

## Sri Lanka's cycle of oppression and resistance continues.

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### Invitations to explore for oil in Mannar

India, China and British Gas interested

SRI LANKA has given one of eight blocks to explore for oil in Mannar to India and another to China and is planning to allocate the rest of the six blocks in three months.

Colombo has already sold two sets of the available data to India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and British Gas.

"Out of eight blocks, we have offered one to India, one to China. Both the blocks are in Mannar, closer to Kaveri basin," Sri Lanka's Petroleum Resources Minister, A H M Fowzie said.

Norway-based TGS Nopek had conducted seismic surveys which have revealed the possibility of oil deposits off Sri Lanka, mainly in Mannar Basin.

"Earlier, TGS Nopek was asked to do all things. But, there was a change in our policy and we bought the data for 10.5 million dollars and gave it to Australia's spectrum. We are at an infant stage and need to put up infrastructure and human resources," Fowzie said.

Fowzie said Colombo was mulling expanding its single refinery's capacity to 100,000 barrels per day from the present 50,000 barrels.

The state-owned Daily News paper Saturday hailed the moves as auguring well for Sri Lanka's fortunes.

"It is too early to predict the quantity of oil that can ultimately be extracted from the deposits available around Sri Lanka, but it would not be churlish to speak of an economic and social revolution," the paper's editorial said.

"Just one look at the Middle East is enough to convince even the most hardened sceptic of the power of oil. Even the Western industrial nations are at their mercy."



Sri Lankan troops stop and search civilians in the northern town of Vavuniya. Harassment of Tamils by the overwhelmingly Sinhala security forces is rapidly increasing in government controlled parts of the Northeast and in Colombo. Photo T. Vivekarasa/AFP/Getty Images

## Sri Lanka to continue war against Tigers

EMBOLDENED by the Liberation Tigers' withdrawal from the Vaharai region last week, Sri Lanka's hardline government vowed to eradicate the LTTE and suggested the movement sues for peace.

Late last week, the LTTE pulled out of the besieged Vaharai

enclave, having held out against a Sri Lankan onslaught for five months.

Sri Lankan troops moved into Vaharai as LTTE fighters retreated from the enclave into the sprawling Batticaloa hinterland, including the Toppigala jungles where major LTTE camps are

based.

The LTTE withdrawal averted a bloody battle for the small strip of land hemmed in by the Indian ocean on one side and a lagoon on the other.

Had a major confrontation taken place, there is little doubt there would have been severe

civilian casualties, the BBC reported.

This Monday the Sri Lankan government vowed to continue its offensives which began mid-2006 and to drive the Tigers out of the rest of their controlled areas in the east.

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## FEATURES

# Statistics mask economic crisis

**Economist column**  
Sunday Times

PRONOUNCEMENTS about the high rate of economic growth in 2006 and predictions of even a higher growth rate for 2007 confuse most Sri Lankans. The realities they face do not indicate an improvement in their living conditions.

In fact they are facing one of the severest erosions in their incomes at the same time they listen to the assertion of a high economic growth. Some may well ask 'what is the use of economic growth if it does not benefit us?' Others may well ask who benefits from this growth.' Still others may say, 'statistics statistics and more statistics- damn lies'.

Economists, who do not like to displease the powers that be for whatever reasons, even explain the twin phenomenon of a high growth rate and high rate of inflation as being not inconsistent.

They cite the experience in the 1980's when the economy reached the all time record growth of just over 8 per cent with a rate of inflation of 20 per cent as evidence of this.

The implication is that we are going through an economic growth experience of a similar sort and that inflation should be endured in the interests of economic growth.

Plainly, they imply that inflation has been generated by the growth momentum.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The comparison of the growth cum inflation experience in the 1980's with that of today is unwarranted.

Paradoxically it is useful in understanding the underlying factors determining growth and inflation during the two periods. The comparison is misleading, as they are contrasting scenarios and

causes for a similar result.

In 1983 the economy grew at over 8 per cent, while inflation rose to 20 per cent for the same year.

One economist pointed out at that time that the rate of inflation during this period was understated by the indices used and demonstrated that in fact inflation was around 26 per cent in 1983 rather than the official count.

He demonstrated that basic items such as food and medicines were among those whose prices increased highest and therefore by implication inflation hit the poor worst.

This is the current experience as well.

The causes for the high rate of inflation then and now are however widely different.

In the 1980's inflation was caused by what economists call "overheating" of the economy.

There was a huge thrust in investment, particularly in infrastructure, that would yield returns in the long run rather than produce results immediately. Such large expenditure was inflationary in the short run.

They were justified in the long-run interests of the economy though some economists, such as those of the IMF, argued that stabilisation measures were needed to ensure that long term growth was not adversely affected.

The large investments were mostly financed through foreign funds though there was large counterpart funding as well.

The inflow of foreign funds that are converted to rupees, as well as the deficit financing of the government, led to huge increases in the money supply that fuelled inflation.

Therefore one might say that what was a good development for



the economy in the long run had rather distressing effects in the short run and particularly on the sections of the middle classes, fixed wage earners and the poor that were particularly hard hit.

The current situation and developments are qualitatively very different. The causes for inflation are high prices for oil, large subsidies to corporations, increased expenditure on salaries and the huge cost of the war.

The trade deficit and the consequent strain on the balance of payments is depreciating the rupee and thereby increasing the cost of imports.

In summary both the fiscal deficit and the trade deficit are having an inflationary impact though in different ways.

There are also other proximate factors that account for high prices of food, an important component of the cost of living.

These are the rains, floods and landslides that have reduced production, as well as disrupted transport of produce.

These are to some extent tem-

porary though there is a tendency when prices rise, they do not come down to the earlier levels when the immediate causes are removed.

The salient contrast in the two experiences of growth and inflation in the 1980's and now is that the former was brought about by mainly large productive investments that overheated the economy, while the current inflation has been brought about by high oil prices, large subsidies, war expenditure and the depreciating currency.

The growth statistic itself is misleading. The 6 to 7 per cent growth includes a high proportion of growth that is the resultant of increased government expenditure on services such as defence, increased expenditure on security services, increased employment in the public services and increased salaries and welfare expenditures.

The convention in the compilation of national accounts is such that the value of output of these services is computed as being the

value of the expenditure on them.

Additionally, there is a growing scepticism about the veracity of the GDP statistics. Are the figures massaged to give a higher growth figure?

The nature of the Sri Lankan economy and the manner in which the statistics are compiled permit a high degree of kneading production statistics. It is known to have been done before. Is it being done now?

There are many reasons why the commonsense view that all is not well with the economy is buttressed by hard statistics.

The large fiscal deficit reaching double digit proportions, even the official price statistics indicating a 19 per cent rate of current inflation, a trade deficit that is likely to be the highest ever of over US\$ 3000 million and the continuing depreciation of the currency are clear indicators of a deepening crisis.

Hiding behind a dubious high rate of economic growth is a dangerous course for the country.

**Rajapakse Presidency, p8-9**

## Bribes costs Sri Lanka a billion dollars a year

**Mel Gunasekera**  
AFP

KICK-BACKS and crooked deals cost Sri Lanka over a billion dollars last year amounting to about a fifth of tax revenue, the country's top official whistle-blower told AFP in an interview.

The head of the parliamentary Committee on Public Enterprises, or COPE, told AFP corruption and fraud runs deep in the main foreign investment promotion body and a state-agency involved in privatisation.

COPE, which last year probed 26 of the 210 state enterprises, found fault with Sri Lanka's Central Bank too for not monitoring financial institutions properly

and failing to recover large amounts due to the state.

"As a result of these inefficiencies and corrupt deals, we estimate Sri Lanka may have lost in excess of 100 billion rupees (one billion dollars) last year alone," Legislator Wijeyadasa Rajapakse said Monday.

The loss is about a fifth of government revenue and amounts to about four percent of the 24-billion dollar economy.

He said he had discovered that the Board of Investment (BOI) operated without a business plan and maintained records in an ad-hoc fashion.

"It was shocking discovery to all of us. The BOI is such an important institution and the main agency to attract foreign investments to our country," said Rajapakse, who is also a ruling

party law-maker.

The BOI attempted to mislead parliament by submitting a "false document" under the pretext that it was their corporate plan, he said.

Sri Lanka, is hoping to attract a billion dollars in investments this year, after securing 600 million dollars last year.

But Rajapakse expressed doubts over the figures quoted and the manner in which investments are secured by the BOI.

"We are not attracting top world-class companies, but people to open Chinese restaurants, massage parlours and karaoke clubs under the BOI banner. It's an insult to our country," he charged.

According to COPE figures, BOI approved more than 2,800 firms to operate over the past 28

years, of which it had cancelled around 1,100 licenses.

"There's no excuses for the BOI, they are thoroughly incompetent. If these tax breaks and concessions are given to local entrepreneurs they can do better."

Rajapakse pulled up the Central Bank for not taking action against illegal finance companies.

"We estimate over 20 finance companies are now illegally operating without a license, and the bank must take steps to stop it," he said.

Privatisation of state assets had also failed to reap benefits though around 60 organisations were sold, generating over 65 million dollars in revenue, he added.

"Privatisation has been stopped now, but what was done hardly brought in money to pay

for five months of interest payments on our loans."

He also found fault with the island's main child protection agency saying it had not utilised foreign aid properly to help children.

The auditor-general last year found that only 13 percent of the 3.2 billion dollars in aid international donors had pledged to support Sri Lanka's tsunami recovery in December 2004 had been utilised.

COPE also called for the replacement of the head of the Institute for Policy Studies, the country's top economic think-tank, who is seriously ill.

"I personally represented him as a lawyer in a case where we proved that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and dementia," Rajapakse said.



## NEWS

# Sri Lanka to continue...

*Continued from page 1*

"The people of Vaharai have been liberated from the clutches of the terrorists," defence spokesman and government minister Keheliya Rambukwella said.

"Toppigala is a bit of a volatile area, which runs the risk of [our] forces being attacked from time to time, so we will have to eliminate that risk as well," he told Reuters.

"If tomorrow the LTTE says 'we are ready to stop hostilities and get back to the negotiating table', we will stop immediately," he added.

"If they do not, then we'll have to liberate the Tamil civilians in the east and then call (the Tigers) for negotiations."

They Tigers warned that their withdrawal in recent months from sprawling parts of the eastern province did not constitute a weakening of their striking capability.

"In the east, there is always a balance between possession of territory and fighting ability, and it may constantly change," Tiger military spokesman Rasiah Ilantiraiyan told Reuters.

"In the context of what they have done with the ceasefire

agreement, the Sri Lankan government has a big way to go to prove their commitment to any kind of negotiated settlement," he said.

Yoko Akasaka, the head of the UNHCR field office in Batticaloa town, said the civilians had started fleeing from Vaharai and moving south to Batticaloa early on Friday morning last week.

"By the time they arrived in the government-controlled towns of Mankerny, Singhapura and Ridithenna [in Batticaloa district] they were starving and exhausted," she added.

They newly displaced joining several thousand others who had already fled a few weeks ago to escape the military's indiscriminate bombardment of the blockaded LTTE-held region.

Dr. T Varatharajah, Medical Officer At Vakarai government hospital, told the BBC that he was the last civilian to leave the former LTTE-held territory.

In the wake of sustained fighting for many months, international truce monitors say the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) now holds only on paper.

Many Sri Lankan analysts hailed the capture of Vaharai, which Sri Lankan government



**Sri Lankan troops examine a bridge to Vaharai blown up by the LTTE to slow the military advance.**

said was a 'strategic' victory.

"The success in Vaharai is historic because it helps achieve on the ground, that which the Supreme Court did in law: the liberation of the arable East, with its rice fields, from the grip of the Tamil Eelam project," wrote Dayan Jayatilke.

"The success in Vaharai is further proof that President Rajapakse is a leader worthy of support."

But other analysts, whilst noting that the LTTE's loss of access

to the coast was a setback and victory for the Sri Lankan armed forces, said the LTTE's military capacity was largely intact, albeit concentrated in the north.

"The capture of Vakarai may not be strategically important in military terms, but it is likely to give a much-needed psychological boost to the security forces, still reeling from a deadly suicide attack on a convoy of naval sailors last year," Ethirajan Anbarasan of the BBC Tamil service says.

Seasoned observers say that the Tigers are known for their resilience and that they will come back with some spectacular counter strikes elsewhere, he said.

"As most of their elite fighting units and weapons intact, they are not going to lie low for long."

Some analysts said the capture of the A15 coastal road which runs from Trincomalee to Batticaloa town through Vaharai would prevent the LTTE from reinforcing its units in the Thoppigala jungles.

