

President Rajapakse's enthusiasm for war is infectious.

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War vow

Sri Lanka's Army commander vows to capture the LTTE-controlled north after taking the east in new offensive. [NEWS 2](#)

Jaffna's plight

Food and other supplies are in short supply as Sri Lanka's government continues its blockade of the A9. [NEWS 2](#)

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A distraught father carries his child, wounded by Sri Lankan bomber into Kilinochchi hospital. Report p4-5, p8. Photo TamilNet.

Starvation in Vaharai

AS the last reserves of food ran out amongst the Tamil people in the Vaharai region, the United Nations warned of an impending crisis this week.

But Sri Lanka's military tightened its blockade and continued to shell refugee camps in the Tamil Tiger-held enclave.

"A humanitarian tragedy is unfolding in Vaharai and the international community should not remain silent any longer, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) said.

"The situation in Vaharai is grave and demands an urgent response," the United Nations office in Colombo said this week.

"15,000 people are isolated without access to food or basic supplies as stocks are decimated," the UN said.

The Sri Lankan military has maintained a total embargo on supplies into the area since October.

Only one convoy of humanitarian aid has been allowed in since then. And that was on

November 29th, after the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) briefly came under intense pressure from the international community.

That pressure has tailed off, even as Sri Lanka has stepped up its military offensives against the LTTE in the east, directing indiscriminate bombing and shelling at human concentrations in the area.

"We stand ready to assist those still trapped in Vaharai. These persons are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable," the UN's Acting Resident and

Humanitarian Coordinator, Amin Awad, said in a statement.

"We must always recall that it is the most weak who remain behind - the elderly, the sick and the disabled. They are still without access to food, emergency medical services, and shelter, and continue to be caught in the middle of relentless fighting," Awad added.

In a desperate appeal on Friday, the TRO said there was food for only one or days.

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Bus blasts

Twenty people die in blasts said to be retaliation for the military's bombing of Tamil civilians. [NEWS 11](#)

Tourism staggers

Sri Lanka's tourist industry reels as the government steps up the war and other countries warn citizens to stay away [NEWS 11](#)

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NEWS

Jaffna: stranded and starving



Sri Lanka Army commander Sarath Fonseka and other top officers pictured arriving at a base complex in the east from which operations against the Tamil Tigers are being coordinated. Photo SL Army

Sri Lanka military vows to 'annihilate' LTTE in east, north

AFTER taking control of the eastern province in the next two months, Sri Lanka's military will recapture the areas held by the Liberation Tigers in the north of the island, the Army (SLA) Chief said last week.

On Wednesday Lt. Gen. Fonseka visited the Army headquarters in the island's east to set the military strategy in motion.

On Tuesday Lt. Gen. Fonseka vowed to totally "liberate" the north soon after his forces "rescued" the eastern region from the LTTE," the Daily Mirror reported.

"After eradicating the Tigers from the East, full strength would be used to rescue the North," the Army Commander was quoted as saying.

Lt. Gen. Fonseka was speaking after he visited the Sri Dalada Maligawa (Temple of the Tooth) where he paid homage to the Sacred Tooth Relic and also paid a courtesy call on the top Buddhist priests "who blessed the Army Commander expressed the wish that peace be dawned at least this year as the people have suffered enough," the Daily Mirror reported.

On Wednesday, accompanied by Sri Lanka's Chief Of Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera, Lt. Gen. Fonseka met with senior commanders of the SLA's 23 Division based in Welikanda, Polonnaruwa in the island's east.

In his New Year's address, Lt. Gen. Fonseka praised his soldiers for fighting "in a disciplined

and committed way protecting human rights" in the face of provocations by "those barbaric separatist elements."

"We have come forward in order to annihilate the common enemy for separation and protect the territorial integrity of our Sri Lankan Motherland and her nation," he said.

The Sri Lankan military's publicly stated plans have effectively rendered the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement with the LTTE defunct.

However Sri Lanka's political and military establishment are not perturbed as they are confident the LTTE's strength has been exaggerated and the Tigers can be defeated by sustained military action.

The government believes the LTTE's repeated failure to hold positions it had vowed to defend against Colombo's military are indicative of the Tigers' weakness.

In an informal year-end interaction with the local and foreign media in Colombo, Lt. Gen. Fonseka had said that the Security Forces would be able to take the strategic eastern coastal towns of Vaharai and Kadirweli in about a month.

Only the rains and the slushy terrain were preventing the tri-services from launching an offensive to capture the two objectives, he said.

Lt. Gen. Fonseka said the LTTE had only about 800 fully-trained fighters in the East in addition

to a militia of about 2,000.

According to the Daily Mirror's defence column Wednesday, the SLA has set itself a mid-February deadline to destroy key LTTE camps in the East.

"The military top brass therefore is convinced that that it would be able to bring the LTTE down to its knees on all counts, if the forces can maintain the present military momentum till July this year, though it admits it will take years to wipe out the residual LTTE pockets."

"There is anticipation that there will be a crucial battle in June/July period in the North most probably in Muhamalai once again," the Daily Mirror said, referring to the frontline in the Jaffna peninsula which has seen heavy fighting in the past four months.

"The military is confident that they can secure a convincing victory during this confrontation which comes after the consolidation of power in the East," the paper said.

"Even otherwise any major losses to the LTTE cadre strength during the battle, the forces think, would cause a critical setback to a weakened LTTE."

"A chance of the LTTE agreeing for a compromise this time around in order to avoid a confrontation and a resultant depletion of cadre strength is also not ruled out," the paper said.

"However no change would be expected in the government military strategy."

SHORTAGES in Jaffna due to the Sri Lankan government's refusal to open the A9 highway to the peninsula are biting hard, reports said.

Shortages of food have sent prices soaring in the peninsula home to half a million Tamils and controlled by 40,000 Sinhala troops.

Last week the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said it "also remains concerned about deteriorating livelihoods" in Jaffna.

"Limited access by land to the peninsula has impeded the population from receiving sufficient food, medicine and other essential supplies since August 2006," OCHA pointed out.

"The price of a kilo of rice was Rs. 180 early this week. Now it is Rs. 200. The price of soap was Rs. 125 last week. Today it is Rs. 150. People cannot cope with these increases," residents in Jaffna told The Sunday Leader newspaper.

A kilo of sugar is sold at Rs. 200 while an egg is sold at Rs. 30, the paper said.

Many families can only afford one meal a day, the Sunday Times reported this week.

Long queues of people are seen at the shops opened by the military where dry food items are sold at controlled prices. These same goods are sold in the black market at five times or 10 times the amount of the market price.

"The racks at grocery stores and pharmacies are empty. The food distributed via the Corporative stores are inadequate," a resident lamented to the paper.

People were unable to even buy the simplest drug, Panadol, during a recent outbreak of Chikungunya that affected about one fourth of the population.

The only affordable food in Jaffna these days are grapes with vendors unable to transport them to other parts of the country.

Restaurants are closing down with owners unable to carry on the daily operation.

As many as 2,000 people have lost their jobs and those who earn a daily wage are facing near starvation.

Even a kg of firewood is sold at Rs. 12.

Amid this major food crisis, even exercise books are being severely rationed, the Sunday Times reported this week.

"Parents are seen in a long queue to obtain their ration of just two exercise books for a child as the new school year begins in the war torn district," the paper said.

The hardships faced by residents of Jaffna including soaring

food prices appear to have seen little relief in spite of claims by the government that there are no shortages.

Last week a limited amount emergency food supplies from Tamil Nadu, India were said to be enroute to the region, cut off from the rest of the island.

Before the A9 land route was closed, an average of 8000 people travelled via the route to and from the North.

Now civilians have to travel via air or sea.

A ship takes passengers between Jaffna and Trincomalee once a week while two local airlines have a daily service from Colombo to Jaffna.

However, residents say these means are inadequate and thousands of people are stranded in Trincomalee awaiting transport to Jaffna.

Military personnel are also moved on these routes.

Sailings have been disrupted by rough seas and, like last week, by clashes at sea between the Sri Lanka Navy and the Sea Tigers.

Before the land route was closed an average of 200 (12 seater)

Many families can only afford one meal a day

vans used to carry passengers from Colombo to Jaffna daily, the Sunday Times said, adding now these van owners are facing financial problems and are unable to pay the monthly lease.

Meanwhile the military presence has been tightened in Jaffna with checkpoints at every junction, the paper said.

A daily curfew is imposed from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. The town is deserted after 3 p.m. with shops closed at about 2.30 p.m. Some of the government departments close at about 2 p.m. and banks at 12. Buses do not ply after 5 p.m.

Most roads are closed to the public and many have been turned into one way routes for security reasons.

But kidnappings and killings appear to be the order of the day with the Human Rights Commission saying it has received 163 complaints of missing people since August 11 last year.

Meanwhile security forces say they have only detained 50 people.

Hundreds more people went missing before that and scores of bodies are found dumped, sometimes with their hands tied, usually with gunshot or knife wounds.

NEWS

'They simply don't know where they will be safe'

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But, amid silence from the international community, the embargo has not been lifted.

"We only have enough food for one or two more days," TRO's Vaharai Director of Operations, Mr. Moorthy, told reporters in a telephone message from there.

"The people are suffering and there is nothing that we can do due to the SLA embargo on food and medicine."

"It is the responsibility of the GoSL and the international community to ensure that these civilians are not made to suffer due to a lack of food, medicine or the threat of bombing or shelling.

After refugees around Vaharai hospital were targeted by Sri Lankan heavy guns, the TRO pleaded for the area to be defined a 'safe haven.'

The Sri Lankan military says it will capture Vaharai within a month and says it will not ease the pressure on the region.

After taking control of the eastern province in the next two months, Sri Lanka's military will recapture the areas held by the Liberation Tigers in the north of the island, the Army (SLA) Chief, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, said last week.

On Tuesday Sri Lankan artillery shells hit the Verugal area to the north of Vaharai, killing two people and wounding nine others. The victims had fled shelling in Vaharai on Tuesday.

Vaharai hospital was hit during Monday's bombardment which was directed at a refugee encampment around it.

Three people were killed and eleven wounded.

Four critically injured civilians were moved by the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) to Valaichchenai District hospital in government-controlled territory.

One of the four succumbed to her injuries at Valaichchenai hospital.

Tamil parliamentarians are calling on the international community to act.

Last week Batticaloa district parliamentarian, S. Jeyanandamoorthy, urged Ban Ki-moon, the new UN Secretary General, to prevail upon the Sri Lankan government to declare a safe-haven Vaharai for civilians to take shelter in.

"The international community that has played a role in the peace process, has a moral responsibility over the Tamils, as a people, suffering in the hands of a failed post-colonial state," Mr. S. Jeyanandamoorthy.

The GoSL has already rejected an earlier call to declare a humanitarian zone encompassing the Vaharai hospital and the surrounding areas for the protection of the civilians.

Meanwhile, 20,000 people who last month trekked through jungles to escape the Sri Lankan shelling by crossing into government controlled areas are also living in miserable conditions, the



Displaced in Vaharai wait for desperately needed food supplies. But the Sri Lankan military has blocked all roads. Photo TamilNet.

UN said.

"Despite reaching relative safety they still face many problems and an uncertain future," a UN news report said.

