



MILITARISATION

Sri Lanka is one of the most militarised countries in the world. In 2018, the World Bank estimated there were 317,000 service personnel in the country, twice the size of the UK's regular forces. Successive governments have continued to allocate the highest budgetary allocation for defence spending despite the end of the civil war in 2009.

The budget allocation for the defence in 2023 was 539 billion Sri Lankan rupees. Defence allocation is massive especially compared to the amounts allocated for health and education. The Ministry of Health has been allocated 322 billion rupees. The Ministry of Education has been allocated 232 billion rupees.

The Sri Lanka Army comprises seven regional commands, five of which are based in the Northern and Eastern provinces. A 2017 report by the Adayaalam Centre for Policy Research (ACPR) and People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL), found that there was at least one Sri Lankan soldier for every two civilians living in Mullaitivu.

Militarisation in the North-East has a clear impact on all facets of civilian life such as politics, livelihoods and economic growth in the area. The military is one of the largest employers in Mullaitivu. For example, the military manages pre-schools, farms, hotels etc. Military-run businesses compete with private businesses.

The Sri Lankan military has been instrumental in the construction and maintenance of Buddhist temples in the North-East post-war, including in areas with no Buddhists. Furthermore, land grabbing is carried out by the military along with other government institutions.

The military's presence and the accompanying threat of violence has a chilling effect on civic activism. Protests are carefully monitored by the security forces. The organisers, leaders and participants of people's struggles, especially in the North-East are often harassed by the security forces.