

The international community abandoned the ceasefire.

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Sri Lanka forces mass for offensives



Children read a book while sitting in a bunker in the their village near Kilinochchi. Sri Lanka's military is bombarding LTTE-held areas daily. Photo LAKRUWAN WANNIARACHCHI/AFP/Getty Images

SRI LANKA'S armed forces are massing troops and have weapons for further ground offensives against the Tigers while continuing their bombardment of LTTE-controlled areas.

The military's hectic preparations come as the fifth anniversary of the 2002 ceasefire, which exists only on paper now, was marked by vehement protests by Sinhala nationalists urging hard-line President Mahinda Rajapakse to tear up the agreement.

The military has already vowed to clear the east of the LTTE before attacking Vanni, a large swathe of territory the Tigers control in the north.

Emboldened by a series of retreats by the Tigers in the east over the past eight months, the government announced plans to attack Thoppigala where LTTE bases are located in thick jungles.

The Army is moving vast quantities of weapons and ammunition to areas close to the Muhamalai frontline in the Jaffna peninsula and also near Omanthai in Vavuniya district.

Muhamalai and Omanthai are the two main entry points to the LTTE-controlled Vanni region, which President Rajapakse, in his Independence Day speech, vowed Feb 4 to capture within a year.

In Jaffna the military has extended hours of curfew. In addition to the 11-hour night curfew, during the day civilians are barred from major supplying the Muhamalai frontline from the Palaly base complex. The military has also imposed a peninsula wide ban on fishing until further notice.

Tuesday last week the Army began moving heavy weapons including at least fifteen tanks to the Muhamalai forward areas. Weapons and troops have been moving to the area continuously for several days, reports said.

Meanwhile the Sunday Times reported a continuing military build-up by the LTTE also in and around the Jaffna peninsula.

Newly trained LTTE cadres were being deployed in rear defences and other localities

while regular cadres were being moved to frontline defended localities at Muhamalai.

In Batticaloa, the military's announcement that 'the fall of Thoppigala is imminent' has triggered the flight of thousands of Tamils into government areas.

An estimated 70,000 people who fled earlier Sri Lankan offensives are already struggling in squalid refugee camps.

In the run up to the publicly declared push for Thoppigala, Sri Lankan troops have also begun operations against LTTE positions south west of Trincomalee.

Artillery and helicopter gunships have attacked LTTE camps in the jungles near the naval base.

The military has stepped up artillery bombardment and airstrikes on western parts of Batticaloa district and the Vanni.

Villages in the LTTE-held hinterland west of the lagoon that separates it from government-controlled town are being bombarded regularly, displacing ever-increasing numbers of civilians.

Amid daily artillery and Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher bombardments of frontline villages, Air Force jets are bombing deeper areas.

The Tigers are shelling military positions in Jaffna and Batticaloa in response.

This week a group of foreign Ambassadors visiting Batticaloa narrowly escaped LTTE shells which hit the military base their helicopter landed on.

US Ambassador Robert Blake and Italian Ambassador Pio Mariani, were slightly wounded when four shells exploded near the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) helicopter they had alighted from. Reports said Mr. Blake's arm was grazed by a stone or shrapnel and Mr. Mariani suffered a small cut to his scalp.

The LTTE said the government had failed to notify it in advance of the movement of foreign diplomats into the Northeast warzones as is customary practice and had launched artillery attacks from the airfield prompting Tiger counterfire.

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NEWS

Sri Lanka and India step up naval patrols

INDIA and Sri Lanka are boosting efforts to stop the Liberation Tigers smuggling supplies from India's Tamil Nadu state across the Palk Straits, the government in Colombo said this week.

The authorities in Tamil Nadu are creating new coastal checkpoints and police posts and two days ago seized aluminum bars being smuggled to northern Sri Lanka as raw material for weapons, Sri Lanka's Defense spokesman, Minister Keheliya Rambukwella, said.

The Indian moves are in response to renewed requests by the government of hardline President Mahinda Rajapakse which has vowed to destroy the LTTE militarily.

The Sri Lankan request came as Indian Defence Minister A. K. Anthony pledged to make surveillance of India's coast topmost priority of the coast guard and navy.

It also comes after a string of seizures of materials which could be used for weapons manufacture by the Indian authorities in coastal areas of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, home to 65 million Tamils.