Even government controlled parts of the Tamil-dominated area are running short of food.

"Sites are hosting people at twice their actual capacity, the district is facing a potential food shortage and many families have been separated in flight or during transport to emergency sites," according to the head of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) field office in the town of Batticaloa, Yoko Akasaka.

Many of those fleeing Vaharai and gone into the enclave to escape Sri Lankan offensives against their homes in areas such as Sampur in the Trincomalee district.

UNHCR has offered the authorities assistance in organizing so-called "go and see" visits so that community leaders and other volunteers can visit their former homes, many further north of Vaharai in Trincomalee district, and decide whether return would be safe.

"Many people first fled to Vaharai because of violence elsewhere and they are worried about whether it will be safe to go back," Ms. Akasaka said.

"They simply don't know where they will be safe. Even here, there are reports of abductions from displacement sites."

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TRO offices stripped in police raids

AFTER a spate of attacks on its offices by the Sri Lankan security forces and allied paramilitaries, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation this week urged the Sri Lankan security forces to ensure protection for humanitarian aid workers.

"Over the past four days the TRO offices in Colombo (Monday 8th) the government controlled areas of the NorthEast - the Trincomalee and Vavuniya offices (both on January 5th) - have been raided by police," the TRO said.

Police who thoroughly searched the offices and removed computers, documents, files, and other material from all the offices, the TRO said. "The Trincomalee office was also attacked and ransacked by armed paramilitaries on Saturday and Sunday nights."

The attackers, who were speaking both Sinhala and Tamil ransacked the Trincomalee office on both nights burning documents and destroying furniture. In the Sunday attack the paramilitaries stole the office's Toyota Mini-Cab Pickup truck.

TRO requests that "the

Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) guarantee the safety and security of humanitarian relief workers during this time of conflict."

"Security for the TRO offices in the GoSL controlled areas is the responsibility of the GoSL of Police and security forces," the organization said.

"The GoSL has consistently failed to provide any such security and has failed to investigate and charge any persons in the 20 attacks on TRO offices or TRO personnel in the past 2 years."

In January 2006, seven TRO workers were abducted by Army-backed paramilitaries and have been missing since.

Other attacks in the past six months the TRO listed:

10 December 2006: 40 people killed and 100 injured when GOSL forces shelled 3 TRO refugee camps in Palchchenai, Kandalady and Vammivadduvan.

8 November 2006: Kathiraveli 47 people killed and 136 injured when GOSL forces shelled a TRO refugee camp. The TRO Sonobo Children's Home was shelled, 12 children injured.

August 2006: TRO boat mak-

ing yard in Eachchilampattu bombed by the Air Force.

23 August 2006: TRO Jaffna office destroyed.

19 August 2006: A TRO boat making yard to re-supply tsunami affected fishermen was bombed by the Air Force. All boats under construction or finished were destroyed, with the store room and the main building.

15 August 2006: Amparai TRO office attacked - gunfire and grenades.

31 July 2006: Punochchimunai, Muslim Village, "Rebuild a Village Project" The storeroom at the work site was broken into and over 200 bags of cement were stolen. The staff and security guards on the project had resigned or stayed home due to intimidation by the paramilitary Karuna Group.

15 July 2006: Grenade attack on TRO Jaffna office, 100 meters from an Army checkpoint.

13 July 2006: Cement being transported to a tsunami "Rebuild a Village Project" being implemented in Vaharai, Batticaloa District was hijacked in Valaichennai by paramilitary forces.

NEWS

Tamil civilians targeted in Mannar airstrike

D.B.S. Jeyaraj

transcurrents.com

A RECURRENT feature of the on going 'dirty war' between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Tamil Tigers is the continuous victimisation of innocent Tamil civilians in aerial bombardment and artillery shelling.

After these pathetic victims are killed, maimed and injured the state comes out with the usual story that only LTTE positions were targeted and that there were no civilian casualties.

It has become routine for the state to justify these attacks as part of its propaganda war.

Any one daring to articulate the inconvenient truth is wrongfully accused of being a Tiger agent or propagandist.

The suffering of civilians caught up in a war they do not want is ignored. Humanity is forgotten in this climate of charges and counter-charges. Human beings are reduced to insignificance.

Iluppaikkadavai in the North - Western district of Mannar became the site of another atrocity in this continuing pattern. It is a small village about 25 km to the north of Mannar town along the Mannar - Pooneryn road.

Iluppaikkadavai's population had increased over the years with more than 4000 displaced people from other parts of the North seeking refuge there.

The village falls within areas in Mannar district controlled by the LTTE.

Four planes, all of them Israeli Kfir jet bombers, swooped down from the skies at 9.35 am on January 2. There were twelve explosions with two bombs failing to explode. People screamed and ran in search of elusive safety. It was all over in ten minutes.

Around 25 dwellings were destroyed and damaged. About 50 - 60 people were injured. Some of them succumbed to injuries. There were people whose bodies were blown to pieces. Others were maimed losing limbs.

People from Iluppaikkadavai rushed to the scene of bombing. Among these were the parish priest Fr. Arulnathan and Village service officer or Grama Sevaka, Sinnathurai Vejendran.

The villagers led by Catholic priests and nuns of the area administered first aid and began efforts to take the people to hospitals.

There were two small hospitals in the region. One was at Mulankaavil to the north and the other at Pallamadhu to the South of Iluppaikkadavai.

Even as injured people were taken to these two hospitals it became apparent that many of the serious needed medical care that could not be provided adequately at the Mulankaavil and Pallamadhu hospitals.

The closest big hospital was at Mannar town only a 40 minutes ride away. An urgent message was sent. Mannar hospital authorities promptly despatched two ambulances.

The entry - exit point for GOSL and LTTE controlled areas was at Uyilankulam. The Sri Lankan security officials there refused to let the ambulances go to Iluppaikkadavai.

No amount of pleading by civilian officials would make the army relent. This was not due to the individual whims of security personnel. They were acting on orders from the Defence ministry in Colombo.

There is a visible design here. In the East the security personnel at the Mankerny entry - exit point display the same conduct when it comes to helping the beleaguered civilians of Vaaharai get medical treatment.

There too the callous cruelty is due to orders from Colombo.

The next best alternative was the hospital at Kilinochchi which is a Tiger controlled area. Two ambulances drove down from Kilinochchi and transported the serious cases there. Instead of being taken to Mannar hospital that was only 25 km away the injured had to be taken to Kilinochchi 80 km away.

Two of those admitted to Kilinochchi hospital died subsequently. With these deaths the death toll went up to sixteen. Seven of the sixteen were children under 10 years. Some of those killed too had their limbs blown away.

The body of a youth killed in the bombing was taken away by the Tigers. The victim was a member of the LTTE and had come on leave for the new year to visit his family.

At least ten of the injured in the Kilinochchi hospital are under ten years of age. Three pregnant women are also seriously injured.

Of the twenty five wounded at Kilinochchi seventeen are reportedly serious, six are said to be critical. Five of the injured have lost limbs. The eyesight of another three is impaired severely.

Even as this civilian tragedy was unfolding the official version related a different tale. The Sri Lanka army website had this to say -:

"With a view to eradicating Sea Tiger capabilities in north of MANNAR, Air Force Kfir jets this morning (2) bombed several identified Tiger terrorist targets in Iluppaikkadavai, Mannar and Panichchankerni, Vakare.

"The Sea Tiger base, north of Mannar has been regularly used by Tiger terrorists to launch deadly attacks on Sri Lanka Naval fleet on duty in the seas around the gulf of Mannar.

Intercepted Tiger transmis-



sions confirmed that Tuesday's air strike inflicted damages to them.

The Catholic Bishop of Mannar - Vavuniya diocese Rt. Rev Joseph Rayappu was at Iluppaikkadavai at 12.45 pm on the day of the bombing.

He inspected Padaguthurai and spoke with survivors. He also made detailed inquiries about the alleged presence of an LTTE sea tiger base in the vicinity. The prelate also went to Pallamadhu hospital.

Thereafter Bishop Rayappu wrote a letter to President Mahinda Rajapakse on the bombing. He also released the letter to the media and held a media conference and spoke about the actualities at Iluppaikkadavai.

Bishop Rayappu was quite candid in his interview to the BBC 'Thamilosai.' He categorically denied that there was a tiger camp or base in Padaguthurai.

The Bishop said that he had come to know that there was a Tiger communications point one and a half km away from the

bombed site. There was also a LTTE warehouse at another place about one and a half km away from Padaguthurai. There was however no LTTE presence in Padaguthurai, asserted the Bishop.

The Bishop's revelations evoked a hostile response from the state.

The Media Centre issued a diatribe against the Bishop in very harsh language. A senior priest from a 'minority' religion was unfairly condemned for voicing the suffering of a section of his flock.

One wonders whether the media centre would have the temerity to issue such a statement against a Buddhist prelate or even a Sinhala Catholic Bishop? The silence of the Sinhala Catholics on matters like this is truly deafening!

With the world waking up slowly to what actually happened at Padaguthurai, the GOSL was under increasing pressure. All sorts of explanations were

offered.

Colombo kept insisting that only a Sea Tiger base was hit. Then it changed position and blamed the LTTE for 'any' civilians being affected.

One accusation was that the civilians were brought to the area deliberately in anticipation of an air strike. Another charge was that the civilians were working as slaves of the LTTE in a tiger camp.

Even Air Force chief Roshan Goonetilleke - himself a Christian like most of the victims - emphasised to the media that the air force engaged only in precision bombing based on precise information.

Meanwhile terrified Tamil civilians began moving out of some coastal areas in LTTE controlled Mannar fearing more air strikes. More dispersals can be expected if indiscriminate aerial bombardment continues.

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NEWS



(above) Distraught relations of victims immediately after the airstrike (top) Bishop of Mannar Rayappu Joseph visits the destroyed village. (opposite page, top) one of many young victims being rushed to hospital (opposite page, below). Many children were killed by the jets. Photos TamilNet

'There is a church in clear sight'

Letter to President Mahinda Rajapakse by the Bishop of Mannar, Rt Rev Rayappu Joseph

"Your Excellency,"

"Three Kfir bombers aided by an aircraft that is said to be supplying information to them, had been bombing the above small settlement of displaced people consisting of 35 families from Navanthurai, Jaffna. This aerial bombing took place today, 2nd of January, 2007 at 9.35 in the morning."

"I saw 12 spots where the bombs had struck and two of these bombs remain unexploded. The area of this attack is just within a radius of 100 meters close to the sea shores."

"This settlement consisted of 35 Catholic families who were all very poor fisher-folk. There is a Catholic church on this very spot in clear sight. They were living in small cadjan sheds."

"The Parish priest of this locality in the person of Fr. P. Arulnathan OMI and most of the priests and religious working in this area are very familiar with this location, the people and their day to day life."

"I visited this very spot today at 12.45 noon and the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) came there fifteen minutes later. Tomorrow morning i.e. on the third of January 2007, the SLMM is expected to visit this locality."

"After listening to the people and to the priests and religious working in the area and from my personal inspection, I wish to convey to you that there were no

LTTE bunkers nor could we see any sign of their camps nor any individual residence of possible LTTE cadre in or in the vicinity of this area."