## What does Sri Lanka's Army gain from Vakarai?

A Sinhala nationalist newspaper questions the purpose of capturing a tiny town that most Sri Lankans had never heard of before.

### Defence Correspondent The Island

AS the long drawn out battle for Vakarai comes to a close, both the armed forces and the LTTE, as well as the entire nation, are wondering where the next battlefield will be opened.

For nearly six months, Vakarai, a tiny town that most Sri Lankans had never heard of before, held centre stage in the country's civil war.

Now, with the armed forces finally taking control of the Vakarai area, the Army needs to plan its next strategy.

Although operations will continue in the Vakarai region to weed out the LTTE cadres remaining there, and to gain greater control of this border area between the Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Polonnaruwa districts, the Army should not squander its valuable resources there any more, but should move to the Northern Province and take the battle to the Tigers.

The Army's top brass should

be mindful that they are not diverted towards purely political targets, rather than areas that are more important militarily. The short history of Eelam War IV has unfortunately been driven by political objectives, rather than military ones.

The operation to re-take the Mavil Aru Anicut in mid 2006 was almost purely political. Almost no one had heard of this area before.

But when the leadership of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) made it a cause celebre by threatening to march there, the government ordered the Army to re-take it, which would stop the JHU from making political capital out of the situation.

The next operation, the capture of Sampur, was again mostly politically motivated in order to secure Muttur town and stop the Tigers from shelling Trincomalee.

After all, it was the Army itself that had watched idly as the

Tigers set up new camps in the area during the ceasefire, and then gone to the extent of supporting the UNP government's denial that such camps existed.

Even when media personnel who revealed the existence of these camps came under threat from the UNP regime, the Army's top brass did not say a word.

The operation to re-capture the area was the unfortunate need of playing politics earlier during the UNP regime's time in office.

The next operation, a disastrous attempt to retake the entire Jaffna Peninsula by attacking Muhamalai, was again politically motivated. The Army's top brass simply wanted to hand the government a significant victory on the eve of the next round of peace talks. In the end, this failed.

So far, although both the armed forces and the LTTE have lost thousands of soldiers and cadres killed and wounded during the fighting over the last year, little of major strategic value has been gained or lost.

True, the LTTE has lost control of much of the East now. But this was expected no sooner its Eastern Commander, Col. Karuna, defected and threw his support behind the Army.

For the LTTE to have continued controlling Vakarai would not have been a major victory in strategic terms. It is neither here

nor there. Vakarai is not Batticaloa or Trincomalee or Vavuniya or Mannar or Jaffna.

The same applies to the armed forces. Capturing Vakarai is not an end. Vakarai is not Kilinochchi, or Mullaitivu. To be sure it was a victory. But in the long history of Sri Lanka's civil war, it is a minor victory. The major battles remain to be fought in the North.

Previously, few outside the Batticaloa district had been to Vakarai, which is a town on the rarely-travelled route between Batticaloa and Trincomalee.

Vakarai had been under government control until 1997, when the Army camp there was closed down in order that its troops could be shifted to the Northern Province, where the ill-fated Operation Jaya Sikurui was in progress.

Vakarai and a string of small camps had been protecting the earlier UNP government's determined effort to control the East.

Many small camps, Vakarai among them, with thousands of soldiers manning them were closed down, as then Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte threw more and more troops into the futile attempt to force the roadway to Jaffna.

Ratwatte was willing to cede this area to the LTTE, since there are no major towns on this route.

When the troops vacated the area, the LTTE moved in with a small group of cadres and took control.

The road to Trincomalee continued to be used by civilians, including a bus service, with vehicles crossing through the Army's checkpoint and then the LTTE's checkpoint, and vice versa on the Muttur side after crossing the Mahaweli River at Verugal.

The road was closed down from time to time when there were clashes between LTTE cadres and troops. But for the most part it remained open.

This situation changed when the LTTE closed the Mavil Aru Anicut last May, forcing the government to launch an offensive to retake the anicut.

The crossing point was then closed since Vakarai became the southern front of the Mavil Aru battle. This worsened when the Tigers attacked Muttur, and the Army after forcing them out of Muttur town, continued on to capture Sampur.

Wherever the Army chooses to strike next, the choice must be made both carefully and swiftly. A wrong decision would doom the country to a long drawn conflict. A slow decision will allow the Tigers to regroup and re-arm. The decision is now.

*(Edited)*

## FEATURE

# Cleansing the east of Tamils

Sri Lanka is changing the demographics of the east - with international assistance.

Vidya Kumaraswamy

Tamil Guardian

AS HE PROMISED earlier this month, Sri Lanka's military Chief General Sarath Fonseka has successfully captured LTTE controlled Vakarai and established a secure military hold over a large chunk of contiguous territory in the eastern province.

With Vakarai in military hands the land from Trincomalee down to the Verugal river is now officially 'cleared.' At least for now.

Although President Rajapakse has presented his latest military victory as part of a second 'war for peace,' Sinhala Buddhists will see the capture of Vakarai as the unfolding of a larger and more important story.

The recent military adventure is simply the latest phase of a Sinhala Buddhist project to reclaim the northeast as part of a mythical Sinhala civilization 'lost' to recurrent Tamil invasions.

The strategic importance of recent offensives in the east has to be set against the backdrop of President Rajapakse's decision to support the demerger of the Northeast province.

The 1987 Indo - Sri Lanka Accord recognised the merged Northeast province as 'historic habitation of the Tamil -speaking peoples.' It was incorporated as the thirteenth amendment of the Sri Lankan constitution.

A further measure of contemporary recognition was also given through the now infamous 'Oslo Declaration' of 2002 that again recognised the northeast as the Tamils' historic habitation whilst suggesting federalism as a possible solution to the conflict.

By sanctioning the demerger in 2006 the Rajapakse government has removed the only clause in the Sri Lankan constitution that recognised the Tamils as a distinct people with a historical right to exist on the island as a culturally and politically cohesive group.

With the demerger in place, the Tamils are once again reduced to a minority whose claim to political and economic rights must always be at the sufferance of the Sinhala Buddhist majority, the 'rightful owners' of the island.

In the mythology of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, the Buddha himself dedicated the entire island to the Sinhala people and Buddhist faith, thus sealing the holy trinity of race, land and faith.

From the late nineteenth century Sinhalese politicians have embraced the ideology of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as articles of faith and have sought in different ways to reclaim the island as a pure Sinhala Buddhist land.

During the 1920's and 1930's as the British slowly handed control of the island over to majority rule, Sinhala politicians used their new found power to pursue an aggressive policy of colonising

the northeastern Tamil areas of the island with settlers from the Kandyan and southwestern regions of the island.

While the policy was justified in reference to the high levels of landlessness amongst Sinhalese peasants, Tamil politicians complained of discrimination against landless Tamils and argued that the real intention was to change the demography of the Tamil speaking areas.

Census figures bear out early Tamil fears that colonisation schemes were leading to massive demographic change.

In the strategically and culturally important Trincomalee district alone the percentage of Sinhalese rose from 4.4 per cent to 33.6 per cent between 1921 and 1981 while in the same period the proportion of Tamils in the population dropped from 53.1 per cent to just 33.7 per cent.

Sinhala leaders who championed the colonisation schemes projected themselves in the image of Buddhist kings reclaiming an ancient civilisation that had been lost to Tamil invaders.

Despite his anglicised manners and appearance, D. S. Senanayake, Ceylon's first prime minister was not averse to reveling in the glory of his allegedly ancient and Aryan Sinhala heritage.

Claiming to be the direct descendant of the mythical king Duttugemunu, who vanquished the aged Elara, the Tamil king from the north, Senanayake made colonisation of one of the central policies of his government.

Although colonisation was justified as necessary to relieve landless and increase food production World Bank reports from the 1950's and 60's argued that the schemes gave very low returns on investments.

However, as the development economist Mick Moore has argued the land policies 'and the ideologies which support it, have in general focussed much more on the control of land than on the cultivation or use of land.'

As the rate of demographic change increased Tamil leaders demanded that a self governing Tamil unit in the northeast was needed to protect the economic and political viability of the Tamil - speaking peoples as distinct political entity.

Pacts negotiated by the Tamil leader S. J. V Chelvanayagam in 1956 and 1961 with Sinhala prime ministers recognised the Tamil claim on the northeast.

But these pacts were abrogated and Sinhala colonisation continued unabated.

The population change in the eastern districts was so massive that in the thirty years from 1946 the Sinhalese population in the

colonisation areas grew from 19 per cent of the population to a staggering 83 per cent.

The rate of growth was so great that in 1959 the Amparai electoral district with a 91 per cent Sinhalese population was carved out of the previously Tamil majority eastern province.

The 1977 electoral victory of the right wing and pro-western United National Party (UNP) gave a renewed momentum to the demographic cleansing of the northeast.

Backed by massive funding from western donors, the UNP government embarked on an

Plan Implementation, that oversaw the new colonisation schemes stated that the developments bore 'testimony to the glorious past of the Sinhalese Buddhist civilization of Sri Lanka.'

The leaflet went on to describe the ideal Sinhala Buddhist society that would be created with internationally funded government aid.

"The Mahaweli authorities will not only lead the settlers towards material prosperity, but also provide them with spiritual guidance to make them morally upright. On Poya Days every family has been advised to go to temple, offer flowers, perform other rites, listen to sermons and observe sil (Buddhist precepts)."

While the government was busy consolidating the Sinhala Buddhist hold on the northeast, voluntary efforts to resettle Tamils displaced by the state aided anti Tamil pogroms of the

burnt crops.

Dr. Rajasunderam, Gandhyan's organising secretary was arrested along with the president Mr. S. A. David. Both were subjected to physical torture as well as cruel and sadistic treatment.

The Tamils' claim on their homeland was finally recognised through the 1987 Indo - Sri Lanka Accord.

Once this recognition was incorporated into the Sri Lankan constitution it provided a measure of legal protection to the political and physical integrity of the Tamil - speaking peoples.

Although these legal measures have not protected the Tamils from Sri Lankan military onslaughts they have undermined the political viability of further demographic change by recognising a collective Tamil claim on the northeast.

As a consequence, since the late 1980's, when the Indo - Sri Lanka Accord was incorporated into the Sri Lankan constitution, there have been no new large scale government sponsored colonisation schemes in the northeast - although illegal encroachments have continued unabated, assisted by military operations.

Now, with the demerger in place, the government will once again pick up the pace of colonisation schemes.

The military campaign in the east has already displaced 72,000, mainly Tamil civilians.

Whilst most of the Sinhalese and Muslim civilians who had been displaced by fighting around Mutur in April 2006 have been resettled, the Tamil civilians cleared out of Sampoor, Eachilampatu and now Vakarai are unlikely to return to their homes in the near future.

As in previous pre-colonisation clearances, displaced Tamil civilians will be maintained in refugee camps and made dependent on government handouts while their fields and homes are handed over to armed Sinhala colonists.

The international community, which remained silent whilst civilians were being bombarded in Vaharai and Sampoor, will now mobilise to build camps to intern displaced Tamils in government - controlled areas.

Thus, once again, the international community and the aid agencies will be complicit in ethnically cleansing the Tamils from their homeland.

In the coming months the Rajapakse government's military and political efforts to dilute the Tamils' presence in their historic homelands will unfold.

As the international community connives in these efforts the Tamils must once again ask themselves what or who will guarantee their right to exist with dignity as a people in lands of their ancestors.



ambitious programme to further extend existing irrigation and colonisation schemes.

Through projects such as the World Bank funded Mahaveli diversion and the Canadian assisted Madhura Oya irrigation plan over 390,000 acres of new land was irrigated, mainly in the eastern province and over 140,000 families were settled.

Although the massive foreign funding for the schemes was secured using the rhetoric of liberal economics, the local propaganda made it clear that Sinhalese Buddhists were yet again the intended beneficiaries of the schemes.

A leaflet from the Ministry of

UNP era were violently disrupted.

For example, between 1977 and 1981, Gandhyan a Tamil run voluntary organisation resettled 85,000 Tamil civilians displaced from the Hill Country in the Tamil majority Vavuniya district.

As the small co-operative farms created by Gandhyan flourished, government ministers began claiming that the settlements were hiding terrorists and helping to consolidate the Tamils' claim on their homeland.

The security forces began harassing the settlements and eventually in April 1983 a joint police and army operation raided the offices of Gandhyan, arrested staff, seized documents, destroyed farm buildings and

## NEWS



# Suffering and fear on the road to Vaharai

FOLLOWING Sri Lanka's Army Commander Lt. Gen Sarath Fonseka's assertion early January that the military will evict the Liberation Tigers from the East in the next two months, the Army has intensified shelling and artillery attacks against Tamil population centres.