The seizures are possibly the "tip of the iceberg," Mr. Anthony said, according to Indian media reports cited by Sri Lanka's Media Center for National Security.

Minister Rambukwella, citing the recent visit to India in early February by Sri Lankan Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapakse, brother of the President, has described the relations between the two countries as 'a new beginning.'

Hailing the intercepting of a boat loaded with arm making material in the Palk Strait by Indian Coast Guards on February 14, he said: "Please, I request India to do more."

Minister Anthony, taking part in a fleet review on February 19, described the suspected LTTE boat traffic in the Palk Strait as a threat.

Citing this as an example, he promised 15 new ships, 23 aircraft and modern equipment for the Indian Coast Guard to combat drug trafficking, piracy and smuggling along the extensive Indian coast.

The Sri Lankan government has long been lobbying New Delhi for naval cooperation to crackdown on alleged LTTE gun running in the Indian Ocean.

President Rajapakse during his visit to India in November 2006 personally sought joint patrolling of the waters between the two countries.

However Indian premier Manmohan Singh denied this request from Sri Lanka's Sinhala

hardline government amid opposition from major political parties from Tamil Nadu.

Earlier this month Sri Lanka's new foreign minister Rohita Bogollogama visited India to repeat his predecessor, Mangala Samra-weera's, request for increased patrolling of the waters between the two countries.

The recent captures of boats carrying supplies for the LTTE suggest that, whilst not publicly agreeing to Sri Lanka's request, India has stepped up naval patrolling as requested.

The seizures began in early November last year with the Tamil Nadu police recovering a lathe machine used for making bomb shells from a fishing boat in Rameswaram.

Shortly afterwards, on November 29, Tamil Nadu police recovered 30 boxes of Gelex boosters used to increase the velocity of bomb shrapnel from a vehicle involved in a traffic accident near Madhurai on the highway connecting Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

On December 5 and 11 fishermen from Rameswaram found three live rockets in their fishing nets and handed them in to the authorities.

Again, on January 24 Tamil Nadu police took into custody two tons of ball bearings used in bombs and mines on route from Chennai to the coastal city of Thoothukudi.

Following this haul eight people were arrested including five Sri Lankan Tamils and further three tons of ball bearings were seized.

The arrested men have been charged with trading in illegal explosives and for violating the Foreigners' Act, press reports said.

"Several seizures of contraband along the Tamil Nadu coast as also from inland have stamps of the LTTE," a senior police officer told Indian media after the raid.

"But in the absence of mid sea-sea seizures or landing-point seizures in Sri Lanka we have not been able to link the Tigers with the smuggling," he added.

Indian intelligence agency sources were also quoted by media reports as saying that the recent hauls may be only the tip of the iceberg.

With over 1000km of coastline and over 400 landing points the long and porous Tamil Nadu coast is considered an ideal route for taking supplies to Sri Lanka's north.

The authorities in Tamil Nadu are creating new coastal checkpoints and police posts, press reports said.



A Vikram class OPV with the Indian Navy will become Sri Lanka's third 'blue water' warship

India donates second large warship to Sri Lanka Navy

INDIA is to grant the Sri Lanka Navy another ocean-going warship as part of greater cooperation between the two countries, media reports in Colombo said Sunday.

The Nation newspaper said India "will either grant or lease a coast guard vessel" to the Sri Lanka Navy.

The former Indian Coast Guard vessel, 'Varaha', is similar to the Offshore Patrol craft (OPC) which India provided in 2000 and which is now the flagship of the SLN, the paper said. The Varaha will be the third large 'blue water' warship in the SLN's fleet along with the US-supplied cutter.

The Varaha has already been serving with the SLN as a substitute while the SLNS Sayura, the flagship of the SLN bought from India 7 years ago, was being refurbished in India.

The refurbishment of SLNS

Sayura was being conducted at no cost to Sri Lanka, press reports last year said.

The 75 metre length Varaha requires a crew of 100 including 11 officers. It can reach a top speed of 22 knots and has a range of 8500 nautical miles.

If the proposed grant is carried through by the Indian government, the Varaha will be the SLN's third such vessel with a deep sea capability, The Nation reported.

Formally known as Indian Navy's Ship Saryu, the SLNS Sayura was provided to increase Colombo's blue water capability, especially in the light of LTTE smuggling weapons on oceangoing ships.