"This attack is clearly on a civilian target which, as far as I had witnessed, has blown to pieces 13 innocent civilians on the very dawn of the New Year 2007. It is feared that many more of the wounded would succumb to their injuries."

"I, in the presence of the Catholic priest of this area saw eight civilian bodies of the above tragedy at the Pallamadhu hospital out of whom three were children of 2, 6 & 11 years old. They were all limbless and three of them headless."

"The parish Priest of this area had seen five bodies of civilians known to him who succumbed to death at Mulankavil hospital, this morning."

"I was told by the Doctor of the Pallamadhu hospital that more than 35 wounded people had been dispatched to Mulankavil hospital and from there, nearly 25 serious cases had been sent to Kilinochchi hospital most of whom are, I was told children and women. A good number of these may not survive, I was told by a doctor."

"There were no LTTE killed in this incident except one who was on leave and had come in civil, minutes before the attack to this place to pay New Year visit to his mother-in-law, as I came to know from my inquiries."

'To survive, we must be strong, we must fight'

GRIEF was mixed with anger last Wednesday as hundreds of residents, religious leaders and civil representatives attended the mass funeral of several people, including children killed when Sri Lankan Air Force bombers destroyed a village in Mannar, in the island's Northwest.

The village of Illupaikadavai in Manthai West, an area of Mannar District controlled by the Liberation Tigers, is where more than 4,000 displaced Sri Lankans have sought shelter from the conflict since early 2006.

Four Kfir jets dropped twelve bombs on the hamlet on Tuesday January 2, killing sixteen people and wounding 35 more.

Sri Lankan security forces also refused to allow urgently requested ambulances to enter the LTTE-controlled area to rush the badly wounded to hospital.

"One may wonder whether

this indiscriminate killings of innocent people is the will of God," said Rev. Fr. James Pathinathar in his address at the funeral Wednesday.

"Denying freedom to anyone cannot be the will of God. To survive in this world one has to be strong. We must learn to strengthen ourselves in unity and face any hardships to gain our freedom."

"Let us pledge ourselves to fight for our freedom and happiness as we pay our deepest love and respect for the innocent lives robbed so cruelly."

The Deputy Head of the LTTE's Political Wing also addressed the funeral.

The Padahuthurai killings of innocent civilians is another action that exposes the agenda of the present government and its armed forces to ethnic cleanse Tamils from strategic areas in northeast, he said.

On Tuesday the Sri Lankan airstrike was bitterly condemned by the Bishop of Mannar, Rt. Rev Rayappu Joseph, who visited Padahuthurai hamlet to speak to survivors the same day.

There was no military installation of the LTTE in the Padahuthurai area, the Bishop told media, afterwards. Calling the attack "a crime against humanity," he urged the international community to send independent observers to Northeast.

Looking at the headless bodies of women and children the Bishop said the only term he could only characterize the attack as an act of "state-terror."

"Innocent civilians are being killed on a daily basis in the East. A big scale war is thrust upon the people of the East. Many civilians are dying there. Also here in Mannar district, we have witnessed the inhumane act of vio-

lence," Bishop Rayappu said.

"It is high time that the international community realizes the state of affairs here and send a team of observers who can tell the truth to the world."

The international community should censure the Sri Lankan Government for the indiscriminate and terrible violence, he said.

"One should realize the objective of an attack of this magnitude in a purely civilian area where there is no Tiger camp or hostile activity," he repeated.

The Bishop also condemned the Sri Lankan military for telling a "barefaced lie," for saying that the airstrike had hit a LTTE military installation.

"There is no hostile military presence [of the Tigers] in this area. These are innocent civilians who have been living here since 1995. ... I have known these people for years."

"There is no hostile military presence [of the Tigers] in this area. Such an open lie hurts us even further than the gruesome attack itself," he said.

Meanwhile the United Nations said the airstrike "was of the deepest concern" and called for a ceasefire between the government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Tamil Tigers.

"Sri Lankans continue to suffer deeply due to this conflict, and today's loss of life is a source of deepest concern," said Margareta Wahlström, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Acting Emergency Relief Coordinator.

"It is imperative that both sides to the conflict take all measures to fulfil their obligations under international law to protect civilians in this conflict; we have too often seen them fall short in this duty."

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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WEDNESDAY JANUARY 10, 2007 No. 340

New War

President Rajapakse's enthusiasm for war is infectious.

There can be no doubt that 2007 will be one of full-scale war in Sri Lanka. Army commander Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka was emphatic last week; his forces would clear the east within a month and then concentrate to destroy the LTTE in the north, he vowed. President Mahinda Rajapakse shares his confidence. The government is rolling out the political dimensions of the Sinhala hegemonic project - especially the de-merger of the Northeast Province - with a new urgency.

The administration's confidence is infectious, with even the splintering main opposition UNP also now loudly proclaiming the need to defeat terrorism - while also clinging to the notion that there must be a political solution. The ultranationalists of the JVP and JHU no longer stand out as the entire southern polity bays for a total military victory. Even the so-called Sinhala left is hurrying to the bandwagon. And even the international community, while still insisting that there can be no military solution to the ethnic question, has both backed off to give Sri Lanka the space to attempt one and is also providing the required support for it. This confidence in a military solution comes primarily from the past few months of battlefield retreats by the LTTE. We see nothing served by arguing the contrary; we will merely point out that this is not the first time the LTTE has been emphatically written off by the Sri Lankan state and the international community.

However, whatever the reality of LTTE strength, this moment ought to be an eye-opener for the Tamils. As confidence in the military solution has grown, so has enthusiasm waned - both in the south and in international capitals - for power-sharing with the Tamils. For years now we have been told that the LTTE was the Tamils' problem, that the Tigers' hard line was precluding a lasting solution.

But amid a conviction the LTTE can be destroyed, all insistence on a political solution has evaporated. The present situation highlights the Tamils' core dilemma: who can force a lasting solution out of the Sinhala-dominated Sri Lankan state? Who can guarantee our political rights or even our physical security? The international community (which so officiously appointed itself 'Co-Chairs' of the peace process years ago) has gone silent, rousing itself only when attacks blamed on the LTTE occur. There is (an unsurprising) collaborative silence as scores of Tamils

perish in the state's violence. None of the passionate defenders of human rights that emerged during the peace are to be heard now - though some self-serving charlatans who profited from liberal laments (mixed with a little LTTE-bashing) during President Chandrika Kumaratunga's 'war for peace' continue with business as usual. In short, the Tamils find themselves, as ever, facing the Sinhala lion on their own. Except for India. Ironically history repeats itself as Delhi is again compelled by local pressures and familiar misgivings to confront a rampant Sinhala nationalism at Sri Lanka's helm.

But President Rajapakse is confident enough of his military project to openly disregard Delhi's demands. His vision of Sri Lanka is framed not by a one of devolution, but of radical demographic change. That is why the de-merger of the NorthEast Province (NEP) has been rushed through. The JVP filed the Supreme Court case, paving the way for President Rajapakse to realise the division of the Tamil homeland in practice. In short, President Rajapakse intends to clear the Tamils from the east. His military campaign began last April with a broad-front onslaught to drive the Tamils out of Trincomalee. He has continued this murderous campaign since, herding our people down the eastern coast, destroying village after village as he went. He has done so with the approval of the international community and to the enthusiastic applause of the Sinhalese. It remains to be seen what, if anything, India can do to dissuade President Rajapakse from his war, especially when he is convinced he is fulfilling the tenets of the Sinhala revolution his SLFP party inaugurated in 1956.

In the meantime the Tamils have to confront a new reality. Unwilling to accommodate our political aspirations, Sri Lanka and the international community have taken the Tamil struggle back to the battlefield. We are once again on familiar ground. The Tamils are again confronted with the same choice they faced in 1995 after President Kumaratunga hoisted the lion flag over occupied Jaffna and turned to the Vanni: unite or perish. Now, as then, our community, both in the homeland and amongst the Diaspora, must come together. Once again we have to alleviate, as best we can, the suffering in Vaharai and the rest of the Northeast. Once again we have to stand firm against Sinhala efforts to destroy us.

New factors open India's door to the Tamils

Options hitherto frozen out by past history are being explored anew.

Bavani Suntharam
 Tamil Guardian

LAST month saw an important milestone in India - Sri Lanka relations.

After 15 years of avoiding any official contact with pro-LTTE actors, India made a prominent and pointed political gesture: Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met formally for 45 minutes with leaders of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), Sri Lanka's Tamil largest party, known for its support for the Tigers.

Though issues of mutual concern were discussed, the symbolism of the meeting arguably mattered more than the substance.

In the past five years, many countries involved in Sri Lanka have met with the TNA - and indeed met directly with the LTTE also.

But since the banning of the LTTE in 1992, when the organisation was officially blamed for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, India has strictly avoided contact with pro-LTTE actors.

India also distanced itself from the Tamils' struggle and difficulties.

Even after the Norwegian peace process commenced in 2002, India refused to get involved.

First Delhi declined the LTTE's request to provide a venue for talks (interestingly citing opposition to the idea from Tamil Nadu's then AIADMK-led government).

Then India turned down requests by the other Co-Chairs - the US, EU, Japan and Norway - to join them in fashioning a solution to the conflict. Instead India took an 'observer' position.

Some saw India's coolness as an emotional reaction. Delhi, it was argued, was being held back by its historic and unpleasant experience with the Tamil question.

Others suggested India's reticence stemmed from a reasoned decision to refrain from being pulled into yet another failure in Sri Lanka. Given their close and multi-layered experience with the island's conflict, Delhi was sceptical that the Norwegian peace process could succeed.

Against these foils, there has been considerable speculation over the significance behind the 'very warm and positive' meeting with the TNA.

This is especially so because both the Indian Prime Minister and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, declined to meet the TNA during an earlier visit in October.

One line of reasoning suggests there is now a fundamental shift in India's stance on Sri Lanka, i.e. towards a more energetic espousing of the Tamil cause.

While there has been some speculation - espoused mainly by some rosy-eyed Tamils - of a 1980s-style return to Indian involvement, there is little evidence to support such a view, with Indian officials going out of their way to stress that India does not see a 'direct' role on the island.

