



109 GROUNDVIEW

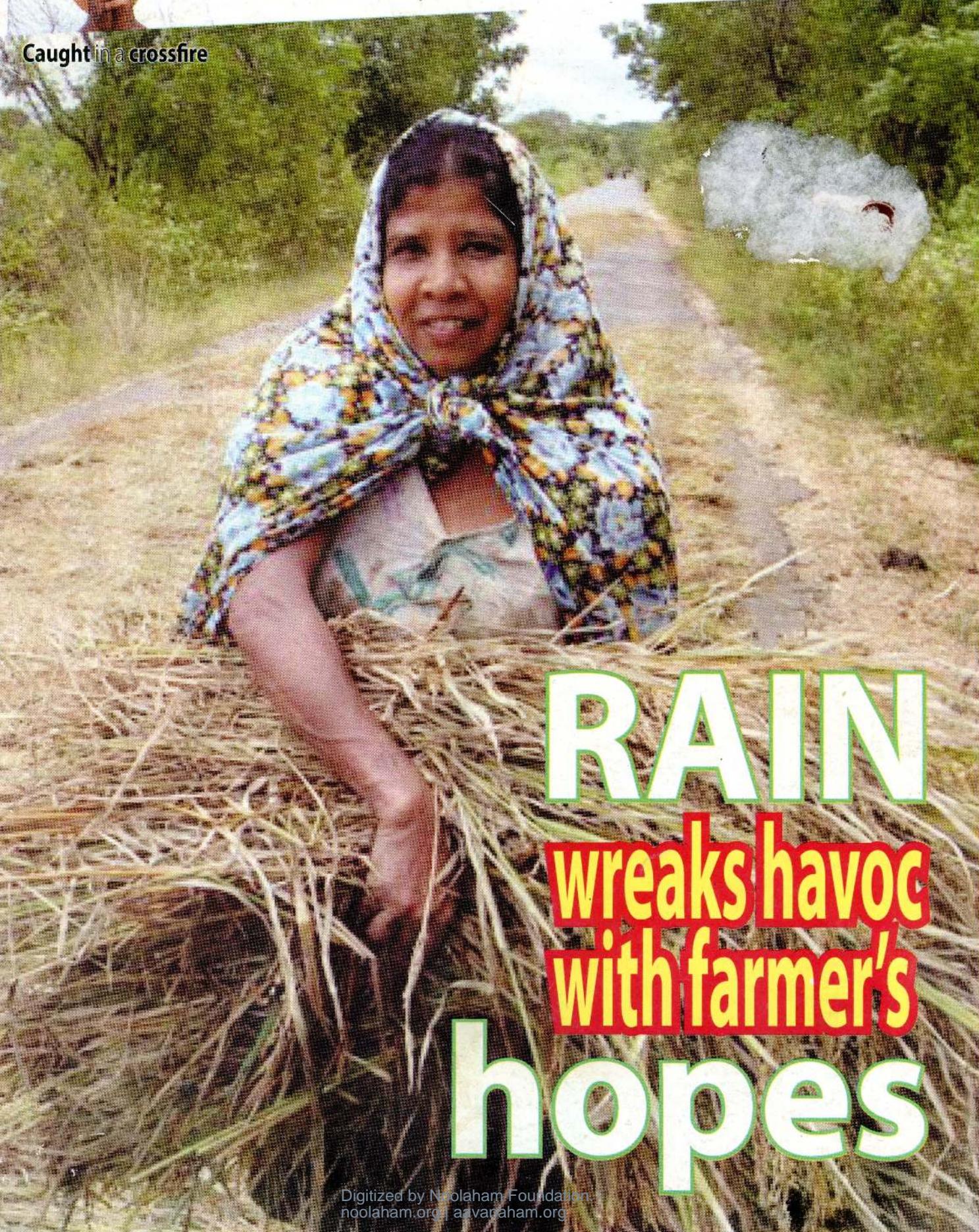
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Caught in a crossfire



**RAIN
wreaks havoc
with farmer's
hopes**

POWER, AUTHORITY AND DISSENT

We live in turbulent times. Dissent runs the risk of denunciation. Criticism could provoke cataclysmic repercussions. Yet we must remain engaged in a dialogue of reason that will allow us to distinguish power from authority. Please let me narrate a folk tale from a land as picturesque as ours - Lesotho. It is a story of power, authority and dissent.

The land was in the high mountains. It was so because Modimo - the supreme power, created their land where it would be within easy reach of his caring hand.

The people had a bountiful harvest. The grain of the maize and sorghum had been safely stored away. The pumpkins, beans were laid out for drying. There would be no empty stomachs for the people during the winter that was approaching.

Yet, the Chief was not happy. He summoned all the men of his tribe whom he consulted on matters important.

With all the fury he could summon he told them "There should be more, so much more!

Tell me why the harvest is so small?" Pointing out to a Sorghum field where birds of many kinds pecked at the scraps of grain that were being spilled by the women harvesters he screamed "The birds! See how fat they are. They are fat because they eat our grain. We must do something about these thieves," he announced in a tone that implied that there will be no further discussion. After all he was the supreme law giver of his land and its people.

All the men agreed with the Great Chief except for one man. His name was Ingongo.

When the tempers cooled he addressed the Great Chief and the other elders in a quiet authoritative manner as he was considered in the tribe as a thoughtful man whose views were often respected.

"They are indeed a nuisance", he said. But it seems to me that they don't take

much. After all our storage baskets are full. Are we not making a great fuss out of something that is relatively small?" The Big Chief would have none of it. "One bird may be small, but many of them together is a very big problem. I say kill them all."

His words were received with near unanimity. Yet the thoughtful dissenter persisted. "I think you are wrong. The birds must be there for a reason." Ingongo was a patient man. He deeply cared for his people. He knew why the birds were there. He could have explained how the birds could be prevented from invading the entire field. A little pond as a bird bath and little bit of grain kept aside would have solved the problem that seems to infuriate the mighty chief. Yet he had no desire to question the authority of the Chief.

"The only reason they are there is to steal our food" screamed the Chief with whom almost everybody else seemed to agree.

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WANT LEVEL PLAYING
FIELD AGAINST
FOREIGN FISHING
FIRMS**

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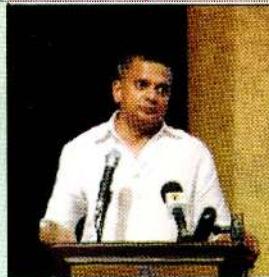
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"I say we kill them all."

The witch doctor was consulted who prepared a cauldron of deadly poison. Sorghum seeds were soaked in the lethal mixture and the next morning they scattered the deadly seeds in their fields.

Sunlight revealed a pitiful sight. Dead Birds were scattered all over. None survived. The birds who according to the chief were stealing their precious harvest were no more.

The Chief was pleased. He congratulated his men for a job well done. Now they could look forward to more greater harvests.

The seasons turned. Summers were followed by winter. Crops sown and harvests gathered and the land yielded its generous bounty.

It took only a few seasons. People began to notice that Maize plants were not growing as tall as they once did. The Sorghum fields were not as thick as they

used to be. The Pumpkins were riddled with inexplicable holes. Bean stalks were bereft of leaves and pods.

Then it dawned on them. They found the land crawling with worms and the plants were infested with beetles, flies and borers. The appetite of the new parasites was far greater than that of the Birds.

The Chief mobilised every man, woman and child to dig the worms from the soil and pick the insects from the plants. They destroyed many but the next day there seemed to be more than before. There was simply no way to rid the land of this pestilence.

The Chief was not one to display contrition. "Let them have the fields," he said defiantly.

"We will not plant any more crops for those devils to feed on." We will return to the way of our ancestors. The men will once again be hunters. The women will

gather fruits and berries. The worms and the insects will die when there is nothing for them to eat.. Then we will reclaim the land."

On and off they inspected the abandoned land. The pests seemed content to live off the natural vegetation. The men continued to hunt and the women gathered fruits and berries. The ways of the mountain tribe who claimed that their land in the high mountain was closer to paradise than any other place on earth was radically changed.

(Adopted from a folk tale from the 'The Quivering Spear' - south African Legends and Fables by Thomas A.Nevin 1996 published by QS partners, Johannesburg, S.A.)

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

- T.S.Eliot

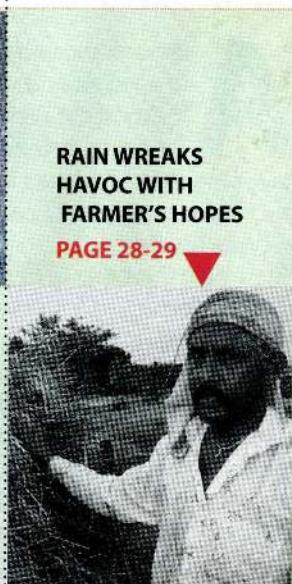


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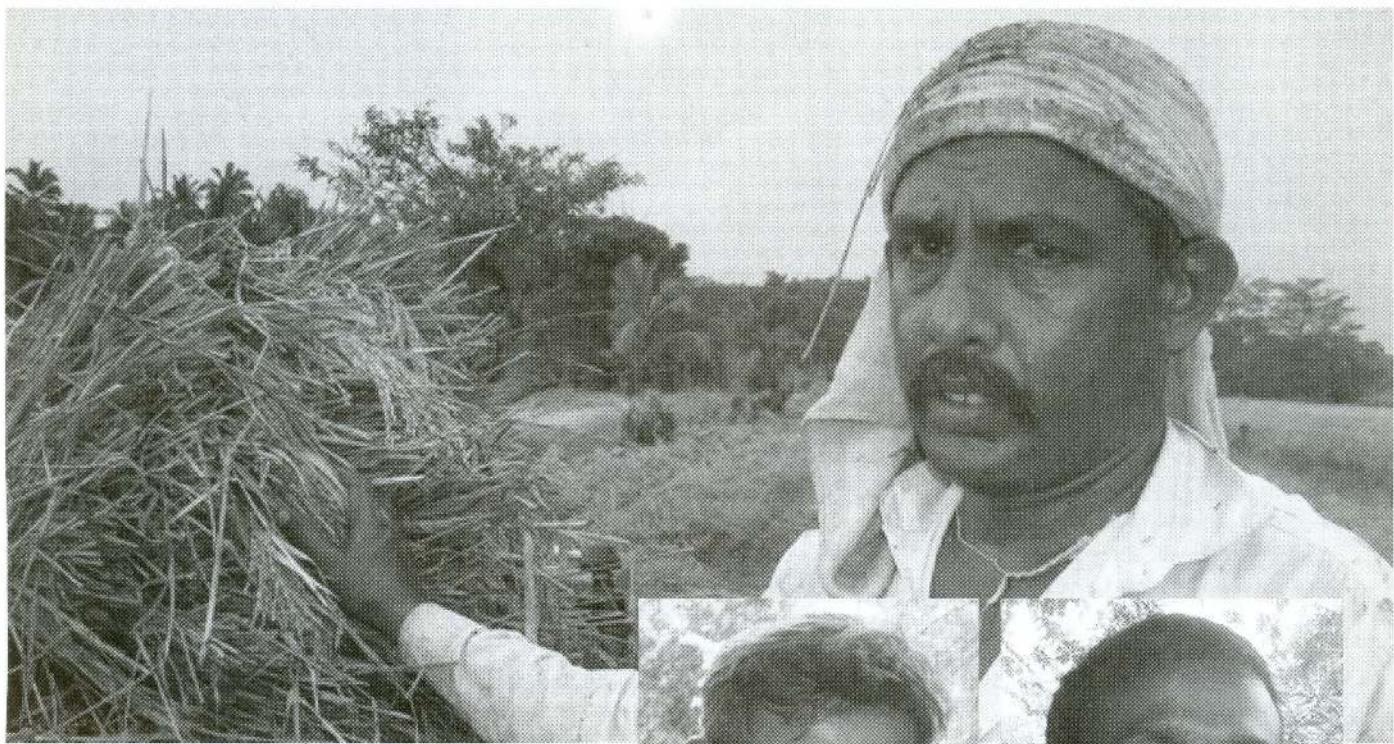
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M.P.G.Edwin



S.Weerathunga

RAIN

wreaks havoc with farmers' hopes

Report and pics by Karunaratne Gamage.