Another OPC was added to the fleet last year when the US Coast Guard vessel, 'Courageous' was donated to Sri Lanka. It was

refurbished and mounted with a weapons system in the US and commissioned as SLNS Samudura.

All 3 vessels (Sayura, Samudura and Varaha) have the ability to carry two helicopters on board and leave the option open for the establishment of a naval air wing, which has been deferred on several occasions due to monetary considerations, the paper said.

Varaha is a Vikram class OPC commissioned in 1992. At construction it was designed to be in service for 20 years till 2012. But after some modifications, the vessel is expected to be in service for approximately 26 years.

The wear and tear of Coast Guard ships is greater since they stay longer at sea and cruise faster when involved in a chase and therefore, their lifespan is shorter than other naval assets of similar size, The Nation reported.

Stories float after boat sunk

IN contrast to trenchant criticism in a section of the press in Colombo, the Sri Lankan government is happy that India blew up an explosive-laden LTTE boat, the Hindustan Times reported.

"They had no option but to blow it up," Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Dr Palitha Kohona reacting to a report in The Island daily, that the blowing up was a "mysterious" affair and that Colombo had rejected the Indian claims about the boat's mission.

The boat, with some LTTE cadres and two Indian nationals on board, and heavily lined with a mixture of TNT and RDX, was caught by the Indian Coast Guard off south Tamil Nadu on February 13.

On February 20, after investigations and due legal process, it was blown up 20 nautical miles off Chennai, as it was deemed a grave security risk.

The Indian authorities and the Tamil Nadu police said that the boat was on a mission to strike a

Sri Lankan harbour, probably Kankesanthurai in Jaffna in the north.

They say the boat ran into a Sri Lankan naval patrol in Sri Lankan waters and turned into Indian waters, where it was caught by the Indian Coast Guard.

Indian officials also said that 15 LTTE suicide boats were hovering around Sri Lanka waiting for an opportunity to strike targets in the island.

But these claims were questioned by Sri Lankans who wanted to go by the original Indian theory that the target was an Indian leader or installation, rather than a Sri Lankan one, as the boat was seized in Indian waters.

Many Sri Lankans had seen in this theory a good chance to show New Delhi that India too was in danger from the LTTE and that it should take the sternest measures to destroy the menace.

The later finding that the boat's mission was aimed at a Sri Lankan target had come as a dis-

appointment in Colombo, the Hindustan Times said.

The Island quoted un-named Sri Lankan officials as saying that the blowing up was under "mysterious circumstances" and that the claim about the 15 explosives-laden boats was a "blatant lie."

A Sri Lankan shipping expert even charged that the story of suicide boats hovering around the island was India's insidious way preventing international shipping from using Sri Lankan harbours!

Another un-named Sri Lankan official had told the paper that the 34 ft trawler with a maximum speed of 10 knots could never have been used for a suicide attack as suicide boats were typically smaller and capable of cruising at 40 knots.

And Colombo or Kankesanthurai could not have been targets because these were high security zones with no possibility of slow moving fishing trawlers or any fishing vessel piercing through the naval cordon, he said.

NEWS

Tacit support for war as truce turns 5

THE fifth anniversary of Sri Lanka's tattered ceasefire was marked with contrasting reactions from the parties to the agreement, the government and the LTTE, peace facilitator Norway and Sri Lankan political parties.

The LTTE and the Tamil National Alliance, Sri Lanka's largest Tamil political party said the international community must share the blame for the resumption of the island's protracted ethnic conflict.

The international monitors of the SLMM (Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission) and the Norwegian government issued statements lamenting the breakdown of the truce.

However, the Sri Lankan government maintained an official silence and instead launched fresh attacks against the LTTE.

Meanwhile Sinhala nationalists, including hardline parties allied to President Mahinda Rajapakse's government stepped up street protests demanding the abrogation of the agreement.

Citing the intransigence and hardline stance of the Sri Lankan state in relation to the ceasefire agreement and the peace process the LTTE called for international support for the Tamil people's right determine their own political future.

"The failure of the peace process despite the international participation [has] deeply frustrated the Tamil people. To their bitter disappointment, the CFA and the internationally facilitated peace process have, as in all previous peace efforts, failed again."

"It has also compelled the Tamil people to resume their freedom struggle to realize their right to self-determination and to achieve statehood."