Others see the Singh-TNA meeting as an irrelevancy with respect to India's policy towards Sri Lanka. They argue that the meeting was driven purely by local factors in Tamil Nadu and the need to ease public pressure

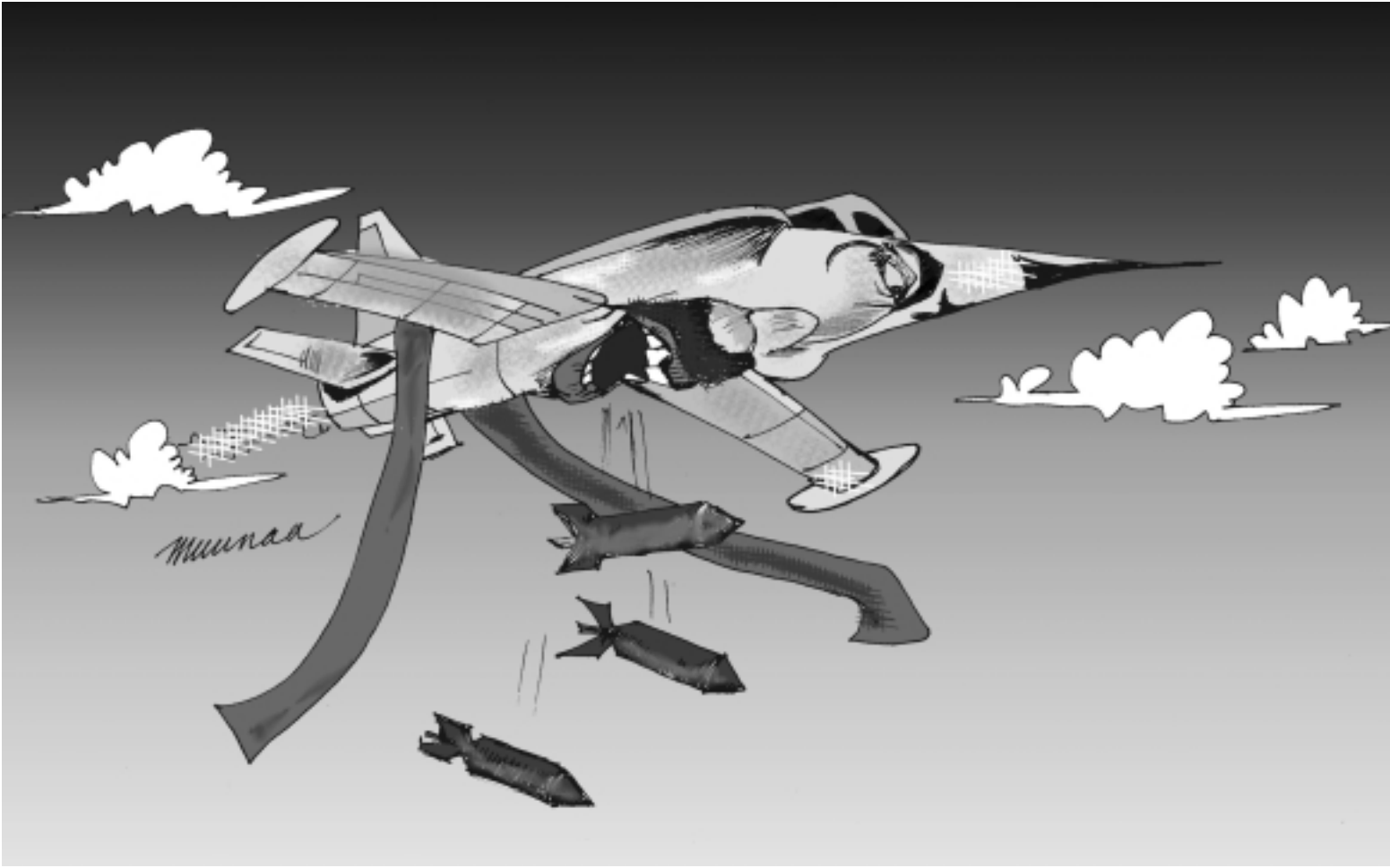
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EDITORIAL & OPINION



on Karunanidhi.

However, this view discounts the two-way relationship between Delhi and the Tamil Nadu and the considerable extent to which the centre can dictate the state actions and sentiments, especially with regards to matters entirely within the purview of the centre, like foreign relations.

Indeed, Karunanidhi's oft-stated assertion that the "policy of the centre is the policy of Tamil Nadu" underscores this reality.

This view also fails to give due importance to India's understanding and nuanced use of symbolism in politics.

Well versed in subtle signalling, the Indian establishment would not have been unaware of the powerful signal that is sent by a meeting between its top political leadership and a party that espouses the LTTE as the sole representatives of the Tamil people.

In fact, the reality lies somewhere in between the two extreme interpretations. India's present actions with regards Sri Lanka and the island's Tamils are being shaped by many factors, including the political forces at play in Tamil Nadu.

While not the sole driver of changes in the central government's stance, the rising pro-Eelam sentiment in the southern state cannot be dismissed.

While there has always been an undercurrent of sympathy in Tamil Nadu for the Sri Lankan Tamils and even a measure of support for the LTTE, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 made advocacy of the Eelam cause, Tamil militancy and the LTTE, singularly unacceptable, especially at the centre.

But in the recent past, events

in Sri Lanka, developments in Tamil Nadu and even shifts in India's role in global politics have compelled Delhi to reconsider the self-imposed limitations on its policy options.

Undoubtedly, the regret over the Rajiv Gandhi killing and the IPKF episode expressed by the LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham in mid 2006 played an important part in this regard.

But equally important are the changing ground conditions in Sri Lanka and the increasing access to first hand information about the grim reality in the Northeast.

Nearly five years after a ceasefire agreement was signed the island is back at full-scale war.

And 2006 has seen a return to the military's deliberate targeting of civilians, including children in schools (such as Mullaitivu) and Tamil population centres (such as Sampoor and Vaharai) and economic embargos on large swathes of the Tamil-dominated North.

The horror of all this has been delivered directly to the international community by the Tamil media - print, electronic and internet - which has expanded dramatically in the past few years.

The people of Tamil Nadu are also in the audience. The proliferation of Tamil vernacular media has given new force and urgency to long-standing sympathy there for Sri Lanka's Tamils.

Renewed suffering in the island's Northeast is thus outweighing the shackles of history. And the resultant changes in Tamil Nadu are dramatic.

For example, while the AIADMK was strongly anti-LTTE for over a decade, party leader Ms J. Jayalalithaa, then

Chief Minister, pointedly refused to meet newly elected Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse during his last visit in December 2005.

Jayalalithaa and the AIADMK subsequently contested the 2006 elections with the stridently pro-Eelam MDMK as partner.

But the Eelam cause itself was not a contested point of friction in that election: all Tamil parties were espousing it. Although the AIADMK grouping lost to the DMK-led coalition, local issues decided that outcome.

Indeed, Karunanidhi's DMK has also begun to espouse a more pro-Eelam line, reflecting the mounting anger in Tamil Nadu that the Sri Lankan military is getting away with killing innocent Tamils in the name of fighting the LTTE.

Established parties like the DMK and AIADMK, concerned only with their long-term political fortunes, take carefully calculated positions on contentious issues.

In this regard, the fiery advocacy of the Eelam cause and the LTTE on public platforms by Karunanidhi's daughter and a potential future leader of the DMK, Ms Kanimozhi, is significant.

She is also amongst the increasing number of Indian Tamils calling on central government to play a more active role in Sri Lanka instead of watching impassively as the situation deteriorates.

Notably she is also calling on Delhi to forget the past acrimony with the LTTE.

But this 'pressure' from Tamil Nadu's political leadership is also reinforcing Delhi's own irritation with the Rajapakse government's defiance of their wishes.

As Indian analysts are bluntly

pointing out, President Rajapakse, having taken charge of a military and economy revitalised with international support, is single-mindedly pursuing a military strategy to crush Tamil aspirations, not just the LTTE.

And having failed to co-opt India into supporting his project, Rajapakse has sought to ensure India remains inactive and moribund while he pursues it.

Moreover, Rajapakse has deliberately snubbed India on several key points.

Repeated Indian requests not to target Tamil civilians and to seek a negotiated settlement are being contemptuously ignored amid an indiscriminate 'broad front' conventional war.

Furthermore, in stark contrast to India's explicit and repeated wishes, President Rajapakse has de-merged the NorthEastern province, undoing the Indo - Sri Lanka Accord.

While the Co-chairs urged President Rajapakse not to alter any standing constitutional structures ahead of a political solution, India went much further: Singh personally raised the issue twice with President Rajapakse, saying the de-merger would undermine the search for a lasting solution and urging him to desist.

But the Rajapakse government swiftly proceeded with the de-merger - indeed, going further by trifurcating the region rather than simply separating the two provinces.

The Sri Lankan move is seen as it was meant: a slight to India.

The shifting stances in Delhi can therefore be interpreted as part of India's new efforts to constrain the Sri Lankan government.

This line of analysis suggests that India's formal invitation extended to the TNA last

October, including the highly publicised possibility of a meeting with the Indian Premier, were meant as a cautionary signal to Sri Lanka.

But President Rajapakse did not react positively (indeed he did the reverse, escalating the military campaign in the Northeast and punishing the Tamil populace even further).

Apart from this embarrassing public defiance of Delhi, the brutality of the Sri Lankan onslaught further enraged public sentiments in Tamil Nadu.

It is therefore no accident that a strident pro-Eelam, even pro-LTTE, rhetoric has emerged in Tamil Nadu since October.

It is arguable that there is tacit approval from the central government for Tamil Nadu's political leaders and community actors to express such views.

Not only does this give vent to local sentiment, it provides a compelling and plausible context in which the Indian government can explore even radical options vis-à-vis Sri Lanka.

It should be remembered that India's involvement in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s was driven mainly by a desire to contain the government of President J.R. Jayawardene.

Not only was his contempt for the Tamil undisguised, so was his scorn for India's authority (hence the pro-Western leader's monicker 'Yankee Dickie').

The Rajiv Gandhi factor was a brake on Indian action on Sri Lanka for many years. But, at the same time, no subsequent Sri Lankan leadership was so openly defiant of India's regional authority or Delhi's political and other interests.

Until President Rajapakse.

Now, India is once again being compelled, reluctantly, to contain rampant Sinhala nationalist forces in the island.

All of this is coloured by a key new development: India's strategic self positioning, which has seen the world's largest democracy move beyond a focus on South Asia and seek a role on the global stage.

Sri Lanka occupies a very different position in this new vision: a regional irritant instead of a major concern.

With bigger interests and ambitions to pursue, India is no longer prepared to let the shackles of its prior history in Sri Lanka constrain its actions.

What India wants is a pragmatic path to its ultimate goal for the island: not just an end to violence, but a stable solution that will ensure that the Tamils are not constantly fending off Sinhala aggression.

While the meeting between the Indian Prime Minister and the TNA is by no means indicative of a strategic shift in India's thinking, neither can it be dismissed as of no consequence.

Rather, it suggests that options hitherto frozen out by past history are being explored anew. In short, India has opened the door to the Tamils again. What happens next depends to a considerable degree on the coming ground realities in the Tamil homeland.

FROM THE NORTH EAST



(top) Christian priests are pictured on Jan 3, 2007 leading the mass funeral procession for 16 civilians, including many children, killed by Sri Lankan jets which on Jan 2, bombed a village in the LTTE-controlled part of Mannar. (above) grief was mixed with anger as hundreds of mourners accompanied the caskets. Priests called for people to unite behind the Tamil freedom struggle. (right) one of the younger victims. Many people were wounded. Ambulances dispatched from government-controlled areas were blocked by troops manning border checkpoints. see reports p4-5. Photos TamilNet.



LTTE leader Vellupillai Pirapaharan receives the first identity card issued by the Thamilcelam National Registry of Persons. The card will function similar to a Social Security Number in many countries, with a unique number for everyone. The scheme was inaugurated on Jan 1, 2007.



Sri Lanka Army commander Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka on New Year's Day parade. Story p2. Photo SL Army.



Civilian vehicle destroyed by a mine triggered by Sri Lanka Army troops who infiltrated Vanni. story p10.