Although the paddy continues to ripen around the land, the hearts of the paddy farmers are not as pleasing. Conditions have progressed from bad to worse, and the burden they have to bear has only become heavier.

One would think that in a country that cultivates paddy, paddy farming would be one of the most lucrative trades to be engaged in.

Although a substantial population is engaged in paddy cultivation – and they provide an invaluable service to a country of rice consumers – the lack of a coherent agricultural policy affects both the producer and the consumer.

The farmers complain that the cost of production is rapidly increasing – and

they are unable to recover their cost by the sale of paddy, and ironically the occupation that feeds the nation is now a loss making enterprise.

They point out that merely bringing down the cost of a hundred weight of fertiliser to Rs. 350 will not solve the problem, as the cost problems the farmers begin from the sowing period right up to the harvesting period.

Although the Government from time to time announces a guaranteed price for paddy, over the years they have been unable to absorb this price, for the rice that is produced.

This has resulted in the farmer being exploited by the private trader or the private mill owner. The farmers complain that paddy cultivation is now a debt

incurring occupation compelling them to turn to other sources of income generation.

Their situation becomes clearer when one examines the actual cost involved in paddy cultivation.

A bushel of seed paddy costs Rs. 1,625 per acre and the pre-sowing fertiliser costs Rs.525. Another Rs. 1,500 is needed for sowing the fields.

The initial cost of the two primary stages of cultivation is about Rs. 5000. Fertiliser, weedicide and labour costs come to another Rs. 8,500, bringing the total cost to around Rs. 13,500.

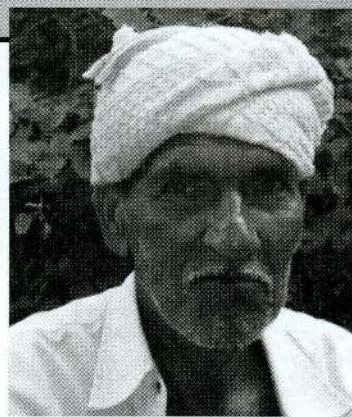
Two more infusions of fertiliser are necessary before the harvest, which cost Rs.1,050 and at least Rs. 600 is needed for more pesticides.

Breakdown of the cost of sowing and harvesting an acre of paddy land

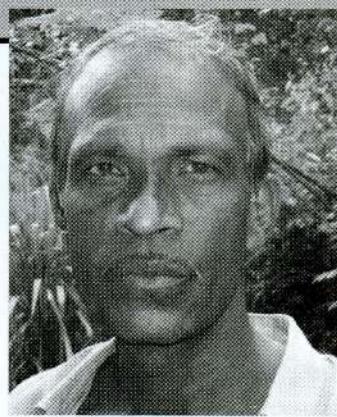
1.	First stage – preparing the field	Rs. 2500
2.	Preparing in-field divisions	Rs. 2500
3.	Second stage	Rs. 2500
4.	Preparing in-field divisions	Rs. 2500
5.	Fertiliser	Rs. 2000
6.	Fertiliser second stage	Rs. 525 (Rs. 350 / 1 ½ cwt)
7.	Seed paddy - 2 ½ bushels@	Rs. 650
8.	Sowing paddy	Rs. 1500
9.	Weedicides and pesticides	Rs. 2100
10.	Fertiliser@ 3 x 350	Rs. 1050
11.	Harvesting (harvest combine)	Rs. 7500

Total

Rs. 26300



K.L. Fransis



C. Edrisinhe

The harvesting and milling which was hitherto done by labourers is now mechanised – and it costs Rs. 7500 for the harvest combine per acre. It therefore costs around Rs. 26,000 to cultivate an acre. Meanwhile, the harvest per acre is about 100 bushels, which the farmer is more

often than not unable to dispose of at the guaranteed price. Most often the harvest per acre is about 100 bushels. A kilo of paddy sells at around Rs. 12 to 13. Sometimes at an average of about Rs. 15. At this rate the farmer will earn about Rs. 32,000. With a cost of Rs. 26000, the farmer's profit is a mere Rs. 6000, which cannot be treated as a net profit when the farmer's own contribution is added to the cost of production.

In addition to these woes, the recent torrential rains brought another onslaught of problems to the already burdened farmer who nursed the hope of getting a hitherto unattainable price for rice, had to watch while his crops were washed away by the rains.

"We were expecting a better harvest this season. But then it rained incessantly from the very moment we commenced harvesting. The paddy is wet and the mill owners will give us only a pittance because of that. There are no Government owned stores anywhere in the vicinity. We have to therefore depend on private mill owners," lamented 48-year-old H. Gu-

napala of Athuwalpitiya in Polonnaruwa.

The paddy that 53-year old Chandrani Kumari Herath harvested was also washed away by the rain. She spoke to us while drying her paddy on the main road.

"It rained continuously for ten to fifteen days and ruined our crops. The paddy took root while still on the stalk. Nothing like has happened as far as I can remember. Even the threshing floor is muddy. That is why we have to dry our paddy on the main road. I don't know what price this crop will fetch," she said in despair. Those living in Polonnaruwa and in the Mahaweli B sector have had to face this calamity as well.

Seventy two-year-old K.L. Francis of the Aralagonwila Hansa Bridge told us that the Maha Season was completely destroyed by the rains. 'I have never faced a tragedy like this from the day I became a cultivator. It never rains like this in April,' he said.

Chandrasiri Edirisinghe is another

cultivator who suffered immensely due to this year's rains in Plonnnaruwa. His crops have been destroyed. His threshing floor went under water just when he and several others like him were getting ready to bring in the harvest.

While all these conditions will result in a massive shortfall the consequent steep rise in the price of rice, will lead to a low paddy price for the poor farmers.

"The price of rice does not come down because the price of paddy falls. The havoc caused by the rains is going to create a sever shortage of rice in the near future. Rice that is now available at Rs. 60 a kilo will soon rise to Rs. 100. Because of the damage caused by the rain even I had to give my paddy cheap - if not for the rains I could have got a better price," he said.

Samantha Weenatunga a young cultivator with fields just below the Parakrama Samudra irrigation tank is engaged in fruit cultivation in addition to paddy cultivation. He said that not only his paddy but his fruit and vegetable crops too were destroyed due to the incessant rains.

At the moment there has been no sign of any steps taken to alleviate the fate of the farmers.

Trinco

FISHER FOLK WANT LEVEL PLAYING FIELD AGAINST FOREIGN FISHING FIRMS

 Mangalanath Liyanaarachchi- Trincomalee

Local multi-day fisher folk claim they have been deprived of the foreign market due to permission being granted to foreign fishing firms that export tuna fish via local harbours.



R.P. Anurasiri



Priyantha Fernando



Tyronne Felix



Christine Fernando

"After they started unloading fish from foreign vessels, we do not even get as much as Rs 200 per kilo for our fish. Not only the government but even the Fisheries Minister does not comment about this. It is the duty of the Fisheries Minister to solve the problems we have,"



Sumith Jayalal

For the first time fishermen of multi-day fishing vessels along the Trincomalee Codbay and other fishing harbours abandoned work and went on strike to protest against foreign fishing vessels that unloaded their catch at the harbour.

The local fishermen claimed that these fishing vessels belonging to foreign companies had connections with government ministers which enabled them to unload their catch at the harbour and send

them to the local market. As a result local fishermen are unable to get a reasonable price for their catch.

"We go to sea in multi-day vessels which cost us around Rs 7 million. We also spend more than Rs. 5 lakhs on each trip. After spending so much, what is the point if we cannot get a proper price for our catch? Fish that cost around Rs. 350 to 400 per kilo, when we set out to sea is worth only Rs.200 when we come back to land. The reason is

that ship companies which have ties with ministers, unload their catches of tuna from several months at sea and then the prices of fish drop at once. There are plenty of vessels bearing fish harvests in the market," said R.P. Anurasiri, a multi-day fishing vessel owner in Trincomalee.

Local multi-day fisher folk claim they have been deprived of the foreign market due to permission being granted to these foreign fishing firms exporting tuna fish via local harbours.

The fishermen point out that allowing foreign ships to fish in local waters as well as giving them the freedom to use our fishing harbours was a dire injustice to the fishing community of the country.

These multi-day fishing vessels which target mostly the foreign markets in Japan and Korea only catch tuna fish for export. The fish that is exported from Sri Lanka is highly valued. However, the fishermen point out, that the tuna fish that is unloaded from foreign fishing vessels are bought at reduced prices by the fish exporters and also mixed together with the fish harvest of local fishermen and exported to these countries. Hence the quality of the local fish which made a name for itself automatically drops.

"The fish we catch is given directly to fish exporting companies. Usually the rate that the companies specify for a kilo of tuna is between Rs. 400 - 450. Approximately six persons work on a tank boat. Each trip costs more than Rs. 500,000," said Priyantha Fernando of Thoduwawa.

"However after they started unloading fish from foreign vessels, we do not even get as much as Rs 200 per kilo for our fish. Not only the government but even the Fisheries Minister does not comment about this. It is the duty of the Fisheries Minister to solve the problems we have," he adds.

Tyrone Felix, a Fishermen in the Negombo area said, "if the Government specifies a fixed price for a kilo of fish we would not be bothered about how much is being unloaded. What happens is, as soon as the fish from the ships arrive, the market for our harvest reduces considerably. Then we are compelled to selling our fish at a loss, to companies. At the same time, as fish can be bought at lower



prices from these foreign ships, fish exporting companies do not buy from us."

Many fishermen were of the opinion that the quality of the foreign fish being unloaded at the Mutwal Fisheries harbour was very poor. They said since the fish was stored in frozen conditions for months, it tended to spoil quickly once brought to land.

"Our fish is stored only for a maximum of fifteen or twenty days. But this fish is about two to two and half months old. This fish is not bought by other countries and we are not allowed to unload them there either," points out Mr. Felix. A Trincomalee fisherman of a multi day vessel, W.P.Damith Rangana commenting on the situation said, "allowing foreign vessels to use our coastal areas and our harbours, is depriving our country of foreign exchange as well as driving local

fishermen to destitution."

When protesting fisherman where approached they said, "we decided not to go to sea until the government gives us a fair solution. However now that there seems to be a better outlook we have temporarily suspended our decision. We have already informed the vessels that have gone out to deep sea to be ready to return to land and to fight against this decision, as soon as they are informed."

We challenge either the Fisheries Minister or the Deputy Minister to a public debate with us. We can come to any television channel and expose the reality to the country. We ask the President whether, the Mahinda Chinhanaya means, getting rich with other people's wealth..." said a multi-day vessel owner in Trincomalee, Sumith Jayalal.



Jayarani



Umaraani



Gunaseeli



Chandra

Silent tears

By Mangalanath Liyanarachchi

With the much celebrated liberation of the East, the residents of the Eastern province no doubt had the most cause for celebration, as the impact of this liberation would surely be the most beneficial for those who live under the threat of a terrorist organisation for over two decades.

The reality of the situation was however to be a stranger to their hopes, as no sooner had the Tigers been cut off armed gangs belonging to several unofficial groups now roam the East, making life once again difficult for the beleaguered residents of the East.