Citing the state's resumption of its military campaign against the Tigers, the TNA also called for international support for the Tamil people's right to self-determination.

"In the face of the Sri Lankan state's insistence on pursuing a military solution to the Tamil National question, the Tamil people are appealing to the international community to recognize their struggle for self-determination and self-rule."

Following a public declaration by hardline Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse that the ceasefire agreement was "a mistake," Sinhala nationalists have been escalating their campaigns against the truce.

Thousands of supporters of the ultra-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi peramuna (JVP) supporters took to the streets Thursday Feb 22, the fifth anniversary of the signing of the CFA, demanding the government tear it up. The JVP is supporting a fast unto death launched by several monks.

Wimal Weerawansa, the JVP's parliamentary group leader told Parliament this week: "The President, Parliament, judiciary and the people were cheated



President Rajapakse reviews the Independence Day parade on Feb 4. His government has resumed the war with international support.

when the Ceasefire Agreement was signed."

However the JHU, a coalition partner of the UPFA government, responding to the JVP protests by saying the pact had already been destroyed.

"Holding agitation and fasting campaigns to force the government nullify the CFA is meaningless at a time when the military has successfully ousted LTTE from the east and have launched aerial attacks on LTTE targets in Killinochchi and Mullaitivu in the north," JHU representative Venerable Omalpe Sobitha Thera said.

However, he echoed the JVP's charge the truce was unconstitutional: "A Prime Minister who had no powers under the Executive Presidential System of the government signed the CFA with the LTTE five years ago contrary to the constitution."

He was referring to the controversial signing by then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe of the CFA, rather than the President at the time, Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Sri Lanka's powerful presidency is the overarching authority in the country. The President is head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces.

Kumaratunga denounced Wickremesinghe for signing the pact, but did not abrogate it due to international support for the truce.

Norwegian reactions came from Development Minister Eric Solheim, who was for many years Oslo's peace envoy to Sri Lanka, and Norway's Ambassador in Colombo, Hans Brattskar.

The Norwegian government pointed out the CFA had put an immediate stop to 20 years of fighting in which tens of thousands of people lost their lives but non adherence to the agreement resulted in return of violence and

massive human rights abuses, grave humanitarian suffering and the displacement of over 200,000 people.

"Norway is willing to go the extra mile to assist their peace endeavours at their request. As soon as the parties renew their peace efforts, we will be ready to do all we can to help. It is my sincere opinion that the vast majority of Sri Lankans have a strong yearning for peace," Mr. Brattskar said.

The SLMM acknowledged that the ceasefire now exists only on paper and offered its continued services in monitoring the ceasefire implementation as per its mandate.

"Following the CFA, a consid-

erable reduction of violence was reached, particularly welcomed by the families in the North and the East who had lived for two decades in areas ravaged by war," the SLMM said.

"[However] at the five-year milestone, however; abductions, harassments, killings, shelling and air strikes are taking place at a war like level."

Notably, the Co-Chairs of the peace process - the United States, European Union, Japan and Norway - did not make a comment on the anniversary of the truce's signing.

The powerful quartet have, since 2003, when they formed themselves, dominated international management of the

Norwegian peace process.

Recent statements by individual countries suggest the Co-chairs are split on the future of the CFA, with Norway backing the truce and the US leading support for Colombo's hardline approach.

United States Ambassador Robert Blake, for example, explicitly avoided reference to the ceasefire in his speech at the Galle donor conference at the end of January and Japan, which provide 80% of Sri Lanka's aid, has also has not referred to the ceasefire in recent times.

Analysts say the silence stems from tacit support for the Sri Lankan government's military campaign against the LTTE.

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Tamil Education Development Council's International Tamil Examination (2006-2007) will be conducted on Saturday May 5th, 2007 at 12:30 pm all over England.

Application form for the examination can be downloaded from:

<http://www.tamilkalvikoodam.org.uk/>

NEWS

'World shares blame for truce collapse'

THE international community shares the blame for Sri Lanka's renewed war, the Tamil Tigers charged this week, accusing international actors of bias and inaction which they say has left the 2002 ceasefire agreement meaningless.

"The international community's unhelpful engagement in the peace effort has had the effect of encouraging the Sri Lankan state to pursue a military solution," the LTTE said in a statement issued overnight to mark the fifth anniversary of a now tattered Ceasefire Agreement (CFA).