(above) A graduate of the LTTE's newly constituted Maj Ahakumaran Academy is congratulated by his mother on the occasion of his passing out. The Maj Ahakumaran Academy trains fighters for the LTTE's elite Imran-Pandian commando regiment. (middle) The batch reverses their rifles during a minute's silence to honour fighters killed in action. (top) New graduates demonstrate their marksmanship and motorcycling skills.

COMMENT



President Mahinda Rajapakse (2R), pictured with commanders of the military and police, is determined to fight a new war. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi/AFP/GettyImages

Rajapakse is bent on a dictated peace

'He intends to remove the Eastern Province from the control of the Tamils and ultimately convert it into a Sinhalese majority area.'

B. Raman
SAAG

IN an assessment on the ground situation in Sri Lanka written on October 8, 2006, I had stated:

"The hardline advisers of Mr. Rajapakse think that they can now see the light at the end of a long and dark tunnel and that this is the time to force upon the LTTE a dictated peace, which would restrict the eventual Tamil control in any political solution to the Northern Province minus Jaffna and the Batticaloa District of the Eastern Province minus the Trincomalee and Amparai Districts.

"Their reported plans for an ultimate political solution also envisage excluding the LTTE's presence and influence from even the Batticaloa District, by placing the Karuna faction and other Tamil parties in power there and keeping Jaffna, Trincomalee and Amparai directly under the control of the government in Colombo. Among other ideas reportedly under consideration are changing the demographic composition of the Trincomalee District by resettling Sinhalese ex-servicemen there."

In pursuance of its strategy for a dictated peace, which will remove the Eastern Province from the control of the Tamils and ultimately convert it into a Sinhalese majority area through the re-settlement of Sinhalese ex-servicemen and others, the Mahinda Rajapakse Government has already

initiated a number of steps by taking advantage of the silence of the international community, including India, on its policy of using its Air Force, heavy artillery and forced starvation to force the Tamils into submission.

In the third week of December 2006, Rear Admiral (Retd) Mohan Wijewickrama was sworn in before President Mahinda Rajapakse as the Governor of the Eastern Province. He has been appointed to hold concurrent charge as the Governor of the Northern Province till a regular incumbent for that post is found.

After being sworn in, he was reported to have told the media: "From 1 January 2007, we have no choice but to run the two provinces separately. Finances have already been appropriated separately for the two provinces."

He also said that fresh appointments would be made to the Northern and Eastern Provincial Councils in keeping with the Supreme Court ruling that the 1987 merger was illegal.

According to him, the new ethnic balance would be taken into consideration when these appointments are made. Consequently, the Eastern Provincial Council is likely to have more Sinhalese and Muslim employees than before. Earlier appointments had been made in keeping with the ethnic ratio of the combined North and East.

The first batch of about 80 Sinhalese ex-servicemen for resettlement was brought to Trincomalee under Army protection on December 30. More are expected.

Not only Sinhalese extremist leaders, but also Buddhist monks have been associated with the plan for the dilution of the Tamil presence and influence in the Eastern Province.

Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, the Army Commander, has been discussing the future strategy with local military commanders. He reportedly met senior commanders of the Army's 23 Division based in Welikanda, Polonnaruwa,

in the island's east on January 3.

He has also been meeting Buddhist priests and seeking their blessing and co-operation for the success of what he called the Government's new strategy to crush the movement for a Tamil Eelam during 2007.

In an informal New Year-eve discussion with the media in Colombo, Lt. Gen. Fonseka reportedly said that the Security Forces would be able to take the strategic eastern coastal towns of Vaharai and Kadirweli in about a month.

He mentioned during his interactions at Colombo that he was confident of defeating the LTTE in the East as well as the North before the end of 2007.

While he attributed the delay in the long-expected Army offensive to take Vaharai to bad weather, another reason is understood to be a shortage of artillery shells for the heavy artillery being used against the LTTE positions. A new consignment of arms and ammunition from Pakistan including artillery shells is expected shortly and once that arrives, the offensive is expected to be stepped up.

The fighters of the anti-LTTE faction headed by Karuna are now openly assisting the Army in its operations in the Eastern Province. No effort is made any longer to conceal the presence and key role of the followers of Karuna in the military operations in the Eastern Province.

The strategy of Mr. Rajapakse's advisers is to develop Karuna as the future leader of Batticaloa to co-ordinate anti-LTTE activities there and Mr. Douglas Devananda, a Tamil member of the present Government, as the future leader of Jaffna to co-ordinate the anti-LTTE activities in the Northern Province.

The men of Devananda have already been working under the over-all supervision of the Army. Devananda has also been made in charge of co-ordinating the movement and distribution of humanitarian relief goods donated by India.

The Rajapakse Government has not been unduly worried over the concerns of the Government of India at the humanitarian situation of the Tamils and over the reported decision of the German Government not to make any fresh budgetary allocations for assistance to Sri Lanka till the fighting stops.

Lt. Gen. Fonseka and other advisers of Mr. Rajapakse have been claiming that the new strategy of crushing the LTTE by the end of 2007 has the tacit support of the Indian authorities and that the expressions of concern over the humanitarian situation in response to pressure from the political parties of Tamil Nadu should be understood in the correct perspective and should not be interpreted to mean that the Government of India disapproves of their military strategy against the LTTE.

They also claim that their plan to remove the Eastern Province from the control of the LTTE was in continuation of a similar plan reportedly drawn up by Rajiv Gandhi himself in 1988-89 to build up [the EPRFL's] Varadaraja Perumal as a counter to [LTTE leader Vellupillai] Pirapaharan.

While there has been a slight forward movement in the Government of India's Sri Lanka policy, it is still marked by considerable ambivalence.

The policy continues to be based on the following postulates:

- A federal solution maintaining the unity of Sri Lanka, but not its unitary political set-up; only a political solution is feasible;

- the problem cannot be solved militarily; till a political solution is found the status quo (North-East merger) should not be disturbed;

- No direct role for India in the search for a political solution;

- No supply of lethal military equipment to the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, which they could use in their counter-insurgency operations;

- No disruption of training assistance;

- active monitoring of the humanitarian situation and provision of relief through channels approved by the Government of Sri Lanka.

Many of these postulates have already been rendered irrelevant by the Rajapakse Government in total disregard of the sensitivities of New Delhi.

It has already ruled out a federal solution and has been working for a unitary solution. It has already set in motion the process of de-merger and the reduction of the Tamil influence in the Eastern Province.

As a sop to Indian sensitivities, it wants to associate India more actively with the economic development of the Eastern Province in order to convey a message that a reduction of Tamil influence would not mean a reduction of Indian influence.

It is bent upon finding a military solution to the problem during the New Year.

Mr. Rajapakse's advisers are convinced that the ground and the international situation are at present the most favourable to Sri Lanka and that they if they miss this opportunity to turn the tide against the LTTE, they may not get another opportunity like this again.

The ultimate objective of Mr. Rajapakse's advisers is to reduce the Tamils to the status of the Red Indians of Sri Lanka kept confined to certain reserves as museum pieces.

A more anti-Tamil group of hardline advisers Sri Lanka has not had since the Tamils rose in revolt in 1983.

However, it would be foolhardy for Mr. Rajapakse's advisers to conclude that the LTTE is losing its resilience and has become less of a fighting machine than it was till 2004. It is still a formidable fighting machine, with considerable reserves of energy and motivation still left.

Edited, original (SAAG paper 2088) published January 7, 2007.

NEWS

Blasts prompt new security measures

SRI LANKA this weekend introduced stringent security measures on public transport after explosions on two buses in the island's south killed at least twenty mainly Sinhalese civilians and wounded scores more.

The government blamed the Tamil Tigers for both blasts. The LTTE denied responsibility.

But Sri Lankan analysts speculated the attacks were retaliations for killings of almost twenty Tamil civilians last week in a Sri Lankan air strike and a landmine attack blamed on Sri Lankan commandos.

On Friday a bomb estimated to contain 2kg of explosive killed six people on a bus in Gampaha district, northeast of Colombo.

The blast on the Colombo - Kandy road left over 50 injured, eight in critical condition.

On Saturday a powerful blast ripped through a bus in Galle district, killing 15 people and woun-

ding at least forty others.

Some police officials claimed it was a suicide bombing by the LTTE.

The bus was driving along the southern tourist strip between Ambalangoda and Hikkaduwa when the bomb went off along the main coastal highway.

On Thursday unidentified attackers triggered a claymore mine in LTTE-controlled Vanni, killing two people and wounding four others.

The blast came as hundreds of people buried sixteen civilians, including many children, who were killed when four Sri Lankan jet bombers dropped twelve bombs on a Tamil village in LTTE-controlled Mannar.

The military said that the raid targeted a pre-identified Sea Tiger base. (see pages 4 and 5).

Blaming the LTTE for both blasts in the south, the government said that the Tigers were

attempting to divert attention from on going Sri Lankan military operations in the Northeast.

"The aim of the LTTE is to have a backlash against the Tamils and to undermine our efforts to find a peaceful solution," President Mahinda Rajapakse said. He appealed to the Sinhalese community to show maximum restraint.

However the LTTE, which had vowed serious repercussions following the Mannar aerial bombardment, denied the Tigers were responsible for the attacks.

"This is a baseless allegation made without any evidence to support it," LTTE military spokesperson Rasiah Illanthanriyan said.

Japan condemned the two bomb attacks on the buses as cowardly terrorist acts. The embassy did not comment on the attacks in the north.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka has imposed new security measures on

transport.

"Security will be tightened at every bus depot and railway stations in the country," Minister Fowzie said. He said the government was planning to introduce more stringent checking at entry points to buses and trains.

As an immediate precautionary measure, all private and public bus owners had been informed to check the passengers before allowing them into the bus or train, he said.

"The passengers will be thoroughly checked. Their bags and luggage will also be checked. We urge the public to co-operate with us," Mr. Fowzie said.

P. A Premasiri, General Manager of Railways, said that all passengers embarking trains would be subject to security checks.

"We may even interrupt long distance trains at certain random points for safety checks", he added.

The Director General of the Media Centre for National Security, Luxman Hulugalle, said that the public is advised not to travel in buses and trains that do not carry out security checks on baggage and other parcels.

President of the Private Bus Owner's Associate Gemunu Wijeratna said all private bus owners had been informed to search passengers before allowing them to board.

Passengers travelling with bags should be informed to keep the bags on the lap, he said.

"Passengers traveling with more than one bag or big bags will not be allowed to enter the bus. Suspicious looking persons will be arrested immediately."

"Bus owners will notify the authorities through 219 or 118 if there are any passengers creating trouble," he said. "All measures will be taken."

Editorial, p6

New blow to tourism hopes

THE two blasts last on crowded buses in Sri Lanka's south, seen by observers as retaliation for military killings of Tamil civilians in the Northeast, come as serious blows to the country's tourism industry, which was already reeling from sharp falls in visitors, especially from Western countries.

Tourism brought \$450 million dollars into Sri Lanka's \$23 billion economy last year, and is one of the main foreign currency earners for the country along with tea, textiles and remittances from abroad.

The escalation of violence throughout 2006 had already depressed numbers of arrivals in what is usually peak season, with the hotel industry estimated to have lost US\$120 million in 2006.