Murugiah Ashok Kumar, husband of Ashok Kumar Chandra Gowrie of 69/10 Uppuveli in Trincomalee is a vegetable vendor who was abducted on October 1 last year while tending his stall. His wife states that to date there is no information about him.

'My husband was in conversation with two of his friends at his stall. A white van approached. A little while later, the van came up to our stall, grabbed my husband, pushed him in to the van and

drove off. I looked for my husband all over, but everybody denies responsibility,' Gowrie said while holding her one month old daughter close to her chest.

Thirty two year old Kanagasingham Logeswaran of No. 30, Linga Nagar was abducted at the Linga Nagar Bus Stand on February 8. His wife Logeswaran Gunaseeli says there is no news about him up to date. "While my husband and I were waiting at the bus halt, a white van came and stopped near us. We thought that the van belonged to someone known to us. Three people alighted from the van and forced my husband into it. The van proceeded towards Trincomalee town without even stopping at the check point. It is only vehicles belonging to the Army or the Police that do not stop at checkpoints and this allayed my fears. Later, I went and made a complaint at the

Police, but I was told that neither the Police nor the Army had taken him. So what more can I do?" says Logeswaran Gunaseeli, while her one year old watches the tears roll down his mother's cheeks, perhaps unaware of the impact this event could have on his life.

"My husband died when my son was very young and I brought him up with great difficulty. It is my son who later looked after me. Last February around 7.30 in the night my son was abducted in a Canter Van. There were about fifteen people in the van. I pleaded with them to release my son. But they pushed me aside and took my son away," sobbed Shivananda Sulochana of Kanniya Bharati Puram as she recounted that awful day. Though she has complained to the Uppuveli Police and the Human Rights Organisation, there has been no trace of



Jerald Madhivadhini



B.Vanaja

her son.

Abductions have been reported not only from the Trincomalee town area, but from distant places like Kantalai as well. On December 10, 20-year-old Alagan Shivakumar of No. 529, Unit 2 was abducted in a three wheeler.

"At around 12 in the afternoon, some persons who came in a three wheeler and a motor bicycle asked him whether he was Shivakumar. My brother said that it was our younger brother, then they left. My brother had then left to the boutique. Some bystanders had seen my brother being taken away in a three wheeler. We looked everywhere, but to date we have not been able to find him, nor is there any news about him," his sister, Alagan Mallika told Groundview.

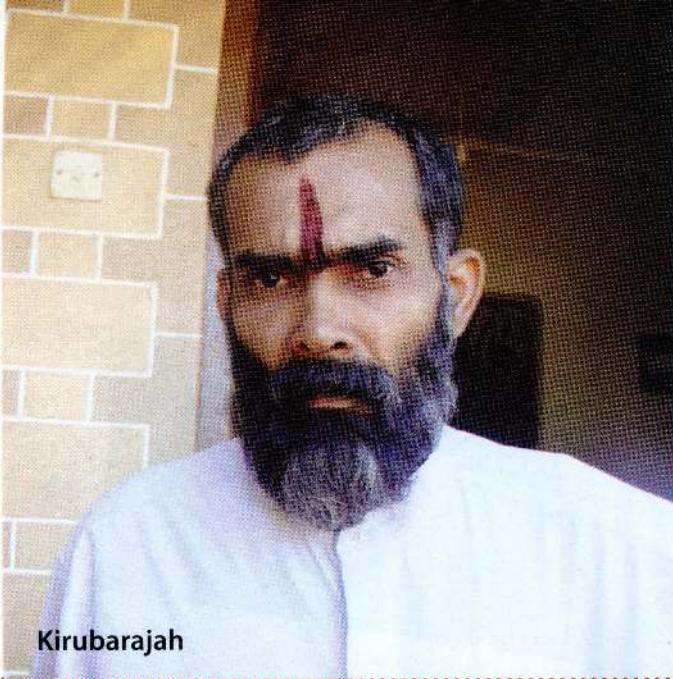
Twenty year old Theodore Christopher of School Street, Ambuwelipuram was abducted on the morning of Independence day last year. The next time his wife saw him was in March of that year and that was as a corpse with a bullet wound in his head.

She says, "Two others were also taken along with my husband. We made complaints everywhere and at each place we were told that there is no such person in custody, and finally we found his corpse. He was wearing the same set of clothes that he was in at the time of his abduction. I am now pregnant – who will my child call father?", she asked disconsolately.

In October last year, an armed group broke into No. 60/16 St. Anthony's Street at Palayuthu in Trincomalee and abducted S. Varaksham who was fast asleep along with his wife and children.

"My husband was a welder. He came home tired after work and we were all sleeping. This gang who abducted him came around 8.30 p.m. or so and they took him away," his wife said.

Thiyagu Umavani of Alleswatta in Trincomalee says she received information that her husband was taken



Kirubarajah



V.Sinnathurai Siva



J.L. Martin

away in a white van while he was at work. Munandi Thiyyagu, her husband was twenty eight years old at this time and was resident with her at Alleswatta. 'We went to several places including the Human Rights Organisation and the Red Cross. So far, we have no information whatsoever, whether he is dead or alive. If he has committed some crime don't kill him – send him to prison for life," says Umapani while kissing his photograph.

Gerard Jatli Martin, a twenty six year old father of one and the son of Gerard Leslie Martin of 114, 3rd Mile Post, 2nd Lane was kidnapped in a white van on January 28, while he was working in a rock quarry at the third Mile Post. "That is what some people who were working there told me," says Gerard Martin. "I went to the Police, the Army Camp and even Karuna's office, but there is no information about my son," he said.

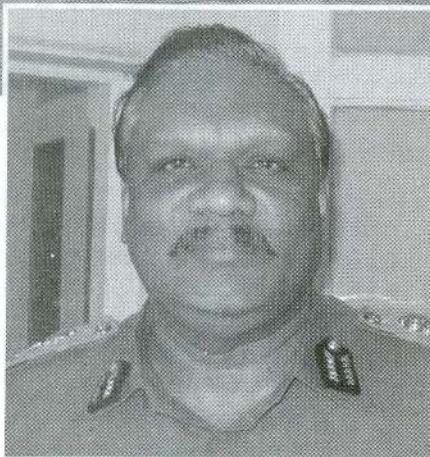
Velupillai Sinnathurai of the EPRLF states that most of these abductees were strong supporters of the Tigers and are in some way or the other responsible for the incidents that take place in and around Trincomalee.

It was revealed to Groundview by the Political leader of Trincomalee(TMVP) Jeganadan Jayaraj (Suranga) in their Trincomalee office that they have laid down arms and returned to the democratic path. "We have weapons only to protect ourselves from the Tigers. We are quite aware that the Tigers and other political forces are blaming us for these abductions as part of their political strategy. If the general population believed that we were responsible for these abductions, could we have won at the recently concluded Local Government Elections. We categorically state that this is all false propaganda," he said.

Groundview made inquiries about the abductions and murders from the Senior Superintendent of Police, Trincomalee, Kithsiri Dayananda. He said that most of these incidents take place where there is no police and army presence.

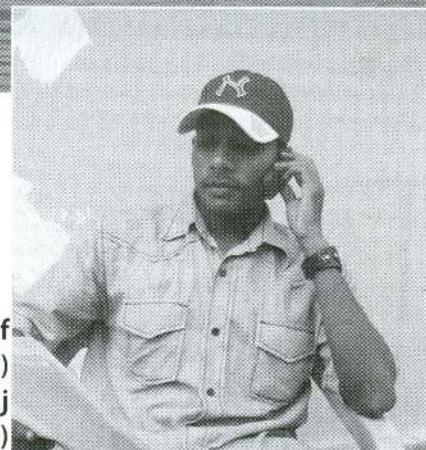
'Many of these abductions have been reported from remote villages. We try as much as possible to contain these incidents. We have set up posts in many of the remote highways and I have advised the officials working under me to try and stop these incidents," he said.

The District Representative of the Human Rights Organisation said the abductions and killings in the Trincomalee District have reached alarming proportions. In January alone they received reports of eight abductions, five missing persons, and one death. In February the figures were 12 abduction 12 missing and four killings. At the end of last year 95 complaints



**Kithsiri Dayanand
-SSP, Trincomalee**

**Political leader of
Trincomalee(TMVP)
Jeganadan Jayaraj
(Suranga)**



of abduction, 90 missing persons and 56 killings were reported.

The representative went on to say that while inquiries were made regarding these incidents from the Army and the Police, no such inquiries could be made from the several armed groups operating in the area.

'Whenever there is an abduction, or someone goes missing, we make inquiries from the Government security forces. From our inquiries it appears that the security forces are not involved in these incidents. We are not in a position

to make inquiries from the armed groups. If the security forces pick up someone they inform the Police. The Police in turn inform us. We can't expect that from the armed groups operating in this area. There are also occasions when those who had gone missing turned up at a later date. The latest incident was where a woman complained that her husband had gone missing. We made inquiries from the Police. What we learned was that he was residing in a different area along with his mistress. There are also occasions when those who were reported as missing have in fact gone abroad," she said.

While it is not unusual that human rights are violated in a country with a long history of civil strife, such actions cannot be condoned during times of peace. There appears to be no escape from the Human rights violations perpetuated by armed gangs.

'If our children have committed any offences, put them in prison, instead of killing them like stray dogs. Karuna and his group were also guilty of criminal acts, but the Government has now forgiven them – then why can't our children also be forgiven," asked Gerard Madivadini, the mother of Gerard Leslie.



Accessibility to markets to sell/buy their produce/inputs is a severe problem faced by farmers, fisherpersons, and traders in all three districts, except the fisherpersons of Batticaloa. Major constraint is numerous check points in the Eastern Province as well as in Colombo. Unloading and reloading, damage goods. It is more so in case of perishables.

Livelihoods in the **Eastern Province**

 **Muttukrishna Sarvananthan**

Principal Researcher, Point Pedro Institute of Development, Point Pedro. <http://pointpedro.org>

IMPACT OF SECURITY MEASURES IN THE EAST

Thousands of people particularly in the Eastern Province have lost their livelihoods as result of the war which resumed in December 2005 and intensified since late July 2006. The conflict has produced mass displacements and loss of livelihoods which can be directly attributed to security restrictions. In this context the nexus between national security and human security is obvious and glaring.

Fishing is the worst affected occupation as all three of the districts in the Eastern Province are coastal areas. In addition, the agricultural sector is affected by displacements as well as rising input prices and the lack of market accessibility. Transport problems, numerous security check points, general insecurity and reduced purchasing power are the main factors that affect wholesale and retail trade.

A survey was conducted by Point Pedro Institute of Development to understand and quantify the true impact of the on going conflict on the livelihoods of residents of Eastern

Province.

According to the findings of this survey, paddy output of Trincomalee district is the worst affected, where the decline in production is 40%. However there is hardly any difference in Amparai and Batticaloa districts.

In the fisheries sector, decline in Trincomalee is highest being 64% which is followed by Ampara (29%) and Batticaloa (4%).

In the trading sector the average number of customers per day has declined by one third in Trincomalee. In Batticaloa the decline was 13%, and in Ampara the drop was just 5%.

These figures indicate that Trincomalee is the worst affected district in the Eastern Province due to the resumption of the conflict..

The survey has been conducted into the changes in value of output as well. Here too, Trincomalee appears to be the worst affected. The other two districts have, in fact, increased their value of output/turnover, except fish catch in Ampara.

In the agricultural sector, the paddy output in value increased marginally by 4% in the Ampara district, and considerably by 10% in the Batticaloa district. However, the paddy output dropped by 24% in terms of value in the Trincomalee district. The increase in the average value of paddy output in Ampara and Batticaloa is due to the high price resulting from a lower output/supply. In Trincomalee also, the drop in the average value of paddy output (-24%) is lower than the drop in the average volume of output (-40%), which indicates that the higher price has partially offset the decline in output.

