tigers are now too weak in the face of the ongoing assault by the Sri Lankan Army to launch counter attacks.

'The LTTE are now only maintaining a defence line. They can't launch any offensive (attacks). They are very weak now,' Karuna told the BBC's Sinhala radio service Friday night.

He, however, conceded that it would take 'some time' for the soldiers to completely defeat the LTTE, which he described as 'a brutal terrorist group'.

'It will not happen in the next few months. We have to work together to win this war,' he added.

Karuna, whose real name is Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, was arrested in Britain in November 2007 and jailed in January for entering the country under a Sri Lankan diplomatic passport issued under a false name. He was deported to Sri Lanka at the end of his jail term.

International human rights groups had urged the British government to try Karuna for his alleged rights violations as an LTTE commander and subsequently as leader of the TMVP. However, the British government chose not to proceed against him on the basis that the evidence was insufficient.

Diplomatic sources said Karuna returned here Thursday, having opted for voluntary repatriation after withdrawing an application for asylum in Britain.

Sri Lankan authorities were yet to comment on the return of Karuna, who heads the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) political party.

In May, the TMVP entered into an electoral alliance with the ruling coalition government led by President Mahinda Rajapaksa and won the maiden provincial council poll in the eastern province, despite charges of election malpractices by opposition parties.

Commenting on his party's victory, Karuna said he was 'very happy' that his deputy, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan - known as Pillaiyan, had been chosen the chief minister.

Rejecting media reports he wanted to replace Pillaiyan, Karuna said the TMVP's agenda was not just confined to the post of chief minister.

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