Even in mid-December, which is usually peak season, the President of the Tourist Hoteliers Association of Sri Lanka, Mr. Hiran Cooray, was lamenting: "usually resort hotels would be doing at least 80% but now they are struggling to do 20% even after giving special offers."

UK, Germany, France, Italy and New Zealand, some of the major countries that generate the majority of high spending tourists, have issued travel advisories against their nationals from visiting Sri Lanka.

German arrivals fell 42.9 percent to 3,229, while holidaymakers from Britain slipped 29.3 percent to 5,180, LBO reported. Not even the bargain basement travel deals on offer have lured many tourists to the island's south coast.

The adverse publicity Sri Lanka received in the last half of

2006 was very badly timed as October and November was the peak booking period for the winter 2006/2007 season.

These include a suspected LTTE attack on the Sri Lankan naval base in the harbour in Galle. The southern town is a prime tourist destination.

"Bulk of the prospective bookings have gone to other destinations," vice president of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, Srilal Miththapala, told LBO.

The tourist industry directly employs 150,000 workers and affects the livelihoods of half a million people -- from shopkeepers selling batik sarongs and incense sticks at tourist strips, to coconut water vendors on the beach.

"Tourism is a key sector, and this year's drop in revenues will affect disposable incomes, which in turn will hurt the economy as a whole," Dushyanth Wijaya-singhe, research head at Asia Securities, told Reuters.

Senaka De Silva, who heads an association representing hoteliers in the south, says the numbers would further decrease in the face of recent escalation of violence and the blasts last week which killed more than 20 people.

"When tourists learn of incidents such as the [Hikkaduwa] blast, they will certainly think twice before coming to Sri Lanka," he told Sunday Times.

"Besides road closures and security checks also discourage the tourists from visiting Sri Lanka."

The Sunday Times said many hoteliers in the region simply did not inform their guests about the blast because they did not want to



Passengers being searched as part of new security measures.

Photo Rukmal Gamage/Daily News

cause "unnecessary" panic.

"If they inquire about the situation we inform them very briefly. We do this to avoid worrying our guests unnecessarily," a Galle hotel official said.

Thousands of travellers normally flock to Hikkaduwa, a sun-kissed, palm-fringed spot on Sri Lanka's southwest coast, renowned for its coral reefs and beaches.

"This is the worst it's been in 30 years," W. M. Bandaranayake, manager of the Coral Sands Hotel on Hikkaduwa's main strip, told Reuters.

"We had more guests after the tsunami," he said in an interview on Dec. 27.

"Every day there are more cancellations," said Bandaranayake, whose hotel is running less than

20 percent full at a time of year when it is usually overbooked.

All this is a stark contrast from when the ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE was signed in 2002, when the island became a recommended tourist destination.

Luxury resorts and boutique hotels, some charging as much as \$3,000 a night, were feverishly constructed along the southern coast, and several 5-star hotels in Colombo were upgraded to meet the surge in affluent overseas guests.

"There were positive signs all around us, and the entire tourist industry was investing heavily," Roshan Gurusinghe, business development head of the up-scale Cinnamon Group, told Reuters.

The Group's occupancy was down 40 percent last December.

Even the impact of the tsunami that battered the south, east and north, was cushioned by the arrival of foreign aid workers.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's Central Cultural Fund (CCF), which mainly depends on income from cultural tourists who visit the island's archaeological sites, is now lacking funds even to pay the salaries of its workers due to the drop in arrivals.

CCF's income for the peak December 2006 season was a mere Rs. 18 million, while it needs at least Rs. 42 million to pay the salaries of around 2500 employees working at various archaeological sites, colombo-page.com reported.

NEWS

Violence round up - week ending 07 January

07 January

● The SLA in Jaffna announced a curfew from 6:00 p.m. until further notice near its Thenmaradchi FDL. The curfew covers Kachchai, Usan, Kodikamam and Meesalai south which are densely populated besides Muhamalai, Kilali and Kachai coast in Thenmaradchi FDL areas.

● Six civilians were seriously injured in a bomb explosion in the Central camp area in Amparai district, near a shop which sells agricultural products and chicken feed. The bomb had been hidden near the shop targeting a STF road patrol unit in Amparai Central camp area. The seriously injured are S. Tharamalingam, W. M. Kulathunga, A. M. M. Harun, A. L. Nauffer, A. L. Naushath and I. M. Abeyaratna.

● Unidentified persons triggered a claymore device at Maharambakkulam in Vavuniya seriously injuring two SLA troopers. Police claimed a youth who is said to have triggered the claymore device died when a hand grenade he had on him exploded after having escaped from the site of the claymore attack. The youth killed was identified as Manoharan Mathanarajah, 23 of Konthakarakulam in Vavuniya, according to the information on the identity card found on his body.

● Three STF personnel were injured in a retaliation attack by the LTTE when the STF and police tried to penetrate into LTTE held Kanchikudicharu in Amparai district. The police and STF, from their camps in Thirukovil and Kanchirankuda, jointly attempted to penetrate into LTTE held Kanchikudicharu, in an attack lasting nearly an hour.

● Vavuniya police recovered the dead bodies of two youths at Pandarikulam area in Vavuniya. The two youths had been strangled to death.

● Eravur police recovered the body of a young fisherman with gunshot injuries in a jungle area in Savukkady, a coastal hamlet in the Eravur police division in Batticaloa. He was identified as Subramaniam Indran, 27, a family man from Arumugathan Kudiruppu, Eravur, who had gone to Savukkady Saturday evening and had not returned home by Sunday morning. The police conducted a search and found Indran's body at Savukkady.

● A bus explosion on Galle Road, at Seenigama in Meetiyagoda Police area in Galle District claimed 15 lives and injured more than 40 (see separate story).

06 January

● Three SLA soldiers were killed when a civilian vehicle, which the troopers at Varikkuddiyar SLA camp commandeered to transport soldiers, was hit by a claymore mine blast at Thaddankulam, Vavuniya. A civilian was killed and another injured in the blast.

● Three SLA troopers and the owner of the vehicle, Rasanayagam Sharmilan, 32, were killed on the spot. The driver of the vehicle, Aarumugam Vaseekaran, 29 suffered minor injuries. Sharmilan and his driver went to collect sand when they were stopped by the SLA soldiers at Varikkuddiyar SLA camp on the Poovarasan-kulam - Cheddikulam road and ordered to transport 5 soldiers, two of them in military fatigues, to Cheddikulam. The vehicle was hit by the blast after it had passed the hamlet of Thaddankulam.

● A Sri Lanka military ship scheduled to transport civilians and military personnel to Trincomalee from KKS Harbour was cancelled as clashes erupted in the seas off Nagarkovil in Vadam-aradchi East. Around 350 civilians who were transported to KKS HSZ from Jaffna were sent back. Gunshots and heavy rocket fire were heard in the seas off Nagarkovil.

● A SLA soldier was killed in a



The 23rd batch of Tamil Tiger cadets to graduate from the 2nd Lt Jeevan Academy pictured on parade, January 2, 2007. Sri Lanka's military has vowed to destroy the LTTE this year. Photo pathivu.com

claymore attack near Uduvil SLA camp. The claymore was placed in front of a canteen run by the SLA, inside a military HSZ. The Uduvil camp serves as the nerve center for SLA's intelligence operation in Jaffna district. The soldier succumbed to his injuries while being taken to hospital.

● Two women were injured in a blast near Jaffna Secretariat at Kachcheri - Nallur road, near the abandoned Jaffna railway station. One of them, Ponnuthurai Philomina, 57, of Somasunderam road in Chundikuli succumbed to her injuries at hospital. The other woman was identified as K. Thiloshini.

● Armed men opened fire on a police jeep at Savukkady in Thalavai in the Eravur police division in Batticaloa, seriously injuring three policemen. The attack was on a police unit returning from a refugee camp at Savukkady in Thalavai.

● Sri Lankan Police, without producing any warrant, raided the Colombo office of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation and searched the office, NGO officials at the TRO office in Colombo told media. The raid follows raids on Vavuniya and Trincomalee offices Friday. "The continuous harassment of TRO is having a tremendously negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected people of the NorthEast," the TRO, the only organization working in some of the most severely affected parts of the NorthEast, said in a press statement. Four TRO officials and workers were taken to the Police station at 3:30 pm and it was not until 9:30 pm that the last male employee was released, according to a TRO press statement.

05 January

● Six persons were killed in an explosion inside a bus at Kalapittiya near Nittambuwa, 36 km northeast of Colombo. Around fifty passengers were wounded, 10 seriously, as the bus, on its way to Giriulla from Nittambuwa, caught fire follow-

ing the explosion (see separate story).

● Two Agriculture Department officials were killed and 2 wounded when a vehicle belonging to the department, transporting fruit plants, was hit by a Sri Lankan DPU claymore mine blast in Nedunkerni, 37 km northeast of Vavuniya. One of the two claymore mines triggered by the DPU attackers exploded. The SLA launched an artillery attack, firing around 25 shells towards the attack site, after the claymore explosion. The officials killed were identified as Agriculture Officer (AO) Tharmalingam Ganesalingam, 59, father of 3 and Subject Matter Officer (SMO) Vetrivel Mahendran, 52, a father of 3. Two seriously wounded, identified as K. Kurukulasingham, 53, an agriculture staff and Arumugam Sithiravelautham, the driver of the department vehicle, were rushed to Nedunkerni hospital and transferred to Vavuniya hospital. Mr. Sithiravelautham is in critical state, according to Vavuniya hospital. ICRC official from Vavuniya, Meytrauo Claire, together with Sri Lanka Red Cross (SLRC) officials facilitated the transport of the dead and wounded.

● Two SLN sailors were injured in a claymore attack at Allesgarden area along Trincomalee-Nilaveli road. The truck transporting SLN personnel returning home on leave hit a claymore mine along the roadside. More troops rushed to site and launched a cordon and search operation blocking the transport services between Nilaveli and Trincomalee.

● Armed men opened fire at Sector 3, Thalikulam on Mannar road in Vavuniya on policemen staying in a temporary camp, killing one policeman on the spot and seriously injuring another. The attackers shot with pistols targeting the policemen in the camp. Residents said heavy gunfire was heard from the site as police clashed with the attackers.

● Sri Lankan STF personnel and the Police simultaneously stormed the regional offices of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisati-

on in Trincomalee and Vavuniya, and interrogated the NGO officials who were present at the offices seizing all the documents. Four TRO workers were taken by the STF and the police from the Vavuniya office. Administrative Officer of the TRO in Vavuniya, Sathiyamoorthy, Programme Officer P. Thevarajah, Accountant Nirosha and Office Assistant Priya were taken by the SLA and the Police, TRO officials in Colombo told media. All the documents at the office were seized by the military and the police and taken in a lorry to Vavuniya Police station.

● Gunmen riding a motorbike shot and killed a 27-year old man in Adiyapatham Road in Kokuvil. A group known as Ellalan Padai claimed responsibility for the killing. In the same incident, another youth who was standing by the street was injured.

Navaratnam Manoraj from Manipay was identified as the victim in the Kokuvil shooting. Ellalan Padai accused Manoraj of being involved in anti-social activities. The injured youth was identified as R. Maheswaran, 26, from Raja Veethy Kopay.