The people originally from the embattled Vaharai region and residents from the neighboring Trincomalee district who fled into Vaharai, swelling the Internally Displaced People (IDP) population, express fear and uncertainty about their future.

"I have been running from place to place for the last four months to escape shelling and Kfir attacks by the Sri Lankan Forces. The international community should do something to save our lives," an internally displaced woman in Vaharai told TamilNet.

"I am from Senaiyur in Trincomalee district and due to the heavy shelling and aerial attacks I first fled to Ilakkannthai and then to Mugaththuwaram. Later, we were compelled to move to Verugal from where moved to Vaharai unable to stand the artillery attacks and Kfir jet bombings.

"The Government that made us displaced, wanted us to move out of Vaharai, but some of us opted to remain here. We face severe shortage of basic essentials. It is very difficult to obtain enough rice, good vegetables and even salt for rice."

"Kfir jets bombed Verugal Temple and destroyed the water sanitation system built by UN agency and thus depriving the people drinking water facility. The people of the area are now

compelled to drink the salinated water once again," another person said.

Another displaced person, Kannappa Sivapakkiyam explained her difficulties: "my hearing ability has been severely impaired due to the continuing artillery and shell attacks. I am scared very much. I have little food and water. I was staying at Palchenai Refugee camp and then fled towards Vaharai hospital to escape shelling. A young boy helped me to come here, as I am unfamiliar to this area. The doctor at Vaharai hospital helped me a lot."

"Please stop the shelling at all costs. I cannot bear this any more. I wish that the New Year will solve our problems and bring us prosperity. I have been displaced several times since 1983 and I cannot move anymore."

A displaced mother, Mrs. Rasa said: "We were running away to escape from the falling shells and bombs. We lie on the ground each time a shell fell. Even though we managed to reach the school building, the shells continued to fall, killing and injuring many people.

"We could not come along Nallur road and we managed to reach Mugaththuwaram. The shelling continued there too, and a fences began burning all around. I prayed as I fled with my child to Vammivedduvan and then to Kandalady as shells continued to fall.

"When shells started raining, I was at the mouth of a bunker and my child was inside. When a shell exploded near me, I was thrown a few meters away. My son shouted my name in panic. I could not see

and hear for a while, and when I regained sight and hearing later, I could hear the sound of more shells. I am a person not frightened easily, but that day we hid in the bunker for the whole day. As soon as shelling stopped, we came to Vaharai."

"The education of the children is suffering. The Grade 5 Scholarship national examination was scheduled on 4 December. However, two days before, Kfir jets started the bombing raids. The Army closed the A-15 road on the day of the exam and the children and teachers waited until 1:00 p.m. for the question paper to arrive."

"I could not stay at home leaving my child at the school out of fear of shelling. The children took cover along the walls of the school building. Teachers asked me why I had come to the school. How could I stay home, leaving my only child at the school?"

"The Government did not send the question papers saying that there were clashes in Vaharai. I was very keen on my child's education right from the nursery class.

"I have seen Sri Lanka's President Rajapakse with his three children on the TV. They all are grown-up children. I thought the President, being the parent of those children, would understand how another parent would feel for the children.

"Mahinda and [Defence spokesman] Rambukwella, who are dropping bombs and shells on us, should come here and stay here for some time. Then only they would understand what pain is, suffering is and fear is."

**Editorial, p6**

## Unfolding misery

A serious shortage of food, drinking water, accommodation, sanitation and toilet facilities

TamilNet

MORE than 72,000 Tamil civilians internally displaced due to the military confrontations in the East, residing in 50 temporary camps in Batticaloa district are facing serious shortage of food, accommodation, drinking water, sanitation and toilet facilities.

People in both Tamil Tiger (LTTE) and Sri Lankan government (GoSL) controlled areas are affected, according to Batticaloa District Secretariat.

The major clashes in Muttur east last August, followed by the battle for Sampoor, and most recently Vaharai clashes have resulted in the massive displacement.

The 72,000 internally displaced people in the Batticaloa district are amongst over 200,000 displaced across the Northeast.

Following the Army (SLA) offensives and aerial bombings by Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF) in July and August, more than 40,000 people from the LTTE controlled Muttur East area in Trincomalee district fled to Vaharai in LTTE controlled Batticaloa district.

During the later battle for Sampoor in November 2006, the Batticaloa District Secretariat reported almost 42,000 people from the Trincomalee district and 30,630 people from northern Batticaloa have fled SLA shelling to government-controlled areas in the Batticaloa district.

These IDPs are sheltered in 22 temporary locations in 14 Grama Seveka (GS) divisions in Batticaloa district.

Last week another 10,000 people fled Vaharai town and hospital amid SLA shelling, swelling the IDP population in other areas of Batticaloa.

The stormy weather had added to people's misery.

Amid torrential rains, strong winds have blown the roofs off six of the toilets constructed at the Kurukkalmadam camp in Manmunai Theneruvil Pattu regional secretary division.

Twenty five tents in the camp collapsed and six civilians residing in the camp afflicted by water-related disease have been

admitted in Kaluvanchikudy hospital.

The camp houses 652 civilians belonging to 188 families, include 68 expectant mothers, 61 nursing mothers and 25 infants.

Acting on complaints that worm-infested food being served to the residents of this camp, Mr. Gopalapillai, the regional secretary visited the camp, and after discussing with the Sri Lankan officer in charge, instructed that in future food should not served without the permission of public health officials.

Commenting on the situation prevailing at this camp, S. Krishnakumar, health officer of Kaluvanchikudy area said that clustering of large number of tents is the root cause for the problems involving sanitation, drinking water supply and toilet facilities.

He says the problem could only be alleviated transferring some of the residents of the camp either to Mahiloor or to a new camp currently being constructed in Kaluvanchikudy.

Acting on the suggestion of Mr. Krishnakumar, Batticaloa district Government Agent (GA), Suntharam Arumainayagam, instructed the regional secretary to take immediate steps to transfer 50 families to Kaluvanchikudy.

The GA also said he will also take the necessary steps to transfer a Grama Seveka (senior local civil servant) from the area.

According to Mr. Arumainayagam, 21000 families (72,000 people) reside in 50 camps in Batticaloa District.

Asked about the number of internally displaced people in Batticaloa district, GA said a total of 18176 families are residing in both the Government controlled areas and in LTTE-controlled areas in the following camps at the various locations: Kaluvanchikudy, Araiampathy, Vaharai, Valaichenai, Manmunai North, Kiran and Chenkalady.

The GA assured that he has discussed with various non governmental Organizations (NGOs) regarding accommodation issues and matters related to providing adequate sanitation and toilet facilities for the displaced.

**More war, p1**

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## EDITORIAL &amp; OPINION

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## Ceaseless Dynamic

## Sri Lanka's cycle of oppression and resistance continues.

The Liberation Tigers' withdrawal last week from the Vaharai enclave has averted an imminent blood bath amongst the 15,000 Tamil civilians trapped in the area. The Sri Lankan military occupied the enclave and, by all accounts, moved into the area around the Verugal river over the weekend. Hailing the capture of this fertile backwater as a major victory, the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse makes no secret it intends to escalate its military onslaught. The euphoria amongst (the burgeoning ranks of) the Sinhala nationalists and the tub thumping in the south has reached fever pitch. Some seasoned observers of Sri Lanka's conflict - including a few self-described opponents of the LTTE - are urging caution, either suggesting the Tigers' recent withdrawals ahead of government offensives are tactical or pointing out that the LTTE's multifaceted war machine is very much untouched. But leading Sinhala thinkers, adamant the 'ancient enemy' is hopelessly weak, are shrilly calling for total war. We opt to leave such analysis (and speculation that passes for it) to others. However, the contemporary trajectories confronting the Tamil people deserve comment.

The Sinhala oppression which (eventually) triggered Tamil demands for autonomy erupted soon after Ceylon gained independence from Britain. Tamils' peaceful political agitation for equal rights was met with rising Sinhala violence, prompting our demands for federalism and, finally, independence. Our enemy, in all that time, has been the same: the Sinhala chauvinism which captured Sri Lanka's state and polity after the British left. We return to these familiar arguments for a reason: to put contemporary developments in perspective. President Rajapakse's administration is, at its core, no different from any before it, just bolder and cruder. The mindset of the Sinhala leadership has been unaffected by sixty years of Tamil agitation, and communal strife or by thirty years of bloody war. Decades of 'globalisation' and self-government have failed to divest the Sinhala body polity of its identity insecurities.

This is why Sri Lanka is still embroiled in ethnic war. It is only by annihilating the Tamil identity, occupying and dismembering the Tamil homeland and scattering our people that the Sinhala polity can find security and 'peace.' Which is why the Sinhala leadership cannot compromise politically. Even when it has offered a

solution, it has abrogated its pacts and accords or destroyed them through bureaucratic sabotage. The Tamils on the other hand, are exasperatingly not reconciled to servitude. Political independence is more than a right. It is not only the sole guarantee of our security against the vagaries of Sinhala anxiety. It has also become the form by which justice can be attained for the increasing deprivations visited on our people by every Sinhala leadership since 1948.

The Norwegian peace process of 2002 held such promise initially because, for once, it seemed the Sinhala leadership had abandoned its efforts to eradicate our identity. But history has proven that Colombo's commitment to accommodation and equality of peoples was a mirage. And now President Rajapakse's administration has brought into relief the ceaseless dynamic between the Sinhala and Tamil body polities: the former seeks to crush the latter; the latter seeks to separate from the former. It was not some new found enlightenment but war weariness that compelled Sri Lanka's leaders to pursue the peace process. But the objective of the peace process was not power-sharing. Rather, the objective was to undermine and dismantle the Tamil struggle through means other than war. They were still committed to Sinhala hegemony. The effort failed however and, once again, the southern leadership has opted for war.

The point is that the entire post-independence history of the Tamils is one of intensifying resistance to rising Sinhala oppression. In that struggle, we have always been, at face value, the weaker protagonists. The Sinhalese have always had control of the state and all that entails. They have always had international allies supplying arms and money under the rubric of 'fighting terrorism.' The state has always had more firepower, securing ever more powerful weapons when those already accumulated proved insufficient. The present is no different. Sri Lanka's new leaders have decisively abandoned the path of peace, confident, as their predecessors were, that at last the Tamil challenge can be smashed. But never has the relative advantage of the state over the Tamils been smaller.

Once again, Sinhala leaders are offering us a choice: enduring the deprivations of their total war or acceptance of their hegemony. But that decision was made so long ago.

## How war became possible

The ferocious war being thrust upon the Tamils not is not the result of a series of unfortunate and unforeseen events, but deliberate policy.

Jana Nayagam  
Tamil Guardian

ONE year after he came to power, Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse can be justifiably pleased with himself. He is well on his way to executing his stated vision and delivering on his election pledges to the Sinhala heartland.

Rajapakse never made any secret of his intents. In fact he laid out its broad contours in his election manifesto, 'Mahinda Chinthana,' and openly declared his views later.

Sri Lanka's stuttering peace process was a 'short sighted' project implemented in 'haste' he said. The 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) and the international monitoring mechanism would be 'reviewed' if he won. The interventions of the Co-chair's (the US, UK, Japan and Norway) would be restricted whilst greater 'cooperation' would be sought with China, Russia and Pakistan.

As far as solving the decades long conflict, his administration would reverse the sellout of his predecessors and ensure the undivided (read unitary) state stood.

Any solution would not be 'trapped' within concepts of a Tamil homeland or self-determination, he warned.

But he would come up with a solution. But only after (read if) it received a 'majority consensus' - shorthand for approval of the Sinhalese majority.

He insisted he was for peace, naturally. But he also set time-frames for the LTTE to 'renounce separatism, demilitarize (read disarm), enter into the democratic process and discussion of a final solution and implementation such a solution.'

Early into his tenure the LTTE, as expected, rejected any negotiations based on a 'unitary' state and insisted on Tamil homeland and self-determination as the basis for talks.

Rajapaksa smoothly shifted gears into the next phase of his project - the implementation of his real solution to the ethnic question.

A core aspect of Rajapaksa's solution is the dilution of any

Tamil claims to a traditional homeland. In practice that means ensuring regions where Tamils constitute a majority are demographically undermined.

And that, as can be expected, means colonization, ethnic cleansing and the redrawing of boundaries.

This is not the first time in the conflict that the Sri Lankan state has embarked on such a policy of demographic reengineering.

But it is the first time it is being done with the international community in close attendance.