"The international community's failure to take concrete action against the Sri Lankan state to stop serious breaches of the ceasefire agreement or its widespread and systematic human rights violations has contributed to war-like conditions."

The LTTE's comments were echoed by Sri Lanka's largest Tamil party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA).

"Although the Ceasefire Agreement came into effect with the strong support of the international community, the latter's selective engagement in the peace effort has had the effect of encouraging the Sri Lankan state in its pursuit of a military solution to the Tamil National question," the TNA said.

"The international community's unreflective insistence on 'a united Sri Lanka' and its unwillingness or failure to take concrete measures to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan state to abandon its aggression in its pursuit of the military option has contributed to rendering the CFA meaningless," the TNA said.

"The simultaneous international proscriptions of LTTE, imposed at the behest of the Sri Lankan Government, has also contributed to the resumption of the conflict."

A simmering shadow war between the LTTE and paramilitary groups backed by Sri Lankan military intelligence exploded into open confrontations between both sides early last year.

Canada and the European Union banned the LTTE early last year and in July the government launched the first of a string of offensives against the Tigers in the east.

The government, emboldened by the capture of territory recognised as controlled by the Tigers under the terms of the truce, have since vowed to wipe them out.

The Tigers hailed the truce which they have described in the past as the 'foundation of any peace process.'

"Even though today it exists only on paper, it remains a unique document in the search for an end to the national conflict," the Tigers said.

However, Sri Lankan military aggression has rendered the CFA defunct and meaningless, they said.

Moreover, international bias against the LTTE had undermined the foundations of the peace process, they said.

"[Despite Sri Lankan offensives into our controlled areas] The international community chose to unfairly take punitive measures against the LTTE, seriously undermining the LTTE's status as an equal party in the negotiation process and thereby weakening the peace process itself."

"This international bias against the LTTE further strengthened the government's intransigence and encouraged it to adopt even more hard line positions [at the talks]," they said, referring to the abortive meeting in Geneva last October.

The LTTE also condemned the international community's failure to pressure the hardline Colombo government to rein in the state's armed forces despite the widespread humanitarian and human rights abuses many observers are criticising the military for.

"The continued failure of the international community, despite the volume of independently gathered evidence, to take effective steps to curb the state's abuses, is turning the Tamil homeland into an Asian Darfur," the Tigers said.

"The situation in the Tamil homeland is deteriorating rapidly and the humanitarian and human rights crises are deepening. People in the Tamil homeland are living in traumatic conditions," the Tigers said.

Repeating its calls for the implementation of the CFA, the LTTE pointed out it had been extremely patient in the face of the state's occupation of LTTE territory and human rights violations against Tamil civilians.

The Tigers warned Sri Lankan aggression and international inaction portended greater bloodshed in the coming period.

"The Sri Lankan military has conducted unprovoked offensives against our forces and occupied our areas in violation of ...of the CFA."

"Even under such grave circumstances we refrained from launching offensive operations and kept ourselves in defensive positions."

"The Sri Lankan government's ongoing war of aggression, aimed at the subjugation of the Tamil people under the guise of 'war on terrorism' will add to the blood-stained pages of the island's history," it added.

"It has also compelled the Tamil people to resume their freedom struggle."



US Ambassador Robert O'Blake with Sri Lankan officers in Jaffna last year. File photo Daily Mirror

Why not self-rule for Sri Lanka's Tamils also?

CITING international support for self-rule of peoples elsewhere in the world, the Liberation Tigers this week again called on the international community to support the Tamil people's demand for self-determination.

Citing the Sri Lankan state's resumption of brutal military offensives and its intransigence on genuinely sharing power with the Tamils, the island's largest Tamil party, the Tamil National Alliance, also appealed for international recognition of the Tamils' demand for self-rule.

Both comments came in statements marking the fifth anniversary of the now frayed 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA).

"The failure of the [Norwegian] peace process despite the international participation [has] deeply frustrated the Tamil people. To their bitter disappointment, the CFA and the internationally facilitated peace process have, as in all previous peace efforts, failed again," the LTTE said.

The Sri Lankan government's pursuit of the military option and the widespread human rights violation by its armed forces have "compelled the Tamil people to resume their freedom struggle to realize their right to self-determination and to achieve statehood," the Tigers said.