● Three civilians were shot dead in Trincomalee and their bodies were found with gunshot injuries, one at Chelvanayakapuram, about 2 km off north of east port town and the other two at Allesgarden. Uppuveli Police said the victims, between the ages 19 and 30, were Tamils.

04 January

● Seven civilians were injured, two critically, when SLAF Kfir jets bombed a tsunami resettlement village in Alampil in Mullaithivu district during the third day of SLAF bombers targeting coastal areas in Mullaithivu. The critically injured, Muthurajah Moses, 9, and Mrs. Nesamany Mariyanayagam, 61, were admitted to the Mullaithivu Government hospital and the others returned home after treatment. A surveillance drone belonging to the

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EPDP - Eelam People's Democratic Party
FDL - Forward Defence Line
HRC - Human Rights Commission
HSZ - High Security Zone
ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
SLA - Sri Lanka Army
SLAF - Sri Lanka Air Force
SLHRC - Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission
SLMM - Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
SLN - Sri Lanka Navy
STF - Special Task Force

NEWS



A young child, with his hand torn by an Sri Lanka Army artillery shell cries alongside her mother who was killed in LTTE-controlled Vaharai, where thousands are starving. seereport p1,3 Photo TamilNet.

Continued from page 12

SLAF was observed from 5:30 a.m. in the area and Kfir jets followed, dropping eight bombs on the hamlet. Several temporary houses were destroyed and permanent houses built by Non Governmental Organizations were damaged in the bombing.

● A SLA soldier was killed and two wounded when a group of attackers triggered a claymore mine targeting a SLA vehicle in Pirappumadu, Vavuniya, a predominantly Sinhala settlement.

● Gunmen in a white van abducted an employee from the humanitarian de-mining organization 'Halo Trust', an international NGO functioning in the Jaffna peninsula. Subramaniam Parameswaran, 29, of Racca Road, Jaffna, was at home with his wife and two children when unidentified persons in a white van held his wife and children at gunpoint and abducted him forcefully, his wife, Esther Marilyn Parameswaran, told the officials of the SLHRC, Jaffna branch. So far, eight employees from 'Halo Trust' have been either killed or abducted and disappeared in Jaffna Peninsula.

● An employee of Danish Demining Organisation, another NGO in Jaffna peninsula, sought refugee with the SLHRC Jaffna office, saying that he fears death at the hands of the SLA and the Tamil paramilitary cadres operating with it. The young deminer, a resident on Palaly road in Punalikattuvan, working for the Danish organisation, said to the SLHRC Jaffna office that on January 1, he and his friends going along Palaly road were chased by armed men on three motorcycles trying to shoot them. He had managed to escape while his friends had been caught and subjected to torture by those who had chased them. The young man further said to the SLHRC that he had gone underground from January 1 before

seeking refuge now.

● Two brothers of a youth abducted from his Kokuvil residence by armed men alleged to be SLA troopers and Tamil paramilitary members Tuesday midnight, surrendered at the SLHRC Jaffna office, fearing for their lives. The youths were placed in protective custody of Jaffna prison. 30 unidentified armed men had gone to Varaki Amman Kovilady road at Kokuvil west in Jaffna to the residence of Ravidran Rajinthan and forced him into their vehicle. His father, who tried to prevent him being taken away, was shot and seriously injured. 33 youths, including the two who sought asylum at the SLHRC Friday, have been placed in the safety of Jaffna prison.

● Family members of a final year science faculty student from Kokuvil East Jaffna, missing since Wednesday, registered a complaint with the SLHRC Jaffna office that they suspect the student has been abducted. Arunagirinathan Niruparaj, 25, senior student in Jaffna campus mysteriously disappeared while engaged in moving from his house to another house in Kokuvil. His footwear and motor cycle, left abandoned in the house, showed evidence that he had been taken away forcibly.

● Armed men in a white van abducted Thuraisingham Balraj, 23, employed in the postal department, from his house on Chemani road at Nallur.

● Armed men arriving at the house of Thiraviyam Satkunam, 30, at Vathiri, Karavedy in Vadamaradchi, shot and seriously injured him. He died the following day at Jaffna Teaching Hospital from gunshot wounds to the head.

● Welikanda police recovered two claymore devices in a house near a police sentry post in Senapura-Kattuvanvila area in Welikanda police division, on a tip received from local residents, and arrested two persons on sus-

picion. Kattuvanvila is predominantly a Muslim area and the two arrested persons are Muslims.

● Two policemen were injured in a mortar attack at Chalampaikulam on Mannar road, seriously injuring two policemen.

03 January

● SLAF Kfir jets bombed Verugal areas in LTTE controlled territory in Trincomalee district. The SLAF claimed that identified LTTE targets were bombed. Casualty information was not released.

● The entire population of Kokupadaiyan village in Mannar district sought refuge in adjacent villages due to fear following the previous day's aerial strike on Padahuthurai by the SLAF. Kokupadaiyan village is in area controlled by the LTTE. About 269 members of 63 families fled from Kokupadaiyan village and sought refuge in villages in Pontheivukandal and Neelamadu in Nanattan Divisional Secretariat Division in Mannar district.

● A Tamil mother and her daughter were arrested by the Maskeliya Police in the central province on receipt of information that they had taken photographs of the Mousakelle reservoir, in a HSZ. The mother and daughter were residents of Jaffna and now residing in Colombo. They had gone to see their relatives in Maskeliya.

● Armed men abducted Thavanayagam Tharsan 16, a grade 10 student at Pethalai Vipulananda Vidyalayam, at Pethalai in Valaichenai police division in Batticaloa. He was abducted near a shop at Pethalai Ramanan junction, as he was on his way to attend a personal errand.

● Gunmen shot dead a young woman at Pt. Pedro, Jaffna. Two armed men on a motorcycle called Ms. Kamalini Kanapathipillai, 30, out of her house at

Vallipura Pariyariar Road in Point Pedro, Vadamaradchi shot her dead and escaped.

● Armed men shot and seriously injured Karthikesu Kirushnathas, 53, a family man from Kudathana, Vadamaradchi east in the HSZ. He stopped his motor cycle by road side to allow a SLA convoy to pass along the Jaffna-Pt. Pedro Road. Two unidentified men who appeared behind him shot and injured him while he was about to resume his journey.

● Armed men opened fire on the SLA camp near Udupiddu junction in Vadamaradchi. Following the attack, the SLA began reinforcing security around camps at Navindil, Thikkam, northern coast of Vadamaradchi, Alvai and Vallai. The roads in front of these camps were closed for public and all vehicles and persons using the roads were forced to use vacant tracts of land nearby. The residents along these roads were directed by the SLA to keep their main gates and entrances always open and to remove fences and other obstructions, allowing free movement for its troopers.

02 January

● SLAF bombers killed at least 16 civilians, including 6 children, and seriously wounding 35 civilians at the coastal hamlet of Padahuthurai, in Mannar (see separate story).

● SLAF Kfir jets bombed Panichchenkerny area in Vaharai region in LTTE controlled Batticaloa district. The remaining local residents and the Internally Displaced Persons fled in panic and gathered around the Vaharai Government hospital for protection. No casualties were reported from the bombing.

● Soldiers from the Vavunathivu SLA camp fired mortar and artillery shells on LTTE held areas in Vavunathivu, Batticaloa. SLA spokesperson Prasath Samarasinghe said the attack was retaliation for LTTE artillery fire on Vavunathivu SLA camp during which one SLA trooper was injured. Unconfirmed reports said that a sentry point on the LTTE FDL caught fire in the attack.

● Four SLA troopers were injured in a mortar attack launched by the Liberation Tigers on a SLA sentry post along the western boundary of Vaharai. SLA troops from their camps are continually launching rocket fire on Vaharai areas causing residents to live in fear and anxiety, reports said.

● Unidentified persons triggered a claymore device at Thonikal area in Vavuniya, seriously injuring two police constables in an attack targeting a police road patrol unit.

The police and the SLA conducted a search operation in the area immediately after the attack.

● More than 30 armed men went on motorcycles to M. Raveendran's house at Vasuki Amman Kovilady in Kokuvil and shot and injured his father when he tried to stop them from taking his son away. The injured, S. Ravindran, 40, could not be immediately taken to the hospital due to a SLA imposed curfew.

● Armed men went to the house of V. Kamalanathan, 56, a family

man, in Kokuvil and cut him with swords causing serious injuries.

● Three youths passing by the SLA camp near Kulapitthu junction in Kokuvil were detained by the troopers for interrogation and are reported missing.

● Unidentified persons lobbed a hand grenade on the SLA sentry post near Arasady junction in Nallur, Jaffna. This was followed by indiscriminate gunfire from the SLA camps in Nallur, Kalviyankadu and Thirunelvely but no one was injured.

01 January

● The SLA launched mortar fire from their camps in Kiran, Chenkalady Black Bridge and Vavunathivu towards LTTE held Vavunathivu, Kurinchamunai, Navatkadu, Pankudaveli, Illupayadichenai and Pulipainthakal areas. The SLA said that the attack was in retaliation to earlier LTTE attacks on their camps.

● Three SLA troopers were killed when gunmen exchanged gunfire with SLA foot patrol in Maanaandi Junction in Thikkam, in Vadamaradchi north. The fire fight lasted nearly 45 minutes. Palaly High Command acknowledged the attacks but did not give details of casualties.

● Gunmen in Navindil, near Nelliady Junction along Point Pedro, Jaffna Road, fired at an SLA foot patrol. The fire fight lasted 10 minutes and no casualties were reported. Following the attack, the SLA closed the Jaffna-Point Pedro road for more than two hours and detained fifteen youths for further investigations.

● A SLA soldier was killed and another four injured in a claymore mine attack at Naavalady in the coastal village of Inparuddy in Vadamaradchi north, on the Jaffna peninsula. SLA troopers were on a routine patrol when they were hit by the road side blast. The area was cordoned off and searched by the troopers. Villagers said about 15 youths were arrested by the troops and taken to local SLA camp.

● Armed men attacked police constables in two separate incidents at Poonthotam junction and near the welfare centre in Poonthotam in Vavuniya. Two police constables were injured in the attack near the welfare centre but no one was injured in the attack at Poonthotam junction. Though gun shots were also heard in Kurumankadu area no one was reported hurt.

● Four bullet ridden bodies of abducted civilians were recovered by Police - two in the nearby jungle area and two near the Post Office - in Damana in Amparai district. Unidentified persons abducted 5 civilians from the area Saturday and killed the 4 aged people, leaving only an 18 year old boy. The victims were identified as Ms. M. Kusumavathy, 65, Ms. K. Mallika, 44, T.M. Suthubanda, 60, and A. Karunarathne, 54.

● An employee of the Bugmitiya Post Office was injured and admitted to the Amparai General Hospital when unidentified persons fired at him at Bugmitiya in Damana Police division while he was on his way to work.

NEWS

Violence round up - week ending 31 December

31 December

● Armed men abducted three youths from a house at Kiran in Batticaloa district and shot them dead inside the Christian cemetery on Vishnu Temple road. Valaichenai police recovered the bodies blindfolded and hands tied behind back.