That the Sri Lankan armed forces would launch a war in the east has long been known. This newspaper, in its June 29, 2005 and April 19, 2006 editions, outlined the rationale of this eventuality.

But the wholesale expulsion and scattering of the Tamil population is Rajapakse's variant of the plan.

After the April 2005 suicide bombing that wounded Army Chief Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, the armed forces responded with a massive bombardment of LTTE-controlled areas in Trincomalee district. Over 40,000 people were displaced.

Whilst there has been sporadic criticism of the disproportionate response few discerned the ethnic cleansing which had begun for what it was.

And yet few international actors have protested when it did become clear.

The long-standing policy of blocking food and medical aid to Tamils in the region is another facet of an integrated strategy. This has also failed to draw an international reaction.

Even now, despite the dire situation in Vaharai and Verugal, Rajapakse's fundamental policy of mass displacement has been met with silence (read tacit approval) by the international community.

Notably, displaced from Sinhala colonies and most of the Muslim community have been quickly resettled in Trincomalee. It is the Tamils who are still



## EDITORIAL &amp; OPINION

## One more try?



being scattered.

There is no doubt that, provided Rajapakse's war goes according to plan, aggressive colonization of Tamil areas and redrawing of local electoral zones will follow swiftly.

Almost every decade since the 1950's has seen such state-aided colonization projects being implemented, supported by official and paramilitary violence against the Tamils.

And that was long before Vellupillai Pirapaharan, the LTTE or 1983.

In the meantime, Rajapakse has been systematically addressing the 'betrayals' of the five years of peace process.

He has effectively sidelined the Norwegian facilitators and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) as he had pledged to do (the peace envoys were subjected to a verbal shelling, the SLMM chiefs to a literal one).

In the last few months Rajapakse has systematically rendered the CFA meaningless. He closed the A9 highway in August (a 'standing' breach of Clause 2.10) and in December he re-introduced Prevention of Terrorism legislation (a 'standing' breach of Clause 2.12).

At the time of his election, his liberal and leftist advocates argued that Rajapakse's electoral pacts with the ultra-Sinhala nationalists were merely opportunistic and that he would follow

more centric policies once he gained power. They were quite wrong.

With hindsight it is clear that Rajapaksa is not a typical politician mired in coalition politics. He is in fact a single minded Sinhala nationalist President who has assembled a close team of trusted hardliners and is rolling out a calculated plan to deliver on his nationalist pledges.

The coterie includes two of his brothers, Gobathaya, a former Army officer who has been appointed Defence secretary and Basil, a de-facto chief of staff and trouble shooter in the administration. Another key team member is Army Chief Fonseka, Gobathaya's former commander.

This team has now presided over a series of major offensives against the LTTE, throughout much of the past year.

The CFA is an utter irrelevancy in their calculations, though for appearances sake, the logic of 'defensive offensive' is trotted out to the Colombo embassies.

With a series of victories against the LTTE under Rajapakse's belt, it is no accident that parallels are being drawn to the Sinhala king Duttu Gemunu, who famously vanquished the Tamils to safeguard the island for the Sinhalese.

Rajapakse himself has taken to referring to the conflict as one between him and Pirapaharan (or between the 'Sinhala Hero' and the 'Vanni Hero', as he once arro-

gantly told Tamil parliamentarians who came to plead for Vaharai with him).

Despite having restarted the war, Rajapakse has been careful to provide a plausible excuse for international inaction: he is said to be seeking a 'southern consensus' on a political solution to offer the Tamils.

Seasoned observers would say he already has a consensus: 'defeat terrorism and protect the unitary state.'

Even the opposition UNP, riven by internal dissent, is only half heartedly clinging to the Oslo and Tokyo declarations on federalism (lest anyone forget, the Oslo Declaration also reiterates the salience of the Tamil homeland).

Yet the international community continues the pretence that Rajapakse is seriously engaged in working out a power-sharing package ahead of pursuing a negotiated solution.

But all of Rajapakse's actions (except the All Party Committee) points to the exact opposite: an all-out war against the Tigers and the dismantling of Tamils' claims to their homeland in the island's Northeast.

The premeditated and ruthless policies of starvation and mass killing directed against the Tamils, particularly in the eastern province, are comparable to those used at the height of military onslaughts by previous Presidents.

And under the new PTA and Emergency Regulations, the disappearances of pro-independence or autonomy (now federalism) Tamils has rocketed.

Even before then, large numbers of civil society activists, academics, humanitarian workers, journalists and other key elements of Tamil society have been targeted for assassination and 'disappearance.'

The term genocide should not be lightly used. But it is the institutionalized and multi-faceted (physical, cultural, biological, etc.) nature of the oppression against Tamils by Sri Lanka's Sinhala-dominated state that make it applicable.

For their part, the international community has consciously aided many aspects of Rajapakse's phase of this long-running slow genocide.

It should be remembered that the Sri Lankan military, including most of its senior officers, have all been trained by the United States and likeminded states.

It should also be remembered that the vast war machine that Rajapakse inherited and is now unleashing has been carefully (re-)built since 2002 with international assistance and funding.

It was being prepared long before Rajapakse came to power, for whoever might be in office. Such support is part of what Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (who was expected to be President now), smugly called the 'international safety net under the peace process.'

With the LTTE seen as the central problem, the peace process was, for the international community, an elaborate exercise in counter-insurgency. The war machine was partly deterrence to keep the LTTE in the negotiation process and partly preparation for the possible eventuality of a return to war.

But even if this international logic is taken at face value, what is truly shocking is that there has been barely a murmur about the wide-scale violence being unleashed upon the Tamils as a whole (and not just the LTTE).

Human rights and international humanitarian law, it seems, are not universal principles, after all.

It has been argued - and this is the view of some policy makers in Western capitals - that the LTTE and the Tamils brought the present crisis on themselves by boycotting the Nov. 2005 elections.

That allowed Rajapakse, who took the overwhelming majority of Sinhala votes, to come to power despite his arch-rival, Wickremesinghe taking the Muslim, Hill Country Tamils and some Sinhala votes.

But this logic of blaming of the victim is flawed for very clear reasons.

The fact that Tamils are a numerical minority in Sri Lanka leaves them ever vulnerable to majoritarian domination. The return of a Sinhala hardline government prepared to revoke power-sharing agreements and reinstate supremacist policies and will always be a clear and pre-

sent danger.

Throughout the peace process, the implied protection against such an eventuality was, of course, the international community.

But if this were truly so, then it shouldn't matter who comes to power in Sri Lanka.

However as Rajapakse has amply demonstrated, even international treaties such as the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement, are worthless unless they are backed by credible powers that the Tamils can call on for support.

Although few believed that the international safety net extended to protecting the Tamils from the Sinhala-dominated state, the international community's tacit endorsement of Rajapakse brutal actions is the prime reason that humanitarian crises have erupted across the Northeast.

Indeed, last year this column warned that Rajapakse had nothing to lose from attempting a military solution:

Were he to pursue a negotiated solution, he would have to concede to some form of federalism, something he and his Sinhala constituency found unacceptable.

However, were he to launch a war and succeed, then he could dictate the terms of a weaker solution. On the other hand, if the war failed, then he would be back at the negotiating table discussing no more than federalism, because that was the ceiling the international community had set on Tamil aspirations.

So the ferocious war being thrust upon the Tamils not is not the result of a series of unfortunate and unforeseen events though last year.

Rather it is a result of a combination of factors.

Firstly, the local and international preparations to contain the Tamil struggle (including the rebuilding and expansion of the Sri Lankan military and economy) that have been underway since the peace process started in 2002;

and, secondly, the ascension to power of a hardline President, who despite his unabashed Sinhala-nationalist mind-set, has the support of the same international community that was underwriting the peace process.

With arms flowing in from his international allies via Pakistan and with financial support assured from Japan and other donors, it would seem there is very little standing between Rajapakse and a new ethnic map of Sri Lanka. Except for the LTTE, of course.

In short, what is unfolding in the Northeast is not a consequence of the international community being unable to influence Sri Lanka's internal politics.

Rather, it is the reverse. It is because, despite all the warning signs, the international community actively intervened to stack the cards against the Tamils and to reinforce the Sinhala-dominated state against them.

That is why is so quiet out there now.

The game, meanwhile, is on. Again.



# Would the real Dutugemunu please stand up?

David Rampton  
Tamil Guardian

THE present Government of Sri Lanka has obviously swung in a potentially Sinhala nationalist direction, at the same time pulling the framework for articulation of dominant political practices the same way.

This was first glimpsed in the run-up to the ruling UPFA's election victory in 2004 when the nationalist JVP and the PNM (Patriotic National Movement) provided much of the mobilising muscle for the campaign.

However, this dynamic only became truly hegemonic in November 2005 Presidential Election campaign when Mahinda Rajapakse pledged a commitment to the ideological framework set out in 'Mahinda Chintana,' with the JVP and the JHU providing the foundations to this proclamation of the new regime and leader's aims.

Although it has been widely discussed, there is as yet no consensus as to the sincerity of the Mahinda Chintana 'vision.'

In other words the jury is still out as to the extent to which this leadership of, and alignment with, the nationalist ideology of actors such as the JVP reflect the personal mindset of the President and the 'Kitchen Cabinet' or to what extent it is reflective instead of the opportunist populist politicking of a shrewd tactician.

It might therefore be more useful to trace the effects that the pursuit of Mahinda Chintana is having on the political ether in Sri Lanka and, indeed, the way in which these effects are impacting on the architects, collaborators and fellow travellers of the Sinhala nationalist highway.

First of all, this is obviously a populist strategy that has sought to harness the ideological force and mobilising potency of the JVP (and to a lesser extent the JHU) in the context of a flagging and redundant peace process in which Ranil Wickremasinghe and his main opposition UNP could easily be portrayed as deeply implicated.

This is despite Wickremasinghe's own attempts to pursue a not dissimilar line of populism in the UNP Presidential Election manifesto of 2005.

Rajapakse and the SLFP-led UPFA have, in order to tighten their hold on the reins of power, sought to mine a seam of southern discontent and frustration with the peace process and perceptions of the aims and strategy of the LTTE.

At the same time, Rajapakse's position can also be defined as an

attempt to contain and outflank the JVP's nationalist mobilisations and the extremely rapid expansion of its constituency base that had taken place between 2000 and 2004.

Not unlike the contest for nationalist legitimacy that arose between then President R. Premadasa and the JVP in the aftermath of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, Rajapakse has also sought to appropriate the Sinhala nationalism of these smaller parties both for the SLFP and for his own image.

The latter aspect is reflected in the incredible proliferation of placards and billboards dedicated to this (including comparisons to Dutugemunu).

Additionally, Rajapakse is attempting to steal the thunder of the more vocal 'nationalist' actors in order to reverse the process at work before 2004 when the SLFP party machine was in disarray and being steadily disembowelled by the JVP.

Smaller parties such as the JHU, with little to guard against in terms of their already shriv-

**Rajapakse has sought to appropriate the Sinhala nationalism of the JVP and JHU both for the SLFP and his own image.**

elled constituency base (and the prospect of being almost wiped out in any forthcoming election) have more fully immersed themselves in the Rajapakse administration.

But the President's strategy and several recent events have begun to place severe strains upon the relationship between the JVP, Sri Lanka's third largest party, and the SLFP-led regime.

Firstly, in relation to the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) and the production of the majority and minority reports, the JVP (like the MEP which nonetheless has decided to remain in the APRC) has objected to the lack of rigour in defining and maintaining a role for the Experts' Panel.

For the JVP, the Panel should have maintained a supporting and advisory role vis-à-vis the APRC rather than engaged in constitution-drafting behind closed doors, which should be the preserve, in the JVP's eyes, of democratically elected parties and their representatives in the APRC rather than

bureaucrats and academics.

It was this, according to the party leadership, that drove the JVP to withdraw from the APRC process despite the President's own attempt, by a high-profile hysterical reaction to the leaking of its contents, to contain the dissenting reactions to the 'Majority Report.'

The JVP's own perspective on State reform is staunchly against devolution and for a unitarian structure as, according to the JVP, it is the communalism of the elites combined with a lack of development that has always failed the people of Sri Lanka and their needs as a whole.

This has led to the current juncture where the JVP feel devolution and federalism is a 'communal' response to a problem created by the past pursuit of elite-led 'communal' politics - despite the fact that a unitary state structure cannot provide a response to the Sinhala majoritarianism that has plagued the Sri Lankan State for the last half-century.

Secondly, whilst the MOU between the SLFP and the UNP may have been perceived to have placed some strains on the relationship between the UPFA and the JVP, the MOU's insignificance and inherent frailty has meant that the prospect of UNP cross-overs is more likely to represent a threat to the ongoing relationship between the JVP and the UPFA.