The average value of fish catches in the Trincomalee district has declined by 59%. In Ampara, the drop was 10%. However, in Batticaloa district, the average value of output increased considerably by 21%. It appears that the high price of fish due to the decline in catches has partially compensated for the loss of output in all three districts. In Batticaloa, the average value of fish harvests increased by 21%, while the average catches in volume dropped marginally by 4%, which indicates that

the higher price has more than offset the drop in output.

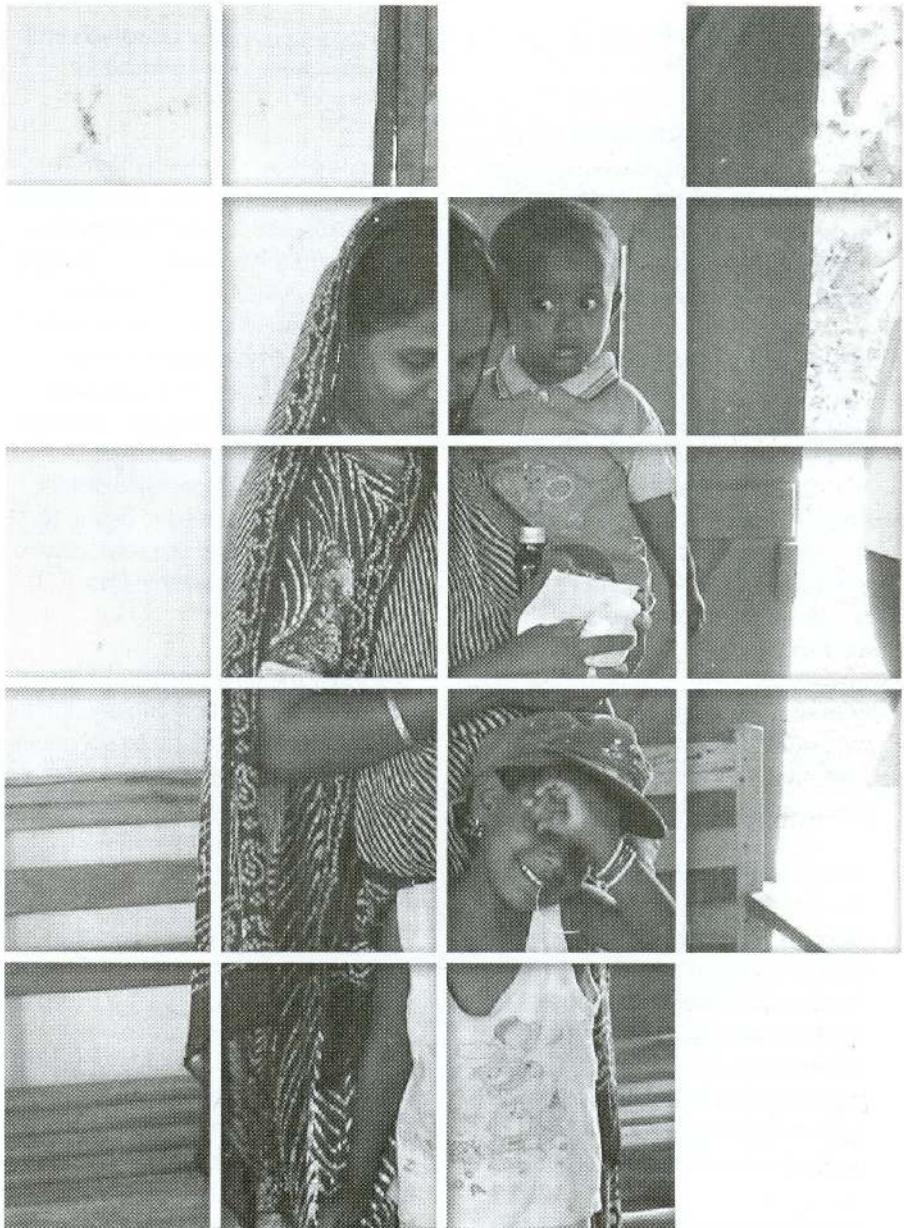
In trading, the daily average turnover among the traders dropped significantly by 35% in the Trincomalee district. However, this figure has increased by 16% in Ampara and by 10% in Batticaloa. Trincomalee, the decline in volume as well as value of turnover is same indicating very little increase in price levels. On the other hand, in Ampara and Batticaloa districts, despite the drops in the average number of customers (-5% and -13% respectively), the daily average turnover has increased by 16% and 10% respectively, which is due to the rise in prices of goods.

Overall, the foregoing figures indicate that despite the drops in outputs/clients of various sectors, higher prices fetched by their produce and goods sold have partially or more than proportionally compensated the losses in volume. Trincomalee district is the only district that has experienced drops in both the volumes and values of output/trade. However, the drops in the volume have been higher than the values due to escalating prices..

Despite the indicated average picture, analysis of changes in the price of produce show disturbing statistics. That is, the average prices of both paddy and fish have increased significantly, and the average number of employees in trading has dropped significantly as compared to figures prior to the resumption of the conflict.

The average price of paddy has increased significantly in Trincomalee district (by 22%) and marginally in Ampara and Batticaloa districts (by 4% and 8% respectively). The increases in prices are due to supply and demand forces. Higher prices of paddy have increased the values of output, and thereby partially compensating for the losses in output.

Similarly, the average price of fish has increased significantly by 27% in Ampara and by 30% in Batticaloa. In



Trincomalee, the increase is enormous, by 182%. However this data may be misleading as only one variety of fish was taken for the sample.

In the trading sector, average number of employees dropped by 19% in Ampara and by 56% in Trincomalee. It is interesting to note that these figures do not collate with the drops in the average number of customers which is 5% and 33% respectively. In Batticaloa there was no change in the number of employees but average number of customers has dropped by 5%.

These observations lead to the

assumption that traders in Ampara and Trincomalee are less optimistic about a change in the present situation for the better. Hence they have laid off more staff than necessary while traders in Batticaloa are optimistic about a change and therefore have retained their staff despite reduced trading activities.

Accessibility to markets to sell/buy their produce/inputs is a severe problem faced by farmers, fisherpersons, and traders in all three districts, except the fisherpersons of Batticaloa. Major constraint is numerous check points in the Eastern Province as well as in Colombo. Unloading and reloading, damage

goods. It is more so in case of perishables.

Only the fisherpersons in Batticaloa opined that there is an easy access to the market to sell their products. This observation was unanimous for all respondents selected for the survey which makes it conclusive.

Prior to closure of A9 highway in the North in August 2006, about 45 – 50 buses were plying between Trincomalee and Vavuniya carrying both passengers and cargo. It has now declined to 5 per day. Besides there is stringent checking of lorries and buses from the Eastern Province to Colombo and other parts of the country.

In this survey, problems encountered by residents of all three districts pertaining to their vocations were discussed in depth.

Both in Amparai and Batticaloa, lack of water and high price of inputs and fuel were identified as major constraints for cultivation. In Trincomalee these were further supplemented by insecurity and followed by a lack of capital. Overall, higher prices of inputs including fuel is the single major problem faced by paddy farmers in all three districts.

In the fishing community in Amparai and Batticaloa, the major problem encountered is prices of inputs including fuel. In Trincomalee, a ban on long distance fishing and fishing around the Naval Base and Trincomalee harbour are the major impediments. Because of the Naval base at the Trincomalee harbour and commercial and passenger ships calling at the harbour, restrictions on fishing is much more severe in Trincomalee, in order to provide security to the harbour. In Amara and Batticaloa the conditions are different.

In the Trading Sector, higher prices of goods, lower number of customers, difficulty in traveling to Colombo to purchase goods and delay in transporting goods are major impediments. High prices of goods is the worst factor that affects

purchasing power of customers and thereby denting the turnover of business.

In spite of several impediments to their vocations, farmers, fisherpersons, and traders in all three districts are sticking to their occupations. There is very little evidence of finding or supplementing their incomes with alternative employment. A small number of farmers in Amparai are contemplating leasing their land and finding alternative livelihoods. Similarly in the Trincomalee district, some fisherpersons have begun to run a three wheeler taxi service to supplement their income from fishing.

Factually the time since the eruption of the conflicts is not long enough for any of them to contemplate changing occupations. There is also no indication of dependence on state welfare payments for livelihood sustenance.

The entire survey boils down to several conclusions and recommendations.

The stringent security measures and the rise of prices of inputs and goods are two major factors that affect the livelihood activities of farmers, fisherperson and traders in the Eastern Province. In some cases transport cost of goods are higher than the cost of products!

In the aftermath of 9/11, the impact of new security measures on international trade has become a hot topic of discussion in international forums. It has been established that terrorist attacks decrease bilateral and multilateral trade throughout the world. However, most of the studies on the international economic impact of terrorism have concentrated on the impact of terrorist attacks on trade, tourism, shipping and aviation operations, and the insurance markets. There is only a limited focus on the economic impact of counter-terrorism measures.

This is the true situation applicable to Sri Lanka too.

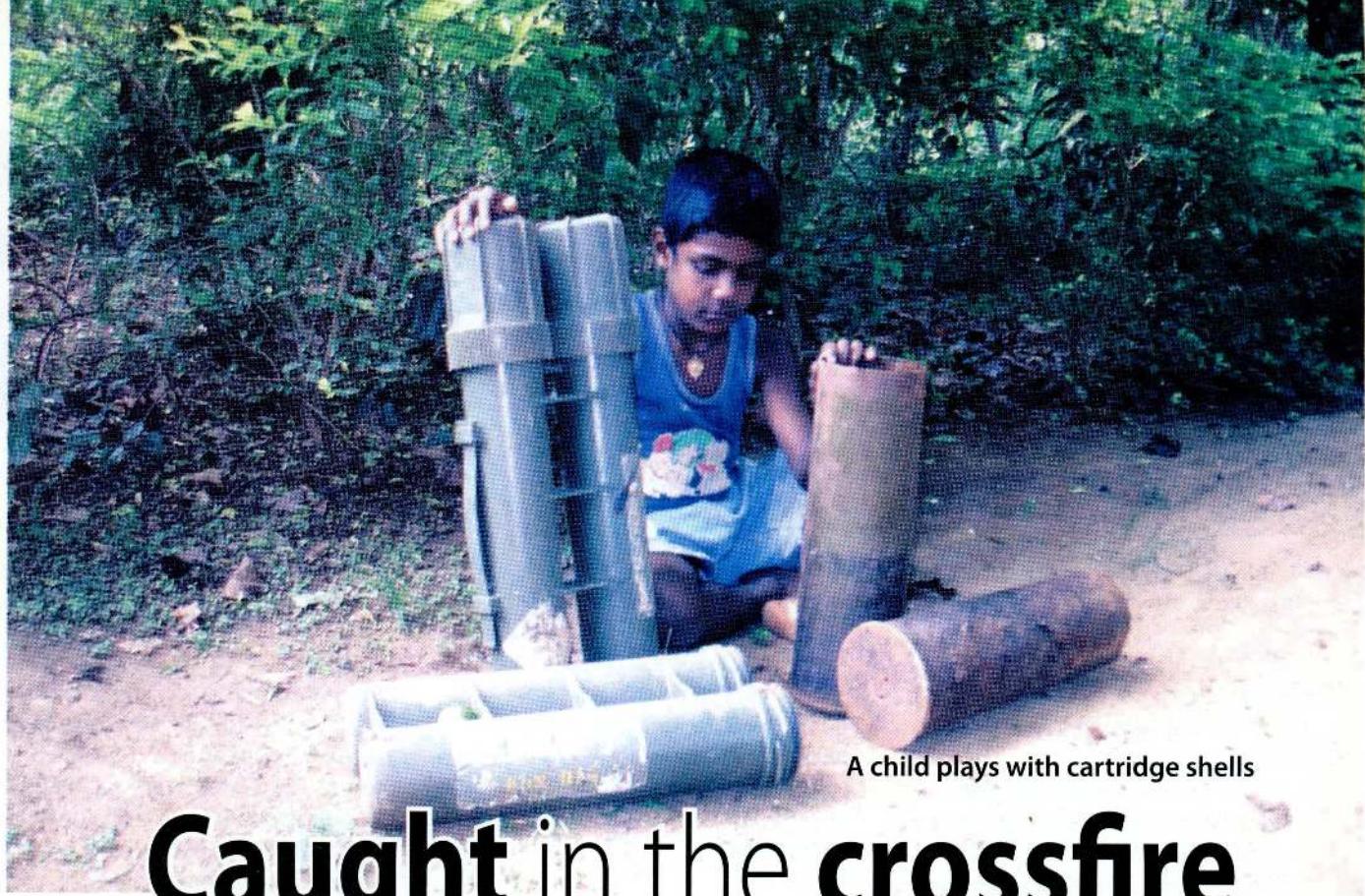
Therefore, it is high time the Sri Lankan policy makers learn lessons from the experiences of other countries in minimizing the economic cost of counter-terrorism measures.