The victims were identified as Veerasingham Senthooan, 22, from Kiran, a student at Batticaloa Technical College, Yoganathan Mayooran, 27, of Vantharumoolai and Namasivayam Puvaneswaran, 24, from Kiran.

Mayooran and Puvaneswaran, both employed in a private insurance company, had come to meet Senthooan at his house from where the armed men abducted the three. Valaichenai Police suspected they were abducted while they were marketing insurance policies.

30 December

● Armed paramilitaries in a white van at 23-year old Perumal Prasanth's house in Nachimar Kovilady in Jaffna and forcibly took Prasanth away in the van.

29 December

● The LTTE launched a counter-attack on a group of paramilitary Karuna Group cadres when the group attempted to launch a penetration attack on a LTTE camp in Kudumbimalai, northwest of Batticaloa.

A wounded paramilitary cadre was captured alive and the dead body of another was recovered by the Tigers. Four Tiger fighters were wounded in the confrontation.

Kudumbimalai, a hat shaped hill, is located in the middle of the large Vadamunai-Tharavai region, northwest of Batticaloa. The paramilitary cadres had entered the LTTE territory to launch an attack on a LTTE camp, while the Sri Lanka Army was providing field artillery support.

● One police constable was killed in accidental gunfire at Kayts Police station. The constable was cleaning his weapon when it accidentally fired, killing the officer identified as Sisira Kumara, 44, from Thangattuwa in Negombo.

● The SLAF, in its latest bombing raids in Vaharai, completely destroyed a water refinery constructed by the UN agencies to remedy the drinking water shortage in the area near Verugal

Murugan temple, charged S. Jeyanandamoorthy, the TNA Parliamentarian from Batticaloa.

In a press communiqué, the MP said: "the bombardment on the water refinery is not only a Ceasefire violation but is a human rights violation and a war crime too."

● Sothilingam Janarthan, 23, disappeared after he left his home in Kasturiar Road to cycle to Jaffna Town on a personal errand. SLA soldiers had arrived at his house on Saturday morning and searched the house, his parents said.

28 December

● The Officer-In-Charge of the Suduvenhapilavu area police station in Vavuniya was shot and seriously injured when gunmen carrying pistols fired at him in close range.

● Two SLA soldiers were killed and three seriously injured when assailants triggered a claymore mine targeting the pickup truck the soldiers were travelling in between Post Office Road and Dutch Road in Chavakachcheri in Thenmaradchy, Jaffna.

● One SLA soldier, deployed on road-side security duty near Madathady junction, along Point Pedro-Jaffna road, and another student passing-by were injured when gunmen riding a motorbike hurled hand grenades at the SLA sentry point. Jeyasingham Ilaventhana, 19, student from Puloly, was injured in the grenade attack.

● A group of armed men forcibly entered a house at Eluthoor area in Mannar town and abducted four Tamil youths.

Two of the abducted were released shortly. The other two were identified as Rasanayagam Jeyasekar, 30, a father of one child and Francis Thurairaj, 26.

Francis Thurairaj is a resident from Kallikattaikadu village and had been staying with his friend Rasanayagam Jeyasekar at that time of incident.

Parents and relatives of the youths lodged complaints with Mannar Police, SLMM, Regional Office of the SLHRC and Mannar Bishop about the abductions.

● The SLA announced the official extension of curfew on Thenmaradchi in Jaffna peninsula until further notice without citing any reason, over its radio at the Palaly Army Head Quarters.

The curfew hours imposed on the rest of the Jaffna peninsula were extended from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Though there are no visible signs of the SLA making



Sri Lankan artillery and jets are systematically hitting Tamil villages in LTTE areas. Photo TamilNet.

any significant movement of troops or vehicles, the sudden extension of curfew on Thenmaradchi has raised residents' suspicion of a major action about to take place on the southern FDL.

27 December

● A policeman was killed when unidentified persons set off a claymore mine targeting a police patrol about 150 metres from the STF camp at Park Road in Vavuniya. STF elite troops rushed to the blast site and searched the area.

● Two SLA troopers from the Kadjuwathe SLA camp were seriously injured when the Liberation Tigers retaliated to the intensive mortar and artillery barrage launched by the SLA from its camps at Mankerny, Kadjuwathe and Valaichenai Paper Factory on Vaharai area in LTTE held territory.

SLA shells fell and exploded in the civilian residential areas of Palchenai, Panichankerny and Kandalady, but no one was hurt.

● Eravur police in Batticaloa district recovered the partly buried body of a man along Kaluvankerny beach on information provided by the local residents. The body was identified as belonging to Kaalikutty Chandrasegaran, 29, a married man from Kaluvankerny, who was reported abducted by armed men on December 8, when he went to a temple in Kaluvankerny.

● The body of a youth was found with gunshot injuries at Varothiyanagar, a suburb in Trincomalee town. His hands were tied from behind. The victim was identified as Mahendran Kiritharan, 17, resided in Palaiyutru and originally from Jaffna.

● Armed men in a van reportedly abducted two Tamil persons, said to be senior operatives of PLOTE, from a house located at Chenaikudiruppu along Puttalam-Anuradhapura Road. One person has been identified as 'Mama'

Pakiyarajah and the other as Karikalan. Abductors were seen armed with T 56 rifles and hand grenades. Their bodies were recovered Friday morning with hands tied behind their backs and gunshot injuries.

● The night watchman at the Pampaimadu, Vavuniya Ayurvedhic Hospital has been reported missing by his relatives. His possessions and motorbike were found intact inside the building by the Police. Somasundaram Sathiyakumar, 42, has been a regular nightwatchman at the site for several years.

● Rasu Sangeethan, 19, a student from Karampan in Jaffna Islets of Kayts, disappeared after he left his house towards Kayts town to buy provisions, his parents said in a complaint at the SLHRC.

26 December

● SLAF Kfir fighter jets bombed Kathiraveli and Palchenai residential areas in Vaharai in LTTE controlled territory and the SLA launched artillery and rocket fire from SLA camps in Mankerny, Kadjuwathe, during a memorial to mark the second anniversary of the 2004 tsunami. Five houses were badly damaged but no one was hurt when shells fell and exploded on residential areas.

● Four civilians, two women and two men employed at a shop, were severely wounded in a grenade attack near a SLA post close to Sathira Junction on Hospital Road in Jaffna town. No

SLA soldier was wounded in the grenade attack amid repeated threats by the SLA troopers to the shop owners in the area, to close down their establishments near the army post.

Medical sources in Jaffna identified the wounded civilians as Alagaratnam Koneswaran, 24, Alagaratnam Muraleeswaran, 26, both brothers from Araly East, employed at a shop in the area, Kandasamy Selvamalar, 66, from Vannarapannai Road and Vigneswaran Jeyasithra, 36, from Hospital Road, Jaffna.

● Five of 19 passengers abducted by Karuna paramilitary cadres from the Saravana Travels private bus on its way from Kathankudy to Colombo on December 20, escaped Monday and surrendered at Eravur police station.

Nagamany Jegatheesan, 31, of Araiampathy, Palipodi Kovinathan, 24, of Puthukudiruppu, Kanthasamy Kannan, 20, of Kokkadicholai, Chellathurai Premalatha, 21, and Aiyathurai Thajeevan, 25, both from Puthukudiruppu surrendered to the police.

All of them were on their way to Colombo on personal errands when abducted. The abductors forced them to leave the bus and took them blindfolded, they said, adding they were not aware of the whereabouts of the other 14 abducted civilians.

● Armed men abducted two youths displaced from Vaharai

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SLAF - Sri Lanka Air Force
SLHRC - Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission
SLMM - Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission
SLN - Sri Lanka Navy
STF - Special Task Force

NEWS



The Jordanian ship that had drifted into LTTE-controlled waters near Mullaitivu remains aground three miles off the shore. The 25-man crew has been released by the LTTE. The Farah III was carrying 14,000 tons of rice from India to South Africa, reports said. It drifted into LTTE-controlled waters after its engines failed. Photo TamilNet

Violence/ Dec 31

Continued from page 12

area, from their relatives house at Union Colony, Valaichenai in Batticaloa district. The two abducted youths were forcibly taken away by the armed men who said the youths have to be interrogated.

N. Tharmalingam, 25 and M. Balendran, 27 were among the civilians displaced from Vaharai because of the continuous shelling on Vaharai by the SLA. The youths were abducted from a house 300 meters from the Valaichenai police station, an area dominated by Karuna paramilitary group which collaborates with the SLA.

● A man was shot dead by unidentified persons in front of Kalaimakal school at Nelukkulam - Cheddikkulam road.

● Kandasamy Sundararasa, 39, and Vettivelu Jeyapalan, 42, two civilians from Thunnalai in Vadamardchy, disappeared while they were riding to Kodikamam on a business errand, their relatives said in a complaint at the SLHRC.

25 December

● SLA authorities in Jaffna said that 6 LTTE members were killed and 9 SLA soldiers were injured, two of them seriously, in clashes at Kakaithivu in Navanthurai, a suburb of Jaffna town. The SLA handed over the bodies of five men to the Jaffna hospital.

Later, the police handed over another body with gun shot injuries. The police said the body was recovered at Aanaikoddai, a village close to Navanthurai. SLA soldiers cordoned off Kakaithivu and thoroughly searched the area. No one was allowed to enter or leave Kakaithivu. It is not known if any arrests were made.

According to SLA officials in Jaffna, the clashes erupted when LTTE members attempted to enter the coastal village of Kakaithivu. The LTTE has not

commented on the incident.

● One police sergeant was killed and three constables were injured when an unidentified person lobbed a grenade on a group of police personnel who were on duty near the Pallimunai St. Lucia Church premises in Mannar district.

Following the explosion people gathered in the church premises had fled from the site as additional police personnel rushed to the scene started firing at random in the area. The dead police constable has been identified as Sergeant Somapala.

● Unidentified men attacked a SLA sentry point located along the Vathiry- Uduppiddy road in Navindil, Vadamardchy Jaffna district, killing one SLA soldier, and seriously injuring another.

The attack which took place in the broad daylight in a densely populated area has shocked the Military command in Jaffna. The attack lasted for more than 20 minutes and the attackers escaped unharmed. The camp was used by the Sea Tigers until 1995 when Jaffna district came under control of the SLA.

● Unidentified persons launched Rocket Propelled Grenades on the office of the Karuna paramilitary group at 15th Colony in Amparai district, completely destroying it. The attackers first lobbed hand grenades and then fired RPGs.

● Armed men called a woman from her house at Akkaraipattu in Amparai district and shot her dead on the spot. The armed men had come looking for the victim's 25 year old son and had killed the mother when they couldn't find the son. The dead woman was identified as Pathmasiri Leelawathy, 48 of Amparai Road at Akkaraipattu.

● Two youths from Ariyalai area, Sri Ayanthan, 22, and Rasenthiram Thevaseelan, 25 were found missing from Ariyalai, Jaffna. They are believed to have been abducted by either the SLA or paramilitaries working with the SLA.

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Sri Lankan soldiers parade in front of newly acquired armoured vehicles. Analysts expect a major war soon. story p2, opinion p10. Photo Sanka Vidanagama/AFP/GettyImages



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