Indeed, many commentators have identified the President's encouragement of crossovers and flagrant flouting of (the already redundant) MOU as an attempt to remove his parliamentary dependency on the JVP and to distance the administration from what is perceived to be a problematic political actor.

This interpretation has also been followed by some wildly optimistic perspectives suggesting that this is a prelude to meaningful engagement with the peace process, constitutional reform, the APRC etc. to the extent that at least one commentator has talked of the positive "moral terms" of the crossovers.

Whilst it is as yet unclear if the parliamentary arithmetic for the UPFA majority may reduce Rajapakse's dependency on the JVP, there is one flaw in such an interpretation of the strategy as it does not recognise the extent to which the MOU, the APRC, the proposed Presidential Commission on human rights abuses etc. are all instances where the President appears to have taken on the attire of governance once expected by the 'International Community.'

Some might even argue that unless there is an election in the offing (which may depend on the situation in the East), there is also little to be won now in detaching

Yet, that is all they are: mere gloss in which the MOU, the 17th



Amendment etc can all be jettisoned or merely be played along with in the current juncture without too much regard for the international repercussion, particularly when Colombo has a found a strong supporter of its headline and belligerent position in the US administration and little willingness to censure the Sri Lankan government for abuses.

In this context one surely begins to wonder what likelihood there is of Rajapakse really seeking to switch political strategy at this point when there is little to be gained.

Some might even argue that unless there is an election in the offing (which may depend on the situation in the East), there is also little to be won now in detaching

Yet, that is all they are: mere gloss in which the MOU, the 17th

## THE RAJAPAKSE PRESIDENCY



(left) One politicians public adoration of President Rajapakse's hails him as the incarnation of Dutugemunu, the warrior king Sinhala mythology credits for defeating the Tamils. *Photo Sanka Vidanagama/AFP/Getty Images.* (above) President Rajapakse bows to a Buddhist monk of the hardline JHU party as Somawansa Amarasingha (2nd left), leader of the nationalist JVP takes his seat. *Photo TamilNet*

# Sri Lanka is at civil war again

“I’ve never known a government which has fallen into ethnic chauvinism so quickly.”

Chris Morris  
BBC

THE ceasefire declared in Sri Lanka between the government and the Tamil Tiger movement has disappeared in all but name.

Some 3,000 Tamil civilians fled from Batticaloa last month.

International mediation has floundered and fighting has flared up again in the north and east of the island, where the Tigers want to carve out a separate Tamil state.

I have always liked Bullers Road.

I used to live on a lane about halfway down.

It is one of the few places in Colombo where you can still walk under a thick canopy of old mara and mayflower trees.

Tall, dense and dark green, they used to cover most of this part of the city, offering protection from the excessive heat of the midday sun.

Only a few trees remain. And even they could not help protect Professor Sivasubramaniam Ravindranath.

An agricultural scientist, he is

the vice-chancellor of the Eastern University in Sri Lanka's troubled Batticaloa district.

But last month he was abducted on Bullers Road in broad daylight.

Despite international appeals for information, and for his release, he has not been seen since.

Who took him, and why? Well no-one knows for certain.

But the talk around town is that it was members of a break-away faction of the Tamil Tigers known as the Karuna group - now bitterly and bloodily estranged from their former allies.

Instead, they co-operate with the Sri Lankan armed forces, and receive their protection.

Professor Ravindranath is not the only victim.

In what feels like a climate of increasing political impunity, Tamil businessmen are being kidnapped for ransom.

Rogue elements of the security forces are probably involved.

In Colombo many people are gloomier - and in some cases more scared - than I have seen them for a long time.

And who can blame them?

In the north and east there has been shelling, bombing and civilian deaths.

Just north of Batticaloa, tens of thousands of people have been forced to flee, caught in the fighting and ravaged by an epidemic of the Chikungunya virus.

In the Sinhalese south in recent days, bombs on buses, more civilian deaths.

When, they ask, will the next attack in Colombo come?

What will be the response? And which way will the president turn?

Mahinda Rajapakse was only elected last year.

I first came across him more than 15 years ago.

I was a young BBC reporter on my first foreign posting - he a member of parliament standing up for the rights of southern civilians, caught between a brutal Maoist uprising and an equally brutal military response.

Now he has risen to the top of the political tree backed by Sinhalese nationalists.

He has packed the presidential mansion with family members and favourites. And he is trying to create a political dynasty.

At De Zoysa Circus, a busy road junction next to Colombo's

General Hospital, a large billboard of the moustachioed president stares down at passing motorists.

It is not the image which attracts my attention though - it is the slogan which accompanies it: "He is our leader," it proclaims, "he is our president, he is next to King Dutugemunu."

Now every Sri Lankan child knows the legend of Dutugemunu, the mighty Sinhalese king who ruled more than 2,000 years ago - the warrior who went into battle on his elephant to conquer and defeat the usurping Tamil king Elara.

The symbolism of the story is potent, and relevant.

Where many Sinhalese see an old-fashioned hero who unified the island, many Tamils see the deification of Dutugemunu as proof that the majority community is determined to dominate the whole country.

And politicians are playing to the gallery.

"I've never known a government," muttered one Colombo old hand, "which has fallen into ethnic chauvinism so quickly."

It does not have to be that way.

There are different voices whispering in the presidential ear.

Some of them, seduced by the trappings of power, are urging him on to all-out military victory

Continued on page 15



## NEWS

# Violence in week ending 21 January

## Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since January 15

### 21 January

● Two SLA soldiers were killed and four seriously wounded when LTTE counter-attacked the soldiers who attempted to breach the Tiger line of defence at Vavunathivu. The bodies of two soldiers, one PK LMG, one AK LMG, two T-56 automatic rifles, a communication device, 10 handgrenades and rounds were captured by the Tigers. Two LTTE cadres sustained minor injuries and two houses were damaged in SLA artillery attack.

● Sri Lanka Police arrested five Tamil civilians in a cordon and search operation in Dehiwala and its coastal areas. The Tamil youths, natives of Jaffna, were detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Police said they were taken in for questioning as they failed to produce their identity cards and establish their purpose for being in Dehiwala. But relatives of the youths said they were arrested even after they produced their national identity cards and other documents to prove their identity and the purpose of their stay.

● Armed men opened fire on Sri Lanka Police on security duty at Kulumattu junction in Vavuniya killing one policeman and injuring two. Three civilians were injured when the police returned fire. One of the injured policemen and one of the injured civilians succumbed to their injuries.

● Armed men shot dead an unidentified civilian in Chettikulam area in Vavuniya.

● SLA troopers started firing artillery air-shots into Point Pedro sea as a number of Sea Tiger boats were observed in the harbour. A cargo ship, 'City of Liverpool', which carries supplies to government troops and civilians in the Jaffna peninsula, was leaving Pt. Pedro harbour when the firing began. About 10 SLN personnel and 15 civilian workers were on board the ship.

● Gracian Panumathy, 34, a mother, was killed on the spot and her two children were wounded in indiscriminate artillery shelling from SLA camps in Palaly and Pallappai towards Vadamaradchi north in the wake of the clash between Sea Tigers and SLN in Point Pedro harbour. Fragments of shells that hit the ground near Alvai Sri Lanka School killed the mother.

● A Tamil civilian who was shot and seriously injured by armed men succumbed to injuries at the Trincomalee hospital. He was identified as S. Uthayasooryan, 40, a resident of Alex Garden in Trincomalee. He was shot at Jamaliya in Uppuveli division.

● Residents of Kathankudy protested in front of the Regional Secretariat demanding the immediate release of a supporter of

Raub Mowlavi, a leader of the Sufi sect, who was abducted - allegedly by one of the Muslim armed groups - at Methaipalli roadankudy. Hiyathu Mohamed Nasar, 35, a father of two, had gone out with two people who had gone to see him about buying a motorcycle, and had not returned. Nasar was the owner of a video shop and a part-time trader in motor vehicles and phones.

### 20 January

● More than eight armed robbers shot dead the owner of a house in Poothavarayar temple in Thirunelveli east, Jaffna, during SLA imposed curfew hours. The armed men opened fire when the neighbours rushed to apprehend the robbers on hearing shouts from house owners. Mahalingam Vigneswaran, 40, a teacher at Puthur Somaskanda College and the owner of the house, died from gunshot wounds. Cash, jewellery and properties costing many millions of rupees were robbed in the previous two weeks, mainly from houses in Jaffna town, Nallur and Chunnakam which are within the direct surveillance of the SLA, and during curfew hours. The armed robbers, in white vans and on foot, move about with ease despite the presence of SLA troopers in these areas. Armed men using similar white vans have abducted many youths during curfew hours in the Jaffna peninsula. The SLA says these robberies are carried out to tarnish their reputation, but no one has been arrested in connection with the escalating number of robberies, abductions and killings in the peninsula.

● Twenty-four Tamil refugees who were arrested by the SLN as they were returning from Tamil Nadu were produced in Mannar magistrate's court and released.

● Four SLA soldiers were killed and three wounded in LTTE artillery fire at Panichchankerni, Trincomalee.

● Gunmen shot dead a farmer, Packiyasothy Jeevankumar, 24, of Kumpurupilly, at Irakkandy in Trincomalee.

● Two boys, displaced from Vaharai to Kannankiramam village in Valaichenai, were abducted by armed paramilitary men. Sivanandan Sivanewaran, 15, from Ilankaithurai in Vaharai was one of the two young boys abducted. The other was not identified.

### 19 January

● The SLA claimed to have entered Vaharai hospital without facing any resistance from the LTTE. Liberation Tigers Military Spokesman, verifying that the Tigers had relocated their positions in Panichchankerni where the SLA had obstructed the land route to Vaharai village, said

LTTE had no combatants in Vaharai village where the hospital is located.

● An elite guerrilla unit of the Liberation Tigers in Amparai district carried out an ambush on an STF convoy, killing at least 11 Sri Lankan commandos and wounding more than 11 at Bakmitiyawa, Amparai. The STF said the Tigers carried out a combined attack, triggering a claymore and deploying gunners armed with light machine guns into a booby trapped area in the predominant Sinhala area.

● Four SLA soldiers were killed and 3 injured in a mortar attack launched by the LTTE at Eachchilampathu, Trincomalee.

● The bodies of three young men were found near Gnanavairavar temple along Mathakuvaitthakulam road in Thavasikkulam, Vavuniya. The police said the victims seemed to have been tortured and killed. All of them had been strangled and there were gun shot injuries on two of them.

● The body of a man shot by armed men was found at Maharambaikulam, Vavuniya.

● Armed men shot dead a youth at Thekawatte, Vavuniya.

● Armed men fired at soldiers in the Navindil SLA camp in Vadamaradchi, Jaffna. Residents fled the area following the clash that lasted for 15 minutes during which 6 SLA soldiers were allegedly wounded.

● Two civilians transporting goods in a tractor were abducted at Pallakkadu junction in Anaicottai near Jaffna municipal area. The abduction was carried out in the presence of witnesses by men in a white van. One abducted was identified as a married man, Nagendram Thayalan, 32, whose relatives lodged a complaint with the SLHRC. The identity of the other was not established.

● Sivasubramaniam Regan, father of two, was abducted from his home in Kalviyankadu in Ariyapathy, Jaffna, during curfew hours. Armed men who arrived at his residence in a white van stormed into house after smashing the front door before abducting him, Regan's wife said.

● A cordon and search operation by the SLA and Police in Wattala, Colombo, resulted in 40 civilians, majority of them Tamils, being taken in for questioning. Many of detained allegedly failed to prove their identity and the purpose of staying in Wattala.

● 145 persons were arrested during a combined cordon and search operation by the SLA and Police in Puttalam, Anamadua and Vannathivillu in the North Western Province. Majority were Tamils. 124 were arrested in Puttalam alone and the rest in Anamadua and Vannathivillu divisions.

● A Tamil man was arrested during a cordon and search operation covering Teldeniya, Rajawella and Aluthwatte in Kandy. Velu Thiagarajah, a resident of Hendala in Colombo, was taken in for questioning as he failed to

provide his identity and reason for his presence in Kandy.

### 18 January

● SLA soldiers at Mankerny and Kajuwatta camps continuously pounded the besieged Vaharai area with artillery shells and shells targeting Vaharai hospital resulted in 5 people being wounded. Despite an urgent message to ICRC about an attack in the morning, the hospital was again targeted in the evening. Thousands of IDPs have taken refuge around the hospital. Eight shells fell around the hospital in the morning and injured one person slightly. In the evening, six more shells fell and injured four people seriously. The continuous shelling forced the civilian population to flee the area.