In Sri Lanka, multiple unloading and reloading which increase the cost of transactions can be avoided by checking at just one place and then sealing the cargo section of the vehicle so that it need not be checked again on the same journey.

Further, unloading and reloading of goods from vehicles could be avoided by using modern scanners to detect any illicit cargo. These high tech equipments are used in European and North American seaports and airports to detect smuggling of human beings and illicit cargo. It is high time the Sri Lankan authorities consider such modern methods of countering the threat of terrorism and easing the burden on the economy and the civilians.

There could be unwillingness or even resistance to introducing modern technologies to combat terrorism, because of the rent-seeking behaviour of law enforcement authorities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that, in order to avoid delays at the security checkpoints, transporters tend to bribe the personnel at these checkpoints. Security-phobia is a bane to some, but a boon to some others.

This is the ground reality. However a responsible democratic government should ensure human security without compromising national security. For this, innovative modern cost-effective methods of counter-terrorism have to be adopted. Livelihoods restoration is a sine qua non for the reawakening of the Eastern Province, and further research is required to more accurately assess the economic impact of security measures and recommend strategies to mitigate their impact on the civilians the government wishes to win over.



A child plays with cartridge shells

Caught in the crossfire

By Ranjith
Jayasundara -
Vavuniya

Villages in the Northern borders struggle to stay alive while they face the threat of starvation since their livelihoods have been restricted due to the on going war

The villagers of Welioya have endured some of the harshest living conditions in the island for over two decades.

Being the northernmost border village, it comes under almost continuous Tiger fire, and the villagers who are often reduced to refugee status have now fallen to the very bottom of the poverty line.

Many of the 326 families living in the Atha Watunu Wewa village are unable to afford even a daily cup of plain tea. A majority being either fishermen or farmers, they have been reduced to helplessness due to the ongoing war.

The Rev. Ranawaka Dhammadinna Thero of the Sri Uduhamaramaya Temple told Groundview.

"In days gone by every family supplied meals to the temple, but now all they send is a little bowl of rice – this illustrates the plight that

has befallen them," he said.



M.G. Punchi Banda

In addition to poverty, the villagers have the added burden of seeking shelter from the constant barrage of artillery fire exchanged between the Army and the LTTE.

"The Army tells us not to be scared, that the artillery fire won't land near us, but when we hear the LTTE fire how can we not be scared," says 62

-year-old M.A. Punchi Banda. Ajit Kumara Rodrigo explained the plight of the village and others like him saying, "my fields are on the other side of the defence perimeter – as a result we abandoned the fields. Yet others were engaged in fishing – but the Tigers concealed in the jungle fired at us when we tried to fish – so that too was abandoned. There isn't even manual work here. We live in constant fear of the mortars and have to be ready to take refuge in the bunkers with our children. It is sad to say that now even our children are used to running into the bunkers at the slightest hint of any trouble. We sorely need some form of aid from the Government, at least in the form of dry rations. There are some families in the village who go for as long as two days without any food. But our pleas to the authorities have fallen on deaf ears so far."

In several families women now head the household as the men have died

As the tears pour down her face she questions how long they have to suffer like this, and whether this will be the life her children are fated to live.



in the war – but it is easy to see that the women are struggling to cope.

The plight of 32-year old widow W.P. Chandra illustrates some of the many hardships the women in the village go through daily.

"I lost my husband some time back – I have two school going children. Our fields are beyond the defence perimeter and therefore we are unable to cultivate. The Tigers will kill us if we venture out. We can afford only one meal a day. If we don't get a

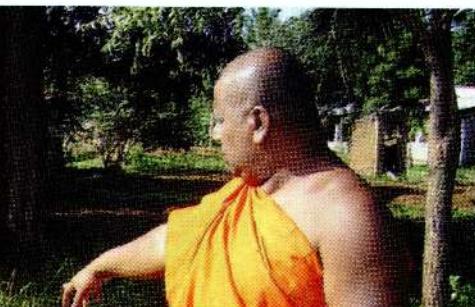
morning meal the children don't go to school that day, and their education has begun to suffer. Because of Tiger mortar the village school has been closed and the children have to attend the school in Nickawewa about three miles away. We can't even afford the bus fare to send our children there. We lead a miserable life over here."

As the tears pour down her face she questions how long they have to suffer like this, and whether this will

be the life her children are fated to live.

Mortars are constantly fired from Mullaithivu across the forward defence line. To date six people have died and 11 have been injured. Due to this, the Government has to built bunkers attached to every house at a cost of Rs. 75000 per bunker. Some of the villagers complain that the bunkers are not strong enough and that the quality of the material used to build them are poor.





Ranawaka Dhamminda theru

Ajith Kumara

Niroshan

Amidst the conditions of war and the ever increasing cost of living, one of the saddest sights however has to be that of students diligently continuing with their studies and preparing for their exams in the stifling bunkers – determined perhaps to eke out a better future for themselves than that of their parents.

District Secretary, Niroshan Karunatileke, agreed that villagers of *Atha Vetunu Wewa* undergo great hardship, as they are unable to

continue with their livelihoods of fishing and farming.

"We forwarded a list of families in need of dry rations to the Government Agent some time ago. The list was then sent to the relevant Ministry and approved. And the matter rests there, we have yet to receive a reply," he said.

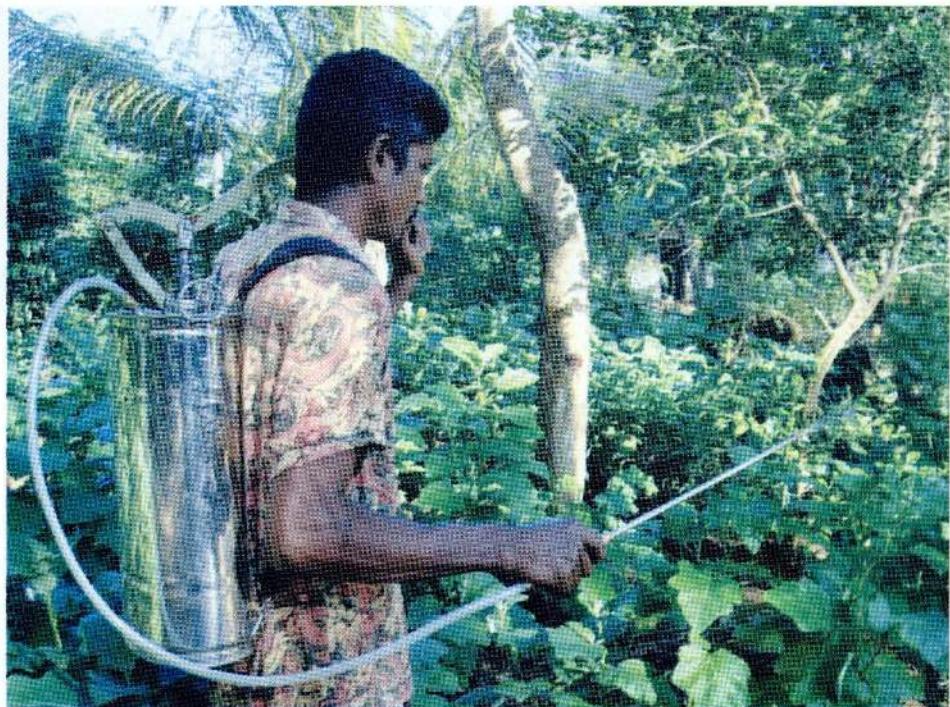
He pointed out that several other villages in the area were facing the same dire conditions. These villagers

face both hunger and danger in these border villages, and perhaps unwittingly, they serve an important role in the defence of the north. If they leave this village it will increase the danger to Padviya and beyond, thus extending the danger to the rest of the country.

Both the Government and NGO's should address the problems faced by these villagers, as the war intensifies, they are in need of help more than ever before.



GroundView
focuses
attention on
villagers in the
North Central
province who
are plagued by
kidney failure,
and due to a lack
of resources the
number of lives
claimed by the
ailment doubles
every year



Chemical fertilizer claiming lives

Located at the base of the Weddagala mountain range lies the village of *Upathgama*, where Mallika (36) suffers from a kidney ailment - which is now emerging as a trend among those in the North Central province.

Ironically it is her fate that a kidney donor cannot be sought from within her family as six other members of her family have succumbed to the same ailment. "I use to do a lot of work in the garden, until I noticed that I had put on weight and was out of breath. I went to the Sri Jayawardenapura Hospital and underwent tests that revealed I was suffering from kidney failure," said Mallika, who adds that from that moment on her husband and two daughters have spent their time in tears.

Mallika is among fifteen others in *Upathgama* who suffers from kidney failure. Two of her siblings also passed away owing to the same disease- they were elder sister Kusumawathie (46) and

brother Gamini (43). Her aunt S. Somawathie was another member of her family to pass away under the same circumstances.

In order for her life to be spared Mallika requires Rs. 500,000 and a kidney. But sadly neither are available to her. She points out saying most of her husband's salary is spent on her medical expenses while they have Piyumi in grade 9 and Parami who is in the O/level class to educate.

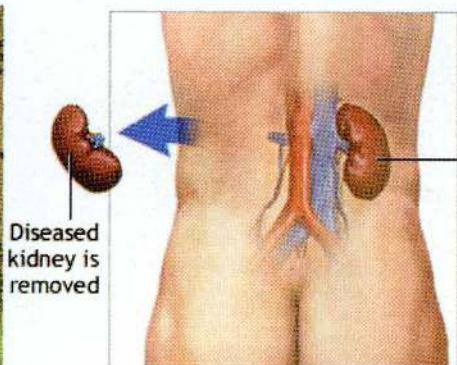
The kidney patients registered for treatment at the Medawachchiya Research and Hospitality Centre at present are over 3,000. A further 1,100 patients continue to take treatment.

The doctors in the area have classified this condition as "Timely Kidney Failure". Attributing it to the long term effects of ailments such as diabetes and hypertension. However, patients with kidney ailments have increased in frequency and the condition is now being identified as a common disease among those in the North Central Province.

Presently the drugs department of the Peradeniya Medical Faculty, a volunteer organization and a team of doctors are carrying out tests to determine and identify the cause for the kidney disease in the area. The Medawachchiya Basic Civil Resources Management Organisation believes the kidney failure to be due to the counter effects caused through chemicals sprays used in farming activities which eventually contaminate natural water sources.

