

Bomb rocks busy Sri Lankan train



The injured were rushed to local hospitals for treatment

At least seven people have been killed and 62 injured in a bombing during rush hour on a packed Sri Lankan commuter train, the military says.

The blast hit the Colombo-Panadura train in Dehiwala station, in a suburb of the capital Colombo, Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said.

He blamed Tamil Tiger separatists for the attack, the latest in a string targeting public transport. The military says it defused two bombs found on buses over the weekend.

Ten days ago a suicide bomber on a motorcycle rammed a bus carrying police officers and last month another explosion inside a bus killed more than 20 people.

In February, 11 people died in a suicide attack at Colombo's main train station.

Tamil Tiger separatists were blamed for that incident, although they routinely deny involvement in bombings in the country.

Toll 'could rise'

The army said Monday's explosion occurred at 1650 local time (1120 GMT), and the area had been cordoned off.



Bodies have been pulled from the wreckage and the defence ministry says the number of dead could rise.

Brigadier Nanayakkara told AFP news agency a pregnant woman was among the dead.

Eyewitness R A Upali told the BBC Sinhala service the explosion took place as the train was pulling out of the station.

"I was in the back of the train. I ran to the place where the explosion happened. I saw people fall on the platform. People with minor injuries ran towards us. I attended to the injured people."

Battles are continuing in the north of Sri Lanka, where the military is carrying out an offensive aimed at crushing the rebels by the end of this year.

On Monday airforce helicopters attacked Tiger positions a day after fighting on the ground killed 21 rebels and one soldier, according to the military.

The BBC's Roland Buerk in Colombo says that the number of attacks in the south has increased as the fighting has intensified in the north.

The Tigers have fought for a generation for an independent state for the Tamil minority in the island's north and east.

About 70,000 people have been killed since the civil war began in 1983.