● SLA troopers and police personnel threatened Tamil civilians at Mathavadikulam, Vavuniya, after a gang shot and killed a Sinhala civilian the previous night. SLA soldiers warned Tamil residents that they would be chased away from the area.

● Gunmen fired on the SLA camp near Uduppiddy American Mission School at Uduppitty junction and SLA troopers retaliated. Heavy exchange of fire took place for nearly five.

● Unconfirmed media reports in Jaffna said that a SLA trooper at Nagarkovil SLA FDL was killed in a LTTE artillery attack while SLA reports said one trooper was killed in Tiger sniper fire. It is not known whether both reports referred to the same trooper.

● Armed men attacked David Camp in Navindil, Vadamaradchi, just one km from the Uduppiddy camp. Unconfirmed reports said that three SLA troopers were seriously injured and later two of the injured died, but the SLA claimed two troopers were injured.

● Unidentified persons activated a claymore device hidden on Kankesanthurai road at Inuvil targeting an SLA road patrol unit but no one was injured.

● Three youths belonging to IDP families were abducted by paramilitary cadres. They were living in a temporary refugee camp at Pethalai after having been displaced from Vadamunai, Uthuchennai and Punanai. One was a married man, abducted near the Valaichenai Police office, while the other two were teenagers. Paramilitary personnel who visit the IDP camps during the day, return at night to abduct the youths, residents said. Families are reluctant to complain to the police about the abductions, which occurs almost on a daily basis, following threats from paramilitaries.

● Unidentified persons set fire to a book shop belonging to a Muslim trader in Kathankudy town, completely destroying the building. The police suspect that the arson was the result of the intra-Muslim religious conflicts prevailing within in Kathankudy.

● Arayampathy STF arrested M. L. M. Makeer of Kathankudy under suspicion of instigating ethnic violence in the border area between Arayampathy and Kathankudy.

### 17 January

● Two youths surrendered to the Jaffna office of the SLHRC, adding to the 39 civilians who previously sought protection from the SLA and paramilitaries. The youths complained of serious threats and intimidation by SLA soldiers. Apart from an elderly couple from Uduppiddy and their 15-year old daughter, thirty six other youths have surrendered at the SLHRC office in Jaffna, within the past few months. All 41 civilians are being kept in protective custody in Jaffna prison under the Jaffna Court's order.

● Arumugam Mayuran, 21, a mason, was abducted on Kondavil Road, Irupalai, Jaffna, during curfew hours by men in a white van.

● A Sinhalese civilian, Mr. P.M. Nissanka, was shot and killed by an unknown gang in Mathavadikulam, Vavuniya.

### 16 January

● Heavy casualties were reported in fresh fighting as SLA forces launched a three pronged ground offensive towards Panichchankerni, south of Vaharai, towards Eachilampattu and Uppooral in the north. 12 LTTE fighters were killed and 7 wounded according to LTTE Military spokesman Irasiah Ilanthirayan who also claimed more than 40 SLA troopers were killed. Sri Lankan military authorities claimed to have inflicted a heavier casualty with more than 30 Tigers killed. They said 4 SLA troopers were killed, including an officer and 20 wounded. The next day the SLA handed over the bodies of 7 LTTE cadres to the ICRC.

● An elite STF commando unit that penetrated into LTTE controlled territory in Vellavel, Batticaloa, were repulsed in a counter-attack by the Tigers. During their retreat, the STF commandos left behind the body of a paramilitary cadre with his arms and ammunition. The STF commandos had launched the operation from Mandoor camp through Kakkachcheddai.

● Two Sri Lanka Policemen were killed in a claymore attack inside the Vavuniya Kachcheri premises. The claymore was fixed to vehicle reported stolen a few days earlier. More SLA soldiers and STF elite troops rushed to the blast site and conducted a search. It is not known if any arrests were made. The policemen killed in the attack were identified as Janake and Geethsri.

● The decapitated body of a youth with cut wounds was recovered by Kathankudy police in Mananthoduva area along old Kalmunai road in Kathankudy.

## NEWS



**President Mahinda Rajapakse was all smiles as he met (l-r) Bishops Rev. Rayappu Joseph (Mannar), Rev. Thomas Saundranayagam (Jaffna), and Rev. Norbert Andradi (Anuradhapura) on Jan 13. Bishop Joseph protested the massacre of 15 Tamil civilians by Sri Lankan Air Force jets which bombed their settlement in Padahuthurai on January 2. He called the attack a crime against humanity, and condemned as a "barefaced lie" the military's claim the airstrike had hit a LTTE installation.** *Photo TamilNet*

kudy, Batticaloa. The victim was identified as Piragasanathan Suth-rasan, 23, a resident of Navakudah Pillayar road. He had been abducted on Saturday on Vanniyar road in Batticaloa by a group of armed men in a white van.

● Five SLA soldiers were killed and three wounded in a claymore attack on Mannar road, Vavuniya.

● An elderly couple from 15th mile post in Udupiddy, aged 56 and 54, together with their 15-year old daughter surrendered at the Jaffna office of the SLHRC seeking protection from SLA troops. The woman had previously been attacked at her home by unidentified men and received treatment at the Jaffna Teaching Hospital. In a recent search operation by SLA near the family's residence a cache of arms was discovered. Consequently, the army had visited their home and assaulted the husband and ordered the wife to report at the nearby camp for questioning.

● Officials of the Jaffna SLHRC have requested the head office in Colombo to arrange for the establishment a special detention camp for the 36 youths who surrendered at the Jaffna office in the recent months. The official also requested the head office to take steps to provide job opportunities for these youths, some of whom are school students, and to provide plans for their future.

● Students of Point Pedro Velayutham Boys' School boycotted classes demanding the release of

a student who went on missing while on his way to attend tuition classes last Friday. Paranjothy Thananjeyan, 19, who set out on a bicycle from home in Manthihai to a private tuition center in Point Pedro, 4 km away, has not been seen since. Student leaders at his school said they believe that SLA soldiers are responsible for the disappearance.

● Armed persons shot dead the owner of a private tuition center in Chavakachcheri, Jaffna. Arumugam Markandu, 60, was at his home when two armed persons came on a motorbike, shot him dead and escaped.

● A gunfight between SLA soldiers and gunmen took place in Manambi area in Thikkam, Vadamaradchi. The exchange of gunfire lasted for more than 15 minutes. No casualties were reported.

● Six persons, including a woman and a driver attached to Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) were shot and killed, and two young men riding in a three-wheeler were killed, in two separate incidents in Vavuniya, Tuesday night.

● Mr. Anton Rupaseelan, 26, Mr. Clive Rohan Rajadurai, 44, a driver attached to Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), Ms. Anthonypillai Ponmani, 57, and Mr. Yoganathan Jeyanthan, 28, were shot and killed at Kurumankadu, Vavuniya. Ms. Jasmin Sivakumar, 25, who was wounded, was the only survivor at the house where the shooting occurred.

● Mr. Perumal Chandrasekaran,

25, and Mr. Tharatharan Ramesh, 30, were killed riding in a three-wheeler on Rice Mill Road in Vavuniya. One of the victims was the driver of the auto-richshaw and one of the men was burnt inside the three-wheeler.

● Armed men in a white van abducted a disabled man at Thettkiyalady in Chunnakam, Jaffna, as he was riding his bicycle along Kankesanthurai road where SLA troopers were present. The footwear and prosthetic leg of Mr. Daniel Shantharopan, 30, a family man from Mylankadu in Elalai, were found where he was abducted. Shantharopan had been earlier summoned several times by SLA troopers at the Atchelu SLA camp where he was beaten and then released, his wife said.

● Mr. Markandu Jeyarajan, 30, and Mr. Marushkodi Sivakanthan, 26, travelling in an auto-rickshaw were abducted by armed men at Maraambaikkulam, Vavuniya. The abductors had come in two motorbikes and a three-wheeler.

● The highly decomposed body of Anthonipillai Sagayanathan, a father of two, was located at Kallikaddaikadu, Mannar. The mason had been missing since he left for work on Friday. He was last seen by eyewitnesses being stopped and interrogated by SLA soldiers. When found, his hands and legs were bound.

### 15 January

● A former officer in-charge of the Trincomalee Harbour Police

was arrested with a suspect, allegedly belonging to Liberation Tigers, in possession of 4.5 million rupees inside a hotel in Matara in the southern province. Mr. Indika Perera, the arrested officer, had returned after a two-year leave in a foreign country. According to initial reports the suspected LTTE member is from Chelvanayakapuram, Trincomalee.

● Armed men shot dead Thambipillai Ramanan, 30, in the heart of Trincomalee town. He had been waylaid as he was returning home from work. The men entered a house in Huskison Road where Ramanan ran for safety and shot him dead.

● Batticaloa Police recovered the mutilated body of a petty trader with several stab wounds and tied with a big stone in Batticaloa lagoon. Sivalingam Rajendran, 28, of Mandapathady, Kannakudah in LTTE controlled Batticaloa district had gone missing last Saturday. Rajendran regularly visited Batticaloa town to conduct

business through Seththukkudah area, which lies between the town and Vavunathivu, one of the gateways to the LTTE controlled area.

● Gunmen shot dead a teacher in Thuraineeelavanai, Kaluwanchikudy, Batticaloa. Saththiyamoorthy Keerththivarman, 31, of Seenakkudiyiruppu in Amparai district, was shot at point blank range as he was visiting his mother for Thai-pong festival.

● Two youths were taken into custody by the Police on a complaint that they had used a telescope to monitor the Dimbulagala residence of Minister Arumugan Thondaman.

● An advanced level student at Hartley College, Pt Pedro went missing amidst an escalating number of disappearances in Jaffna. Murugananthan Paramanathan, 19, from Viyaparimoolai, was on his way to Nelliyadi, Jaffna, to attend to personal errands when he disappeared. His parents said they suspect the SLA of being behind the disappearance in a complaint filed with the SLHRC.

**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

# Troops shoot Christian priest in Jaffna

D.B.S. Jeyaraj  
Transcurrents.com

THE Tamil speaking Christian community in Sri Lanka's northern city of Jaffna is shocked by the brutal murder of a Protestant Christian Tamil pastor in broad daylight on January 13th.

38 year old pastor of the evangelical Tamil mission church Jaffna, Rev. Nallathamby Gnanaseelan, was shot dead as he was travelling on his motor cycle along chapel street in the heart of Jaffna town.

The incident happened near the Vembaddy road junction at about 10.30 am on Saturday.

Uniformed soldiers on duty near the Vembaddy - Hospital road were responsible for the brutal killing say eyewitnesses.

Rev. Gnanaseelan, a member of the National evangelical alliance clergy fellowship in Jaffna, was the pastor in charge of the Tamil mission Church in Jaffna.

On Saturday morning the pastor had gone on his motor bike to Jaffna hospital with his wife Serena and a seven year old eldest daughter who was sick. He had left the mother and daughter at the hospital at about 10.00 am asking them to return home by bus after medical treatment was over.

Rev. Gnanaseelan was scheduled to be in Ariyalai where a day long prayer - fast was on at the church.

He had then gone to the bazaar and bought a few things. Thereafter he was proceeding along chapel street on his motor cycle.

Soldiers stationed at the Vembaddy rd - Hospital rd junction were reportedly sauntering along the nearby roads. Soldiers had signalled Rev. Gnanaseelan to stop and the pastor had promptly obliged.

Suddenly one of the soldiers had fired from a few yards away hitting Rev. Gnanaseelan in the leg and stomach. The pastor fell with the bike too toppling down.

The soldiers had then walked closer to the man lying on the road and shot the bleeding priest in the head at point blank range.

They had then taken away Rev. Gnanaseelan's bible, bag, ID card and other things in his possession and also his motor cycle.

The priest's body lay on the road for more than an hour till he was "officially" discovered by the Police at 11.30 am.

The acting Jaffna district judge Mr. M. Thirunavukkarasu went to the scene for a preliminary inquiry and instructed Police to trace the victim's identity. The body was taken to the Jaffna hospital morgue.

Meanwhile Mrs. Serena Gnanaseelan with her daughter had returned home not knowing that her husband had been brutally murdered in cold blood by uniformed assassins.

She had not been perturbed even when Rev. Gnanaseelan had not returned home that night. Since a curfew was in force from 7.00 pm she had thought her husband was staying on in the church with parishioners during night.

When distraught family members went to claim the body they were informed that the body was that of a "terrorist".

The Soldiers on duty at Vembaddy - hospital rd junction had reported that the victim had tried to take out a grenade from his bag and fling it at them. They had shot him dead in self-defence they had claimed.