Further it has been reported by the organization that males over 40-years who use agricultural chemicals and reside in areas where agricultural activities are carried out over a long period of time are more prone to acquiring the disease.

It is also common for water ways which filter into lakes during the rainy season to be contaminated with chemicals. Excessive fluoride in the body and the use of aluminium kitchen ware are also believed to be contributing factors but have not yet been proven.



Dr. Muditha Palliyaguruge, D.M.O of the Medawachchiya Hospital said it takes only one year for the number of patients to double. The number of patients recorded in July 2006, amounted to 1,600 and by July the following year the figures had exceeded 3000.

"A tablet of calcium carbonate costs Rs. 20 and if there is a shortage at the clinic they have to be purchased from outside. Injections such as Erythropoietin and Venagal cost more than Rs. 6,000. When patients reach the final stage of kidney failure dialysis is the only solution which costs around Rs. 45,000 and is carried out at the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa hospitals. There are thousands on waiting lists of these hospitals."

Dr. Palliyaguruge describing the

symptoms added that "the ability to work begins to decline gradually and due to consistent back and joint pains, they find it impossible to even attend to their day to day chores. You cannot cure this through medication and the only successful form of treatment is a transplant."

Whatever means the doctors use to classify this ailment villagers have come to identify this as a disease that destroys families.

Acquiring a kidney from a donor is a difficult task for many. "Selling human organs is prohibited by an act, and this is why everyone is afraid to either donate or accept a kidney," says Ariyaratne Wickremarachchi, a lawyer in Anuradhapura.

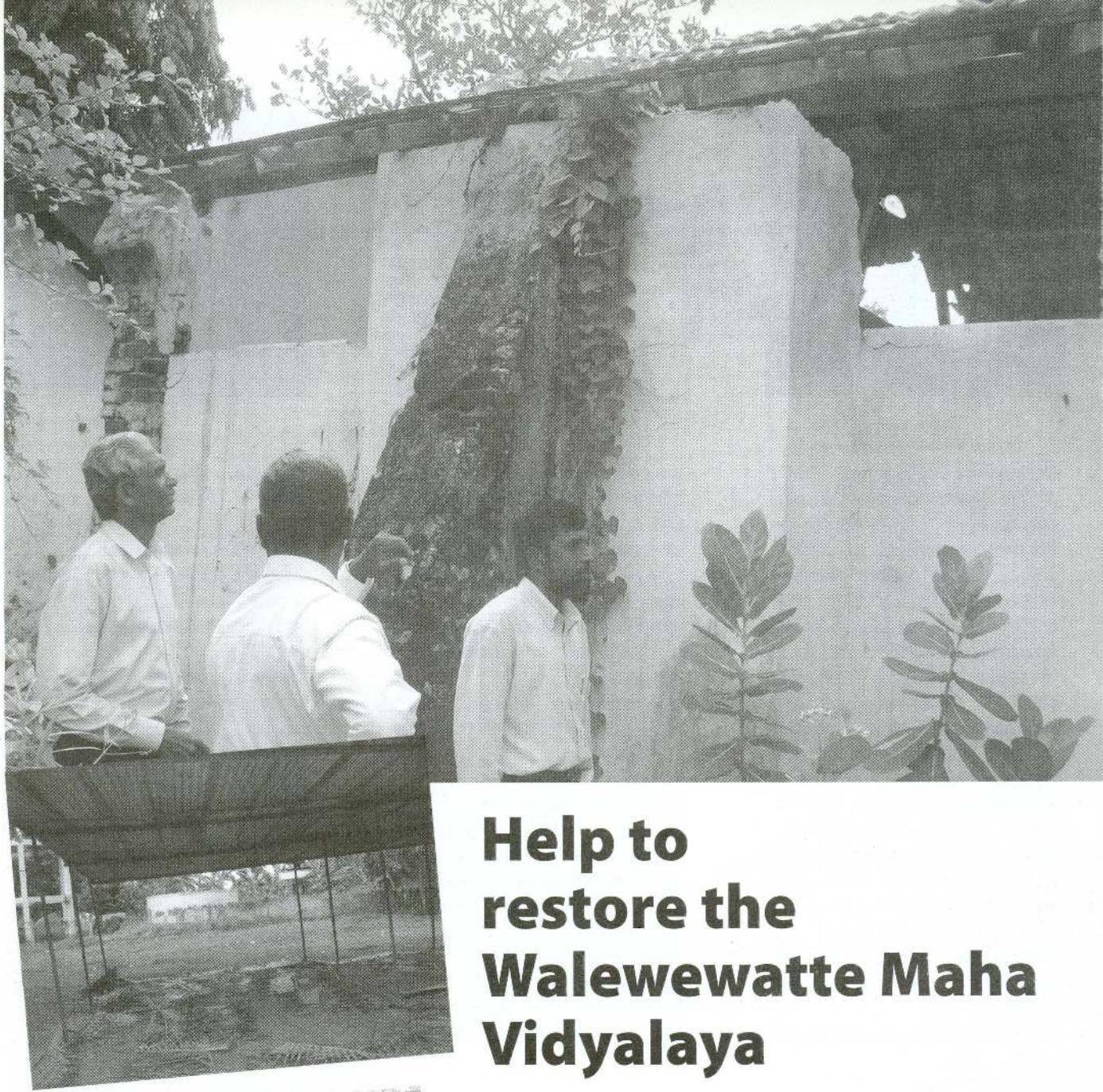
However Provincial Director of healthcare in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, Dr. Wijedasa

Atapattu said kidney failure patients were being treated successfully at both teaching hospitals in Anuradhapura and the district hospital in Polonnaruwa. He added that a 100,000 people from both districts had been tested for the disease.

"There is a long list of contributing factors for kidney failure and among those the environment is part and parcel," says Dr. Wathsala Wijesinghe, Aryuvedic Research Institute, in Navinna.

"If it is the environment that has caused this, the authorities have a lot of work to do in arriving at policy measures to deal with the issue. As a short term exercise facilities should be increased at the Medawachchiya Hospital," he added.





The Walewewatte Maha Vidyalaya school is situated in the Hambantota District. This school was opened in the 1950s by the then Minister of Agriculture, M.D. Banda. This structure was later converted into a larger school consisting of a

Help to restore the Walewewatte Maha Vidyalaya

By P. Ratnayaka, Ambalantota,

few buildings with the assistance of the government.

During the 1970's the student population in this school was around 500 - 600. In comparison to other schools in the area the Walewewatte Vidyalaya school succeeded in producing good results and even went on to produce an all island sportsmen.

However, today the school and its administration has deteriorated to such an extent that only 232 students attend this institution. The poor management, decline in discipline and a lack of physical resources are the main reasons behind its decline.

Today, there are no proper desks,

chairs or black-boards. The halls are drenched during the rainy season. There are no teachers for the three aesthetic subjects of Art, Dancing and Music. Teachers are lacking in the areas of physical education, sports and IT.

This school which celebrated its Golden Jubilee a few years back is now in need of proper sanitation facilities. These children have never seen laboratory equipment or computers. Although there is a school band it has very limited resources.

This school will be closed if this present situation continues. It is a common occurrence to see children, leaving to enter other schools daily.



Although parents and teachers have approached concerned authorities, so far no solution has been found. It is not a difficult task to bring this school back to its previous condition if the minimum facilities are met.

If there is any possibility of providing these destitute children of the *Walewewatte Maha Vidyalaya* with proper schooling facilities such an act would aid a generation of youngsters of the Walewe River valley.





Women's Day just a dream for the UPCOUNTRY WOMAN

By J.A. Phillip

Women are being exploited by their employers and by residents of the society they live in. This is mainly due to the religion they practice, norms of society, and their traditional beliefs. What is distressing is the fact that they are unable to realize that their rights are being violated. If a particular woman tries to speak up about her rights, she is suppressed and labeled as a garrulous and indecent woman and is condemned and ridiculed by the women of her own community.

Although March 8 was commemorated as Women's Day internationally in Sri

Lanka, over the past fifteen years many functions with the support of the Media have been held. Although many suggestions as well as opinions with regard to the upliftment of women are presented on this day, the following day is like any other and every thing is forgotten and once again women are treated as before.

Although all the pageantry associated with Women's day is in existence the fact is that Women's Day and it's theme are lost to women who work in the estates these women are unaware or have not been made to understand, the importance of their rights.

Trade Unions on Estates

The only suitable representatives to speak on the rights of the upcountry women, are the Trade Unions and related organizations. These organizations should strive to connect the outside world with the estates.

However, these Trade Unions have not been speaking enough on behalf of their rights. In large estates, the Trade Unions charge the women workers the highest proportion as membership fees which are required for their subsistence. Nevertheless, there is almost nothing that



is being done for these women by the Trade Unions. Even the anomaly in wages between the two parties of men and women was settled only in 1980. Women have never been elected into main posts of the Trade Unions or to posts in estate committees or as Estate Conductors. Not even in situations where the women are given membership on administrative committees of the Kovils situated within each estate.

In name only

Although the leaders of unions represented a minor segment of women within their organizations, satisfactory consideration was not given with regard to their rights. In the organizations established in large estates even today the women's sector is active in name only. These women don't have the freedom to celebrate Women's Day as a special day. Only a few Non Governmental Organizations prepare suitable Women's Day programmes and there is no sign of the estate Trade Unions offering to hold such a function or meeting. Although within various planes of society there has been a development in ideas, the upcountry leadership has not changed its

longstanding national views regarding women.

The contribution of women

The Trade Unions established on the estates, are referred to as people's organizations. These unions and organizations do not present any progressive thinking with regard to the rights of women. At the same time, these people do not make an effort to emphasize the importance of women's rights and to get rid of the traditional beliefs in connection with women. A majority are of the opinion that women should live under the conventional custom system of the upcountry region and also within this background the contribution of women should be limited only to the prevalent traditionalism.

That no impact was made

It has to be emphasised here that, within the Nuweraeliya District, at certain places, a few women's progressive meetings were held on Women's Day. Although protests, walks and other reminders of their needs were held it should be understood that the contributions made were insignificant. These events did not create

any impact sufficient enough to bring about any change or modification to the thinking regarding the estate society.

Knowledge beyond book knowledge

Since the estate folk assume that the present educational system is sufficient to enable them to earn an income, students whose only aim is to get through their examinations, do not make an effort to gain any knowledge beyond their books. No encourages them to do so. In order to stand up against the beliefs that have become customary regarding the estate community's women workers, the customs and formalities and the opinion of the the power to do so has not been instilled within these women as yet.

New Thinking

The estate sector as well as the Tamil Educational structure should be further improved. However, it is not an easy task to expect enthusiasm and commitment from these women. Only if the estate women, are able to finish their higher education and enter a university will they be able to face the pressures of their community. Although the estate women



No women have ever been elected into main posts of the Trade Unions or to posts in estate committees or as an Estate Conductor. Not even were the women given membership on administrative committees of the Kovils situated within each estate.

are active in a small way with regard to this advancement, the activities of the estate voluntary organizations which are involved in women's rights could support this new thinking.

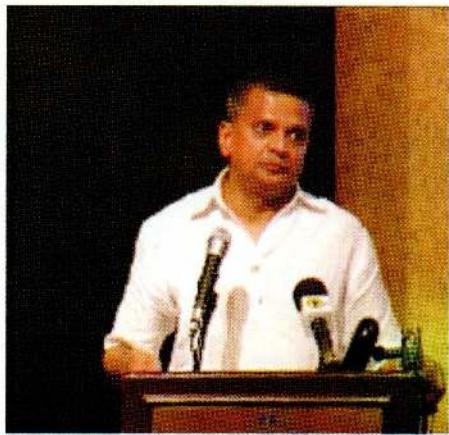
As the estate society still remains as a society which has faced recession, the impact created by new thinking is very small. Women should first, achieve their rights through Trade Unions. Prior to approving, various external organizations, excluding state organizations and their rights they should establish themselves first and gain acceptance among their communities.