In a bid to frame Rev. Gnanaseelan a grenade had been placed inside the bag by the authorities.

Upon finding that the dead man was a well-known Christian pastor the original story was amended accordingly. It was now claimed that the priest had not heeded instructions to stop. Therefore the soldiers were constrained to shoot and kill it was now said.



Thousands of Tamil homes have been destroyed by the Sri Lankan military's aerial bombing and shelling during the past year. Over 200,000 people have been displaced in that time, apart from the hundreds of thousands who remain displaced by military operations during the late nineties. Despite international pledges of rehabilitation aid, little materialised during the peace process. Photo TamilNet

## Violence in week ending 14 January

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since January 08

### 14 January

- SLA soldiers shot dead two young men in an ambush in Mavadi Vembu, Eravur, Batticaloa. SLA soldiers, who were hiding in the wood near the railway line in Mavadi Vembu, opened fire on the passing men, killing them on the spot. The SLA claimed that it has killed two members of the LTTE - Major Shankar and his bodyguard - in the ambush, but the LTTE denied the claim.
- The SLA and LTTE exchanged artillery and rocket fire at the Muhamalai FDL and other areas in Thenmaradchi, southern Jaffna from Saturday evening until Sunday morning. Small arms were also used in the clashes. There were no reports of casualties.
- Two male bodies with gun shot injuries were found in two locations in Inuvil, Jaffna. The naked body of Kumarasamy Thayaparan, 38, a father of five, was found near Kandaswamy Temple in Inuvil West. Residents said he was shot dead around 9 p.m. while a SLA curfew was in force. The body of Sivasubramaniam Krishnakumar, 31, a father of two, was found near a railway crossing in Inuvil East. He was living with his family in Uduvil and Krishnakumar's wife said he had gone to visit his mother in Navanthurai.
- A driver with 'Halo Trust,' a humanitarian de-mining INGO in Jaffna, has been missing since Tuesday after he left his house at Kellner Road in Nallur and reported for work. C. Rajendran, 35, reported for work at Halo

Trust office after leaving his son at his school near 'Halo Trust' office near Old Park Road. Nine other employees from 'Halo Trust' have been killed or abducted and disappeared in Jaffna.

- An employee of Danish Demining Group (DDG), an INGO, sought refugee with the SLHRC Jaffna office fearing for his life at the hands of the SLA and collaborating Tamil paramilitary cadres.

- Four armed men riding two motorbikes shot and killed two Tamil masons at Kannakipuram in Alayadyvembu, Akkaraipattu. The victims, former LTTE cadres, were 300 meters from an STF camp they had just left, after presenting themselves as required by the STF. Sinnathamby Thanapalasingham, 24, and Rajaram, 26, both residents of Kannakipuram, were killed. Packiyarasa Sasikaran, 22, from Alayadyvembu, was wounded. The men had been ordered to present themselves every Sunday at the STF camp.

### 13 January

- Four soldiers were killed in LTTE artillery fire on their position in Mankerni, Batticaloa.

- SLA soldiers shot dead a priest near Vembadi High School and Jaffna Central College, inside the Jaffna town HSZ. SLA soldiers claimed the victim was youth was trying to flee after attacking them when they shot him (see separate story).

- Lingam Rajanikanth, 28, was shot dead near Kondavil Hospital, Jaffna, by two men who had been

following him.

- Two men, including a former member of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), were shot dead and another injured by armed men at Maharambaikkulam in Vavuniya. Muthukumar Puvaneswaran, 29, and Arasan Yogeswaran, 28 were killed. Narayanan Selvaratnam, 25, who was injured, told the police they were attacked by a group of 5 men who spoke Tamil fluently.

- The body of Mohamed Naffar, 23, a Muslim man, was found near a mosque along Ganesh Lane in Palaiyootu, Trincomalee.

- Sri Lanka security forces, assisted by the police, arrested 209 youths in Gampaha, 36 in Nittambuwa, 22 in Minuwangoda, and 7 in Borelesgamuwa during separate cordon and search operations. Many were released after proving their identity while others were detained for further questioning. The majority of the arrested youths are Tamils. Most are natives of Trincomalee, Killinochchi, Jaffna, Batticaloa, and Upcountry, and have been working in factories and other worksites in Sinhalese dominated areas.

### 12 January

- Former student of Jaffna Hindu College, Kanthiyalahan Srisanath, 21, abducted on Sunday allegedly by the SLA and collaborating paramilitaries, was released by his captors in front of his house. His abductors had transported him blindfolded in a white van during the curfew hours and left

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



Tamil civilians in Sri Lankan government controlled parts of Northeast are increasingly subject to aggressive searches by Sinhala troops. Photo T. Vivekarasa/AFP/Getty Images

him in front of his house. Srisanath was abducted on Palaly Road while travelling from his house to that of a friend in Urumpirai.

● Unidentified persons activated a claymore device at Paalamaikal sector in Vavuniya, killing two policemen on the spot and injuring one.

● Armed men shot dead Periyathamby Yogeswaran, 33, a hairdresser, at Poovarasankulam in Vavuniya on his way to work.

● Raman Rajkannan, 28, a family man from Rajkiramam, Karavetty in Vadamardchy, was shot and seriously wounded by two armed men on a motorcycle while riding his bicycle along Nellyyady-Kodikamam road to visit a friend in Urumpirai.

● A 'Grama Sevaka' (village level administration officer) was shot dead by gunmen at his office in front of the historic Sellasannithi Murugan Temple in Thonadamanaru. The body of Vellaiyan Premachandran, 46, lay outside his office for more than 15 hours until Saturday morning. The officer was killed by two men who had gone to his office on a motorcycle. Four village level officers have been shot dead in Jaffna during the past 6 months.

● The bodies of the two men found with gun shot injuries at Nanattan-Eruvittan in Mannar

were identified as Rajasankar, 23, and his brother Theivendran, 21. Police recovered the bodies with their hands tied behind their backs. Perumal Raja, their father, told Murunkan Police he had been residing with his youngest son, Theivendran in Madukarai. Rajasankar, his eldest son and a father of one, had been residing at Maharambaikulam in Vavuniya with his family. On January 11 his youngest son left to Vavuniya where he met his elder brother. "Both my sons were shot dead when they were returning from Maharambaikulam to Madukarai that same night," he said.

● A SLA soldier found dead after sounds of gunfire at the 513-brigade camp in Ariyalai in Jaffna committed suicide, officials at the camp said. However, a Jaffna judge who visited the scene, found suspicious evidence contradicting the officials' assertions, and directed further investigations into the trooper's death. The Judge found bullet wounds in areas of the body that cast doubts on the cause of his death as suicide.

● Tamil civilians arrested by the Sri Lanka's forces under the newly introduced Prevention of Terrorism Act are being sent to Boosa detention camp in Galle due to lack of space in Colombo jails. About sixty Tamils taken into custody in Colombo are like-

ly to be sent to Boosa shortly. The government established the detention camp in Boosa in 1971 to detain suspects arrested following the first insurrection by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Boosa detention camp was again used to detain suspects in 1981, following the second JVP insurrection. From 1987 many Tamil youths arrested in the North East were detained in Boosa camp.

### 11 January

● Two SLA soldiers were injured, one seriously, in a claymore attack on SLA soldiers in Maravankulam, Chundikuli, Jaffna.

● A claymore attack on a SLA road patrol in Vathiri, Thikkam Road in Vadamardchy resulted in SLA casualties according to unconfirmed reports. SLA soldiers and armed assailants exchanged gunfire for nearly ten minutes after the attack, which occurred near Thevarayali Hindu College.

● Armed men waylaid a fishmonger behind Valvettithurai hospital in Vadamardchi and shot him dead. Kankesamoorthy Shanmugarasa, 35, had left his home at Oorani in Valvettithurai that morning and was on his way to begin his day's business, when he was shot.

● Two armed men on a motorcycle, followed a tailor along the

road at Pandiyanthalvu in Kolumbuthurai, Jaffna and shot and seriously injured him. Selvam Theepakanthan, 33, a family man, was admitted to Intensive Care Unit at Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

● The SLA Palaly based radio announced that the 9:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. curfew in the Jaffna peninsula would begin two hours earlier at 7:00 p.m. The Jaffna SLA high command also banned the use of all lightweight motorcycles in peninsula, resulting in hundreds of confiscated 50 cc motorcycles being held in various SLA camps. The owners of motorcycles wishing to continue to use them have to register their particulars at the nearest SLA camp. As a result, owners of the lightweight motorcycles were seen in their thousands waiting near SLA camps in the peninsula to have their particulars registered.

● Muthur Magistrate Manickavasagar Ganesharajah discharged a Tamil youth who was accused of having links with LTTE for lack of evidence. The prosecuting police officer told the court he had no evidence implicating the man in the alleged offence. Muthur Police had arrested Sivalingam Thevarajah, of Iruthayapuram, on 22 December on suspicion, while he was in Muttur town to buy provisions.

● Eight Tamils were abducted in Colombo and two in Puttalam within five days, the Civil Monitoring Commission reported (see separate story).

### 10 January

● Arunakirinathan Niruparaj, a third year science student at Jaffna campus who was abducted from Kokuvil area on 3 January, allegedly by the SLA and collaborating paramilitaries, was released by his captors in front of his residence. Niruparaj had been subjected to severe torture, could hardly speak, and was admitted to Jaffna Teaching Hospital. Niruparaj did not reveal details of his abductors or information of his torture. Relatives said that severe wounds to his body and face bore hallmarks of extended periods of torture.

● Armed men launched an attack on the Kallady office of paramilitary Karuna Group, inside a SLA HSZ. Reports said one paramilitary personnel was killed and eight others injured. The attack lasted for more than an hour, damaging the office.

● SLA soldiers and LTTE fighters exchanged artillery and rocket fire at Muhamalai in the Jaffna peninsula. Eight SLA troopers

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## NEWS

## Violence/ Jan 14

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who were injured in the shelling were admitted to the Palaly Military Hospital. Residents said heavy gun fire was heard from the morning till evening.

● A SLA soldier was injured in a claymore mine attack at Koolavady in Aanaikoddai in an attack that targeted a SLA patrol.

● Three SLA troopers from Vavunativu camp were seriously injured in rocket fire launched by the LTTE on Vavunativu area in Batticaloa. The SLA troopers retaliated with heavy rocket fire on LTTE held areas in Vavunativu, Kurinchamunai, Navatkadu and Ayithiyamalai and other areas with civilian populations. No one was injured in the SLA attacks.

● Forty-nine Tamil youths were taken into custody in two cordon and search operations by the combined State security forces in the western and northwestern provinces. 31 Tamils were arrested in Kalutara and Bandaragama in the western provinces. The youths are residents of Kankesanthurai, Akkaraipattu and Bogantalawa, and were working in jewellery shops in Kalutara and Bandaragama. 18 Tamil youths, majority of them residents of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Jaffna, were arrested in Uddapu, a Tamil village in Chilaw.

● Forty-four Tamils were arrested in a sudden cordon and search operation by SLA soldiers and Police personnel in Mount Lavinia, Colombo. Most of the arrested were from NorthEast and Hill country areas. More than 100 security personnel were involved in this operation. The SLA and Police took into custody those who recently started residing in Mount Lavinia, and those unable to establish their identity.

● Another search operation was conducted in Mattakuliya with the assistance of Mutuwal police, where all buses parked at the Mattakuliya bus terminal were searched. Details of arrests made were not released.

● The SLA and the police cordoned off and searched Udupu area in Puthalam, arresting 45 civilians. 40 of the arrested were released after interrogation while five were detained by the police. The search operation covered Udupu Andimunai, Poonapitty and Selvapuram villages in Puttalam district. More than 500 SLA and police personnel participated in the search operation.

## 09 January

● Two IDPs were killed and 9 others, including two children, were wounded in artillery fire by the SLA towards Verugal. The civilians were fleeing northwards after the artillery barrage towards Vaharai the previous day. One of the civilians killed was identified as Kanthiah Ganesan, 35. Ms. Thayaparan Mathusa, 2, and Mr. Ganesan Jesu, 6, were the two children wounded in the artillery fire from Kallaru SLA base. Ms.

Kathamuttu Thraupathai, 28, Ms. Chandran Vasanthy, 30, and Mr. Packiyarasa Santhiran, 32, were among the 9 wounded. The victims had been staying in Soorainagar village, near Verugal. More than 500 families have taken refuge in areas that come under Echchilampattu division, north of Vaharai.

● Karuna paramilitary group imposed a "ban" on selling Thinakural, Sudaroli and other Tamil language newspapers in Trincomalee district. Newsagents were summoned by the Karuna group in Trincomalee and threatened with being shot if they failed to comply. Karuna group had banned the sale of Thinakural and Sudaroli in Batticaloa and Amparai districts six months ago.

● Karuna paramilitary members on motorcycles shot and seriously injured two Muslim civilians standing along Kathankudy Dean Road around. The paramilitary personnel also severely attacked two more civilians, causing Tamils and Muslims living on the Kathankudy boarder to move to safer places. Sri Lanka police and STF were put on guard on Kathankudy Main Street.

● Gunmen opened fire on two Karuna group paramilitary members at Mahiloor in Kalavanchikudy, Batticaloa, killing one and seriously injuring the other. The assailants, following the two victims riding on a motorcycle, shot at them and escaped from the site.

● Armed men attacked two Karuna Group paramilitary installations in Valaichenai, north of Batticaloa. The attackers bombed and flattened one of the two houses, killing all paramilitary personnel inside. 12 Karuna Group personnel were killed. Castro, a key figure in Karuna Group, was killed in a similar attack on the group's Kalmunai office last month.

● The SLA claimed it had killed 4 LTTE cadres in Valaichenai, soon after the attack on two Karuna Group installations in the eastern town. The Tigers said four political cadres were shot dead by the SLA at Kannakipuram in Valaichenai and had contacted the ICRC to acquire the dead bodies of their cadres.

● A young man who went to purchase Panadol tablets for a sick child in his neighbourhood was killed by SLA soldiers who opened fire on him, killing him on the spot and seriously wounding another man. Yogarajah Nixon, 23, with a torch light in his hand, was killed on the spot as he was returning from a local shop 200 metres away from the house at Athth-ikuly village in Nanaddan, Mannar, with the medicine. An empty magazine of an automatic rifle, the torch light and a packet of Panadol tablets were lying in the paddy field beside the dead body, riddled with bullets. Murugaiah, 34, with three gunshot wounds managed to escape and notified Nixon's father. The troopers also fired at Nixon's father when he tried to approach the site.



An armed mob led by Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Labour, Mervin Silva (in white), arrived on Jan 9 at the site of the first public meeting organised by the newly established United People's Movement (UPM), a peace movement, and attacked the journalists who waiting to cover the event. Mr. Mervyn Silva is known for racial slurs against the Tamils and violence against journalists. But organizers of the meeting accused he was just a stooge and the real instigator was hardline President Mahinda Rajapakse who wanted the peace rally be disrupted at any cost. Photo TamilNet

## More Colombo abductions

TEN Tamils were abducted in Colombo and Puttalam over 5 days. One victim was released after being held blindfolded for a day, but nine are still missing, the Civil Monitoring Commission reported on January 12.

The fate of Professor S. Ravendranath, the Vice Chancellor of Eastern University, abducted December 15 in Colombo's High Security area, remains unknown.

The following details were released to the media:

● Thomas Jesudason, 37, of Jampettah St in Colombo 13 was abducted on 7 January from Galpotha Street in Colombo 13.

● Vairamuthu Varadarasan, 40, of Stadium Gama in Colombo 14 was abducted on 7 January from

near his home.

● Kandhasamy Soundrakumar, 27, of Grandpass Rd in Colombo 14 was abducted on 8 January Wellawatte, Colombo 06.

● Selavarasa Madhi of St Marys Rd, Mattakuliya was abducted on 8 January from near home.

● Selladorai Devendran alias Vijayan, 53, of Aluthmawatha Rd in Colombo 15 was abducted on 9 January from his home. He had been kept blind folded for a full day. The abductors released him near his home the next day.

● Sivasubramaniam Sridharan, 25, and M. Suvendran, 24, both of Garment wate, Karande, Puttalam were abducted on 9 January.

● S. N. Ketheeswaran, 31, and S. N. Kanapathy Nadar, 27, brothers

of 328/9 Aluthmawatha Rd in Colombo 15 were abducted on 10 January from near their home.

● Rashan Savarimuthu, 15, of 23/1 Jubilee Mawatha in Colombo 15 was abducted from near home on 11 January.

The Civil Monitoring Commission is chaired by Srithunga Jayasooriya, leader of the United Socialist Party, and comprises Mano Ganesan, leader of the Western Province People's Front and Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne, leader of the New Left Front. It was set up by the United People's Movement (UPM) to address and intervene against abductions, involuntary disappearances, extra judicial killings and extortions.

● Six armed men in a white van abducted two Tamil youths from their house at Kampawathe in Puthalam. Murugaiah Surenthiran, 24, and Sivasubramaniam Sridharan, 24, both natives of Kilinochchi who had been residing in Puttalam for the last ten years, were abducted.

● SLA officials in Vavuniya said their troopers had shot dead two LTTE cadres in Karuvelapuliyan-kulam area in Vavuniya, when SLA troopers tried to surround six LTTE cadres who had entered into Karuvelapuliyan-kulam jungle hills, crossing Atamasgoda road. One SLA trooper was injured in the fight. A male and a female LTTE cadre were shot dead while the other four had escaped, the SLA said. Many weapons including three T-56 rifles and ten claymore devices were recovered from the Tigers, the SLA officials claimed.

● Unidentified persons triggered a claymore device near Osmania

Muslim College in Jaffna seriously injuring a member of a SLA street patrol unit. The claymore device was hidden in an abandoned house near the college.

● Two paramilitary installations were attacked in Valaichenai in Batticaloa district. At least 10 paramilitary members were killed and four wounded. A house at Puthukudiyiruppu and another at Vinayagapuram, were ambushed by armed men in three wheelers. More than 25 paramilitary members were stationed at the installations.

● More than 40 Tamils were arrested in a cordon and search operation conducted by the SLA and Sri Lanka Police from in areas of Minuwangoda, Negombo, Wattala and Gampaha in the western province following the explosion in Wattala of a transformer supplying electricity to the area. The combined search operation was carried out in areas close to several transformers. The

Police said the transmitter explosion was an act of sabotage.

● An armed mob led by Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Labour, Mervin Silva, arrived at the open air stage in Nugegoda, the site of the first public event organised by the newly established United People's Movement (UPM), and attacked the journalists who were present at the site to cover the event. Three journalists were beaten and the cameras of two were smashed by the mob, which succeeded in disrupting the meeting.

## 08 January

● 3 civilians were killed when the SLA stepped up artillery fire on Vaharai, including the civilian refuge comprising Vaharai Hospital where thousands of Internally Displaced Persons were staying. Vaharai hospital staff sought assistance from the ICRC to transport the critically injured to

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## NEWS

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Batticaloa for further treatment.

● One of the four civilians who were critically injured in the SLA's artillery attack on Vaharai Government hospital succumbed to her injuries at Valaichchenai District hospital after the ICRC officials brought them in boats from besieged Vaharai to SLA controlled Valaichchenai. Ms. K. Santhirakala, 17, died and Ms. P. Mohanappiriya, 6, Mr. S. Thanonjan, 15, and Ms. Meena, 20, were admitted to the Valaichchenai Hospital. The SLA carried out artillery attacks on Vaharai where thousands of civilians, including the IDPs from the neighbouring Trincomalee district, were gathered. A number of humanitarian organizations have appealed to the international community and the ICRC to declare the Vaharai hospital as a safe-haven.

● An LTTE cadre was killed and two SLA soldiers injured in a confrontation near the SLA's FDL in Omanthai, north of Vavuniya. The soldiers searched the area after the clashes and recovered the body of the LTTE member along with T-56 assault rifle, a magazine and food stuffs. They said the LTTE member was attached to organization's auxiliary force.

● Unidentified persons abducted a father of two and his friend 10 days earlier in Mannar, their relatives lodged complaint at Mannar Police. Babel Rossini Kittler, 30, of Pallimunai and his friend Mohamed Faleel Ali Raja of Uppukulam were abducted with their motorbike when they went to Pesalai on a private errand on 27 December. Since then, no news heard about them, relatives said. They have also registered complaints with the ICRC and the SLHRC Mannar district branch.

● Unidentified persons lobbed a hand grenade on an SLA road patrol at Salaiady on Jaffna-Point Pedro road, close to Vadamaradchy Hindu Girls' College, minutes before an SLA convoy passed the area. No one was injured in the attack.

● Unidentified men threw a hand grenade on a SLA road patrol at Alayady area in Polykandy, Jaffna. The SLA troopers shot dead a youth and claimed that he lobbed the hand grenade. The SLA also said that they discovered a claymore device planted by him. The body was handed to Valvettithurai police who transferred the body to Valvettithurai hospital for post mortem examinations.

● The SLA sentry post on College road in front of Point Pedro Hartley College, Jaffna, was attacked by unknown gunmen who lobbed hand grenade at the troopers manning the sentry, which is located inside a HSZ.

● Unknown men hurled hand grenades at a SLA road patrol at Vathiry in Karaveddy, Jaffna. No one was injured in this attack.

● Seevaratnam Niranjan was taken to his birth place Kaithaday in Navatkuli West by SLA personnel in a Buffel armoured vehicle where they arrested another civilian Poopalasingham Rameshkumar, 28, father of two. Though Rameshkumar's wife reported her husband's arrest to the SLHRC, the SLA has denied the accusation.

● The funeral of two Agricultural Department officials who were killed in a claymore attack by a SLA DPU in Nedunkerni was held in Vavuniya. A large number of people, including representatives of government offices in Vavuniya, parliamentarians and representatives of farmers' associations took part in the funeral.

● Seventy civilians were arrested in a search operation launched by Eravur police and the STF at Savukkady, Batticaloa district. Five Tamil youths among the arrested were detained while the rest were released after interrogation. Young men and women among the refugees were also subjected to investigation during the search.

● Tension prevailed in Jaffna when the SLA beefed up troop deployment near schools and colleges in the town as 80% of the students of Jaffna Hindu College, Hindu Ladies College, and the Hindu Primary vacated the school premises after a student mob burned a Sri Lanka Transport Board bus on Kastooriyar Road. The incident followed a warning by the Jaffna District Tamil Students Union, calling on students to agitate against the forced disappearances of students in Jaffna. Armoured cars and Buffel Armoured Personnel Carriers were seen deployed near the schools and SLA troopers were observed in large numbers in the environs of the schools. The Student Union had warned of mass protests unless Jaffna university undergrads and other students, arrested and abducted by the SLA and SLA associated paramilitaries, were released immediately.

## THE RAJAPAKSE PRESIDENCY

## Civil war again ...

Continued from page 9

over the Tamil Tigers - a solution often promised, never delivered.

Others say no, it is time for a bold political offer to resolve the ethnic conflict once and for all.

If the Tigers refuse to compromise on their objective of a separate state - and well they might - their intransigence will stand exposed.

So which path will Mr Rajapakse follow? Who will he listen to? Big questions, no obvious answers yet.

But there has always been one place to which Sri Lanka's political leaders have turned for advice: astrology.

One previous president - Premadasa - hardly got out of bed before hearing the astrologers' prognosis.

And on the day he died, victim of a Tamil suicide bomber, the advice from the planets had been to stay indoors.

Well, the astrologers are predicting another turbulent year.

February and March, they say, are looking particularly unstable.

Let us hope they are wrong.

This beautiful island could and should have the world at its feet. If only it could stop the killing. I wish I could be more optimistic. I love this place.

But whether you believe it is written in the stars or not, this is a nervous worrying time in Sri Lanka - not an especially Happy New Year.

And as for the whereabouts of the vice-chancellor from Batticaloa... for the moment, not even the astrologers could shed any light on that.

## Dutugemunu ...

Continued from page 9

ly to be unduly worried by this as they have a long-term strategy, have secured nationalist achievements, and, like Ranil in respect of a revival of UNP fortunes, can play a waiting game for the contest for nationalist 'authenticity.'

In the meantime, they'll continue to remind the Rajapakses of their presence, such as through shots across the bow in the form of threats of a general strike by their powerful unions and warnings about the consequences of UNP crossovers.

These constitute a gentle reminder that the JVP are still there, undaunted, in their long-term goal of taking the political Centre and in their preservation of the Mahinda Chintanaya ideological programme.

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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





Tamil civilians fleeing Sri Lankan military bombardment of LTTE-controlled Vaharai queue to get past military checkpoints. Report p1, p3-5. Photo TamilNet



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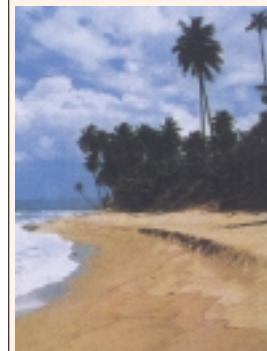


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