There are organizations, which are able to move forward regarding this issue, however, there is no sign of anyone coming forward or taking the lead among women. The task of encouraging women to take the lead should be carried out by more voluntary organizations.

Trade Union Politics

Sadly the present estate Trade Unions have totally surrendered to politics. They have become the pawns of the politicians. Its leaders have directed their attention towards achieving their own needs and facilities. After the demise of Saumyamoorthy Thondaman, projects implemented towards the progress in the estate sector have been few and far between.

Within the above background, these organizations do not show any interest with regard to women's issues. Unless women themselves, raise their voices regarding their rights, there will be little progress achieved. However with the help and commitment of organizations rights of women could be established. However, the question that arises is who will come forward and take an active part in this struggle.



Ranjit Page

Making a difference by investing in people and processes

A business organisation calls other corporates to invest in the people of Sri Lanka

Cargills is primarily a business organisation – what with shareholders and a board of directors, balance sheets, profit and loss statements and dividends. One of their main lines of business is operating a chain of supermarkets selling groceries and like products – in effect, a glorified 'kade'.

But somewhere down the line the company seems to have had a change of heart, a change in attitude and direction. Despite popular belief that the company serves the upper segments of urban society in Colombo and similar cities, the direction the company has taken in recent years seems to prove this belief wrong.

The Cargills name is now to be seen in nineteen of the country's twenty-five districts. Recently addressing a gathering at the Post Graduate Institute of Management at the University of Sri Jayawardenapura, Ranjith Page said "We know who our customers are among the twenty million or so people who reside on this island nation of ours – and we don't differentiate from one customer to another. A short visit to any one of our supermarkets will amply illustrate this."

"We know our customers and the difficulties they face in their day to day lives, with inflation and the cost of living."

"We paused for a moment to see how we could help and it was then that we realised that just as much as profits and dividends were important so were the people and processes involved in making these profits."

"There was on the one hand the consumer, the main, perhaps only source of our income but then how could that be if there was no producer at the other end of the spectrum," he said. Mr. Page went on to explain that the producer and the consumer were each just as much a part of their business organisation as were the shareholders, the board of directors and the employees. The company then

realised that the interests of the company were intertwined with and indeed interdependent with those of the consumer and producer.

Having realised that only if the people of the country prosper would the country itself prosper and that Sri Lanka, it's people and Cargills are in effect, all links in one chain, and that were even one link to break, that would spell doom for the rest of the chain, Cargills then set out to give better prices to the producer and cheaper products to the consumer.

"In January this year the wholesale price of rice was quoted to be Rs. 100 a kilo. In our supermarkets, we sold it for Rs. 74. If profit was the only motive of business why not raise the price of rice to Rs. 95 and make an additional profit and still sell it at a lesser rate than the market place! We need to make people and corporations understand that it is not only profit but its about building a long term relationship with customers at large. It is about helping the consumer spend less money on food and giving him the opportunity to use the money to improve his overall quality of life by investing in education, shelter, clothing and medicine", said Mr. Page.

Cargills has achieved this remarkable feat by investing in people and processes, by focussing on efficiency be it logistics management or waste control. Mr. Page pointed out that since incorporating such measures into their business model post-harvest losses have been reduced to a mere 4-5% compared with the national average of 40%.

This focus on people and processes have far reaching effects on the economy, as Cargills has been able to give back the dividends of these investments to the producer and consumer. The over 10,000 smallholder farmers who Cargills directly incorporates to the supply chain now have the opportunity to improve their standards of living due to the

sustainable market and pricing offered by the company. The consumer too is able to employ his savings towards better housing, better education, better healthcare, etc. The company's policy of focusing on better logistics management also enables it to offer better terms to their employees.

In fact, their model has proven to be so successful that the company was last year invited to share it with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which is trying to empower smallholder farmers in Africa and India through access to information, and knowledge sharing that would facilitate improved decision-making.

"We were honoured by this invitation, because even though we are not a University or a learning institute, we were invited to share what we learned – and that we did readily because we believe that sharing gives us an opportunity to learn further, and learning never ends," Mr. Page said.

"You will see that our approach has a cascading effect – ultimately an investment in Sri Lanka. So our fervent plea to the corporate world is do not look at yourselves through a balance sheet and profit and loss statements. Instead, invest in the people of the country. If you do that, as we have done, I assure you that the profit and loss statements will take care of themselves," Mr. Page concluded.

**From a presentation made by
Mr. Ranjith Page C.E.O. of
Cargills Ceylon Ltd. at the**





13

13th Amendment

A Sinuous path to nation building ..?

 **Professor A.M. Navaratna-Bandara comments on the 13th and the 17th amendment**

The writer is the Associate Professor,
Department of Political Science, University of Peradeniya

The leaders of the Tamil community and the leftist movement, who joined the governments of the UNP and SLFP since independence helped the leaders of these two parties to bring this country to the present catastrophe – war and more war.

The Tamil leaders in the first two cabinets supported the Citizenship and the Franchise Acts of 1948-49 which excluded the Tamils of recent Indian origin from the Sri Lankan nationhood. In 1967 when the Dudley Senanayake government abandoned the District Council proposal which was to provide a limited autonomy to the North-East provinces, the Tamil Congress stayed with the government and the Federal party continued the support they extended to the government in the beginning though the party advised its minister to resign.

The country's left did almost the same when they found comfort in ministerial appointments in the 70's. They helped the SLFP leaders to establish an ethnic dominance system through the constitution of 1972, which incorporated the Sinhala only policy and other majoritarian elements, which were not accepted by them in the 1950s, when they followed the policy of "Two Languages and One Country" - one of the finest forecasts we ever had in Sri Lanka. Both the Tamil and the Left parties betrayed the principles they cherished and the interests of the community or the social groups they represented, when they associated with the SLFP and the

UNP governments. Same thing is continuing today.

What Minister Tissa Witharana did with the interim proposal of the APC was following the foot steps of his predecessors in the LSSP. During the last twenty years the 13th amendment has proved that it cannot devolve powers to the provinces. The legal, administrative and fiscal tensions prevailing in the provincial administrations are well documented now. The functions assigned to the provinces such as education, health services, agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, live stock development etc. have become meaningless due to legal and financial constraints imposed by the 13th amendment itself. The 13th Amendment is a mockery to democratic devolution. The Provincial Councils (PCs) were instrumental in strengthening the grip of the Central government over the Provincial populations through the political men and women hand picked for the positions in the PCs by the party leaders or the Executive President. The PCs have become agents of the Centre. The daily feature in the PC system is re-centralization not decentralization. Finally the Presidency which has gradually established an autocratic rule over all the other institutions in the state is now well in control in the Provincial administration through the administrative arm controlled by the Governor and the Chief Secretary both of whom are Presidential appointees.

Therefore the result of the implementation of Vitharana's proposal would be giving "more legal powers (not practical powers) to the President's own men and women already at the apex of the PCs". In the North-East, it would be powers to the Chairperson appointed to the Northern Interim Council by the President and the victor in the election to be held in the Eastern Province, which is now opened for the new breed of Tamil politicians who are contesting for votes publicly wavering guns in their arms (with a coalition agreement with the governing party). In view of the precarious situation prevailing in the North-East one could easily visualize what would happen to the troubled North-East as a result of the proposal – "full implementation of the 13th amendment" - the interim proposal submitted by the Presidential trouble shooter.

Why did President Rajapaksa who boycotted the PCs in 1988 and came to power on the basis of protecting a unitary state" in his third year in power jump into the 13th amendment bandwagon now? To me in 1987 the 13th Amendment brought us not a political solution but a military solution. It was just an addendum to the military action agreed upon by the two leaders who signed the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. Many have forgotten the fact that the 13th amendment facilitated a justification for the arrival of an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF). It provided a political justification for the Indian government to send its armies to Sri Lanka. The PC was the "peace" the Indian Force tried to keep in the North-East during 1987-1991.

When India agreed to leave Sri Lanka after its failure to tame the LTTE, Vardharajha Perumal, the Chief Minister of the Northern and Eastern Provincial council who was there to provide political support to the IPKF in the North-East, abdicated his authority and sought shelter in India. That marked the beginning of the recentralization process. Just after that, the government of R. Premadasa decided to cancel its earlier decision to hand over the District Secretaries to the PCs. The next step was to bring back the Divisional Secretaries handed over to the PCs by the previous

administration. The recentralization process which is continuing even today entered the scene afterwards. After the political leadership abandoned the implementation of the Indo-Lanka accord, the task of carrying forward the PC system became the responsibility left to the administrative leaders in the PC system.

The PCs never received the money allocated in the national budget fully (this will explain if one goes through the annuals of the Central Bank or the data available with the Finance Commission). Every year the PCs lost millions of rupees due to the delay and non release of funds on time by the Treasury. The PCs were not provided with even a legal draftsman to draft their statutes. The PCs do not have powers and finances to establish their own administrative arm. The tax base provided by the 13th amendment is not enough to manage their day to day affairs, let alone development. The PCs have to depend on the money provided by the Central government. As such the full implementation is not possible even the President used his executive authority. We know many schools and hospitals earlier handed over to the Provinces were returned to the government due to a lack of funds by the PCs themselves. The existing PC system would collapse if the President agrees to hand over police powers to them. The executive leadership is well aware of this situation.

With this prediction one would argue that our President has a well planned strategy against the LTTE. My question is whether emerging of these political scenarios are enough to solve the real issue we are facing now? We students of politics know that the real issue that has been emerging since the 1980s by the Sri Lanka state is not terrorism. Terrorism represents an unreal issue. The real issue is "the way we have handled the post-independence the nation-(state) building process". We have failed to build an accommodative state, effective in incorporating all constituent ethnic groups into the polity. During the first ten years of our independence our regimes engaged in wrong state craft. The need of the day was to develop a comprehensive approach to find answers to such questions as "Who are the

nationals (citizens) of the state?" "Who are the electors of the state?" "What is the national flag?" "What is the national anthem?" "What is the national language?" All these policy issues were decided following the conceptions entrenched in the nationalist ideology of the majority nation disregarding the minority sensitivities. Finally the state identified its national personality with cultural attributes belong to the majority nation. When Ceylon became Sri Lanka in 1972 with the inauguration of the first home made constitution, the state declared those cultural attributes as basic component of fundamental law. It was at this point the Tamil leaders who were so far agitating for a power sharing governmental framework had produced their own state project, Tamil Eelam. [It was a carbon copy of the Sri Lanka state; another "unitary state" on this tiny Island, reflecting the ethnic hierarchy they have visualized for the Tamil portion of Eelam (Lanka)].

I do not totally reject the fact that some countries in the present world system have completed their nation building through military means. But those success cases had an accommodative democratic political agenda for nation building or re-nation building and, a political leadership which has the credentials for taking the moral high ground over the forces of disintegration (terrorism).

That is why we ask our political leaders to become such a moral and democratic alternative to terrorism and, bring forth an accommodative power sharing programme to encourage the minority population to abandon their secessionist political project and the undemocratic leadership. If the political leaders have the courage to do that, we need not bother with terrorism which is not supported in the civilized world.

I earnestly believe that the political leaders in this country have acquired enough experience to understand the gravity of this problem. They know very well to answer questions like "what is the problem?" and "what is the solution?" The problem is that they do not have political will to move forward.

17th AMENDMENT

AUTOCRACY OR DEMOCRACY?

As such the 17th amendment is not just a test of the democratic credentials of our political leadership but is also a test for civil society for their commitment to protect the most cherished elements of democratic governance contained in the constitution.

Since the establishment of the Executive Presidency in 1978 we have been witnessing a covert struggle between democracy and autocracy. Democracy means "rule by many". In the political science literature we call it, "popular sovereignty". In representative government popular sovereignty is institutionalized in the form of the Parliament. Autocracy means "rule by one" or a single person holding power and authority of government and manipulating all three institutions of government, namely, executive, legislature and Judiciary for his/her own personal or party gains.

In the available systems of government the power concentration in the hands of one person may take different forms. The person may be a King or a Queen or an Army General or a Prime Minister or a President. All systems of governments can produce two forms; genuine and perverted. If the ruler is benevolent and uses his/her authority to increase the common good of society the system may be acceptable to society. Then we can say that the system is genuine. If the person in power uses it in a distorted manner for his/her personal gains the system produces the perverted form. When a governmental system based on a single executive (personality) produces such a distorted form of governance we call it autocracy. The authors of the present constitution envisaged an autocratic form of

governance when introducing an executive Presidency in 1978. They placed their trust in a powerful executive President to face up to the challenges emanating from society. They were confident that an executive President whose tenure in office could not be abridged by Parliament would withstand the pressure of democratic politics or popular sovereignty. According to the constitution the President is above the law. He cannot be challenged before the Judiciary. The Judiciary is helpless when the ruler arbitrarily violates the constitution. Thus the President who is the Head of State, Head of Executive, Head of Government and Commander in Chief of the Armed forces received unlimited constitutional freedom to produce a constitutional dictatorship.

During the last 30 years we have been experiencing how the holders of the executive Presidency manipulated not only the three institutions of government but also the day to day affairs of our public service directly or indirectly. Consequently the public officers, be they officers of state delivering welfare services to the people or handling law and order or administering elections, they had to surrender their autonomy to the politicians. The phenomenon of Politicization which was earlier used to examine the relationship between bureaucracy and executive has been moving into areas such as the Judiciary,

The objective of bringing the 17th amendment to the constitution in 2001 was to restrict the autocratic handling of Presidential power on the appointment of State officers and agencies whose independence and impartiality is essential for the functioning of our democracy and the exercise of our democratic freedoms.

Administration of Elections, Civil and Political Rights. Finally abuse of power, corruption, criminalization and militarization became words to be associated with the examination of political behaviour in the country. The passage of the 17th amendment occurred when the country was searching for a way out of the quagmire it found itself in with the powerful Presidency and the politicization that engulfed the entire public domain. The all party consensus that emerged for the passage of the 17th amendment demonstrated the general view that existed in society regarding the misuse of power of the Presidency. The objective of bringing the 17th amendment to the constitution in 2001 was to restrict the autocratic handling of Presidential power on the appointment of State officers and agencies whose independence and impartiality is essential for the functioning of our democracy and the exercise of our democratic freedoms. The amendment stipulated that the President should work with a new institution, the Constitutional Council of which the majority of members are nominated by the Parliament, in appointing high Officers of State and important independent agencies whose functions covered such important aspects of a democracy such as ensuring free and fair elections, guaranteeing the fundamental rights of the citizen, maintaining law order which is the function of the police, the public services and control of corruption in government. The amendment envisages that the Constitutional Council wills check-mate the President if he/she make an effort to exercise his/her authority to make these appointments arbitrarily. On the other hand the independent bodies established under the 17th amendment such as the Judicial Service Commission, Public Service Commission, the Police Commission, the Election Commission and the Human Rights Commission were to adhere strictly to the guidelines set forth by the 17th amendment to guarantee democratic governance. Thus it is essential to appoint the members of these bodies in consultation with the Constitutional Council. The experiences we gained from the President and the Parliament which had to show the way forward for the 17th amendment were not satisfactory. Parliament of 2002 took a long time to nominate its representatives as the political parties quarreled with each other to get their nominees appointed to the Council. President Chandrika Bandaranaike did not appoint the independent Election Commission

nominated by the Constitutional Council. She made acting appointment to the post of IGP when she did not want to appoint the person nominated by the Police Commission.

In 2005 small parties in Parliament did not appoint their nominee as the JVP made a claim for the nomination identifying itself as a party in opposition. Since the 17th amendment requires the appointment of all the members for the functioning of the Constitutional Council the non submission of names of nominee of small parties became a God-given opportunity for the executive President to use his discretion in appointing the State Officers named in the 17th amendment. The so called "principle of necessity" was used and the persons identified by the President were appointed to the high offices and the commissions which were established by Parliament to guarantee good governance according to universally accepted democratic norms.

Only the persons initially named for the Human Rights Commission had the courage of his convictions to refuse the invitation and thus set an example which is indeed a rare phenomenon in these times. The argument they raised was that the legitimacy of these institutions cannot be guaranteed when their appointment is not constitutional. When the Judiciary was asked to intervene it was helpless and said that the President's actions could not be questioned in Courts. If the President is violating the constitution it is up to the Parliament to take remedial measures.

Now the small parties in Parliament have finally nominated their member to the Constitutional Council. The President says he does not appoint the Council. Everything is clear. The problem is not something that lies within the parliament. The real problem lies in the "autocratic governance" entrenched in the constitution that allows the President to turn a Nelsonian eye towards the legislature that in theory represents the popular sovereignty. While the "Crisis state" is continuing with the slogan of "defeating terrorism" many do not want to question the actions which are Presidential but not constitutional. As such the 17th amendment is not just a test of the democratic credentials of our political leadership but is also a test for civil society for their commitment to protect the most cherished elements of democratic governance contained in the constitution.

The districts of Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara, have been affected by the ethnic conflict for the past 30 years. The main economic activities of these districts include agriculture, fishery, animal husbandry and business.

Rice, onions, vegetables, chilly, grains and banana are the main agricultural crops. They were previously exported to other districts. Tourism was also a sizeable industry. However by about 1996 all this came to a standstill.

Productivity has greatly decreased in recent years. Fishing is restricted due to security arrangements. The number of hotels has greatly reduced and their trade is mostly commercial (companies which conduct workshops or meetings in the hotels) rather than tourism related.

Though many government and private banks have come to these districts, they are mainly based in the city. The conflict and the tsunami have both played a major role in the downfall of the economy. In all these districts, properties and jobs have been lost, and people from these districts have been displaced.

Some live in welfare camps while others have become dependent on relatives and friends. In addition to the internally displaced people, there are also the displaced from Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu who have moved into these districts. Many now rely on carpentry, working as agricultural labourers or in retail shops, or engaging in small business activities for their livelihood. Non governmental agencies are providing assistance to some extent, while the Government is helping people to a lesser level.

Out of the districts studied, the economically most stable would be Ampara. Even though Agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing are the main activities, Rice cultivation, sugar cane cultivation, vegetable cultivation, inland and sea fishing, garment industry too are helping to buoy the economy.

Many other products are also found in Ampara, such as wooden products, cement and rubber based products. Many rice mills have been constructed to support the processing of rice. Sugar production has been recently introduced to the district. Since animal husbandry is another source of income generation, milk products also play a big role in strengthening the economy. Since the tsunami many NGO's and INGO's have been focusing on Ampara. Even though the war affected areas (Mahoya, Panpitiya, Aranthaluwa, Central camp and Malwatte) are being neglected, the tsunami affected areas are still being given grants and other services.

The Economic & Business situation in the NORTH-EAST



Issues preventing economic recovery

Unemployed population

Many people have lost their jobs or properties. The current situation has restricted many economic activities, which has also resulted in unemployment.

Change in consumer pattern

The increase in the price of essential goods has reduced the consumption level, exacerbated by the low or no income levels.

Low productivity

A lack of investment, the cost of production, and the lack of loan facilities have led to low productivity. Security planning within the districts has a direct impact on levels of productivity.

Influence of the armed groups.

Threats to the business community, extortion and robberies by armed groups have prevented people from making investments. This situation is however not applicable to Mannar and Ampara.

Poor transport services

The transport services have been restricted, so that many goods can not be brought into these districts, or only at prohibitive cost.

Limited banking facilities

The banks are reluctant to give loan facilities, and demand collateral. Though the government banks are willing to give loans, the level of loans is insufficient to support enterprise and new businesses.

Dependency syndrome

Since NGOs and INGOs started helping the affected communities in this districts, local inhabitants are no longer interested in working.

Potential solutions to rebuild the economy in these districts

o Increasing investments in factories in the Trincomalee District.

- Factories for processing rice need to be built. Currently, the rice from this district is sent to Polonnaruwa or Kurunegalle for processing – adding to both transport and opportunity costs. Processing in Trincomalee would lead to reduced costs and greater levels of employment within the district. There is a need for farming machinery and the introduction of new varieties of rice.

- There are no poultry feed factories in this district. Since the raw materials are available for making poultry feed, establishing factories would bring greater prosperity and employment opportunities.

- Since livestock farming plays a major role, there is a need for milk processing factories. The absence of such facilities has resulted in a waste of milk.

o Fishery sector could be expanded. The facilities for fisheries are in place, but are not being used effectively. There is the opportunity for many who have lost their jobs in this area to be re-employed.

o There is a need for a development bank in the North-East. Though the Sanasa Development Bank is functioning here, its services cannot fulfill the economic expectations of the districts. More services from private banks are also required in order to develop the districts.

o Greater flexibility in the security arrangements and current restrictions would help the economy to flourish.

o The current conflict in this area needs to be resolved before commercial solutions can be implemented.

Compiled by the Regional Support Unit- BPA

Learn and lead

Scholarship to nurture future
Leaders

'Learn and Lead' is a project initiated by a working group comprising eminent people from reputed organisations to sponsor under privileged students from conflict affected areas to study for their A/Ls in schools in Colombo, Kandy and other prominent Districts which provide quality education.

The objective of the scholarship is to help under privilege but intelligent students who face structural inequalities caused by the conflict in all parts of the country which restrict their opportunities for quality education.

This programme that is both strategic and conflict sensitive is implemented by The Business for Peace Alliance (BPA) which is a network of all the main regional business chambers throughout Sri Lanka. The BPA promotes regional empowerment and peaceful co-existence amongst communities.

Presently the BPA is concentrating on getting the first batch of students who are the winners of the "Learn and Lead Scholarships" into the urban schools which have reserved seats for our scholars. The short listed finalists will face an interview panel this April and those who succeed together with their parents will participate in an orientation in Colombo, in preparation to enter the new schools in May.

The scholarship includes the total service of education, clothes, medical attention, leadership development, counseling, vacation plans, extra curricular activities etc that will facilitate to bring out the best in the leadership qualities of these bright children who are victims of the conflict and poverty.

Working Group members

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(Chairman, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce)

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Coordinating the Peace Process (SCPPP))

Ms Manique Mendis (Secretary General/CEO, BPA)

Dr Markus Mayer

(Country Director, International Alert)

Pushpika Weerakoon (Project Manager)

Scholarships for Future Leaders

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Help Lead Your Country Towards a Better Future

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or Trinco district?

Then here is an opportunity to win an all expenses paid
scholarship to study in leading schools in Colombo, Kandy and
other prominent towns which offers 'Quality education and an
environment suitable to nurture future leaders.'

Send in applications with your

- Personal details, (CV)
- O/L results (if not year 11 withdrawal results)
- Education and Extra Curricular Achievements
- Attested by a school principal, head of a place of
worship or grama niladharis

Deadline for
1st Phase Applications, 20th April 2008
2nd Phase Applications, 15th May, 2008

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Children are the only renewable resource of a nation

GROUNDVIEW

State of Affairs

*"Man with his burning soul
Has but an hour of breath
To build a ship of truth
On which his soul may sail -
sail on the seas of death,
For death takes toll
Of beauty, courage, youth,
Of all but truth..."*

- John Masefield.