Against this backdrop, the LTTE calling for an impartial and constructive role by the international community and criticised their unquestioning support for Sri Lanka's sovereignty.

"In contrast to current international practice with respect to national conflicts in other parts of the world, the international community's insistence on a solution that does not infringe on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka is deeply frustrating for the Tamil people."

"The denial of the Tamil people's will is itself a breach of the law of self-determination."

"The international community has not rejected, for example, the South Sudan Machkos Protocol facilitated by US, UK, Norway and Italy on the basis it is affecting the sovereignty of Sudan."

"Nor has the international community questioned the Serbia-Montenegro agreement and the recent proposal on the future of Kosovo on the basis these contravene Serbian sovereignty. The Papua New Guinea-Bougainville Agreement that was not opposed by the international community on the basis of safeguarding territorial integrity and sovereignty."

"In all these cases the peoples concerned have exercised their right to self-determination and sovereignty," the LTTE said.

Indeed, respect for Sri Lankan sovereignty had not prevented the international community from backing the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement, the LTTE pointed out.

"Unprecedented in peace efforts in the island, the CFA was formulated with the full support of the international community, transcended the parameters of Sri

Lanka's majoritarian constitution."

The LTTE's call for international support for the Tamil people was this week echoed by the TNA, which also cited the suffering inflicted by the state armed forces on the Tamils.

"Today, humanitarian and human rights conditions in the Northeast are deteriorating rapidly as the Sri Lankan government puts its trust on a military solution to this political conflict," the TNA said.

"The Sri Lankan state justifies these atrocities committed by its armed forces in the name of protecting its sovereignty."

"The international community's unreflective insistence on 'a united Sri Lanka' and its unwillingness or failure to take concrete measures to exert pressure on the Sri Lankan state to abandon its aggression in its pursuit of the military option has contributed to rendering the CFA meaningless," the TNA said.

"In these [past] five years, the Sri Lankan government has utterly failed to alleviate the sufferings of the Tamil people. Neither has it contributed meaningfully to a lasting solution to the national conflict."

"In the face of the Sri Lankan state's insistence on pursuing a military solution to the Tamil National question, the Tamil people are appealing to the international community to recognize their struggle for self-determination and self-rule."

NEWS



Buddhist monks stage a protest rally on Feb 22 demanding the Sri Lanka government scrap its truce with the LTTE. Photo LAKRUWAN WANNIARACHCHI/AFP/Getty Image

Sinhala nationalists: 'truce is a threat'

SRI LANKA'S frayed ceasefire agreement between the Tamil Tigers and the government, which is five years old, may soon go the way of previous abortive agreements in the island's conflict, amid emerging protests by Sinhalese nationalists and criticism by the President himself.

Until a cycle of killing began escalating in 2005, the 2002 truce, underpinning Norwegian mediated peace process, and had ushered in the longest period of peace since the conflict began.

However, on the February 9, Sri Lanka's hardline President Rajapakse told the BBC, that the truce was a mistake because it had legitimised the LTTE's control of territory.

"Today we realise we have made a mistake," President Rajapakse said of the CFA. "Through [it], we have demarcated areas called LTTE-controlled areas."

Since President Rajapakse came to power in November

2005, the Sri Lankan armed forces have launched major offensives to clear the LTTE out of the east and are now threatening to take the war to the north.

The CFA has all but collapsed after several months of bloody fighting in which government offensives capturing large swathes of LTTE territory.

In the context of President Rajapakse's dismissal of the truce, Sinhala nationalist agitation has escalated sharply in the past few days, as the fifth anniversary approaches.

Hardline monks of the National Bikku Front started a fast-unto-death on February 11 demanding the government to withdraw from the CFA and began a prayer campaign on February 17 at the island's main Buddhist temple, the Dalada Maligawa (or Temple of the Tooth) in Kandy.

The ultra-nationalist JVP, Sri Lanka's third largest party, held rally in Colombo on Feb 22

demanding an end to the truce.

They were joined by nationalist Buddhist monks in saffron robes.

"This cease-fire is a serious threat to the country's unitary status," a spokesman for the monks, told The Island newspaper.

The JVP, whose grassroots support was crucial to Rajapakse's victory at the November 2005 Presidential elections, has condemned the CFA since its signing in 2002. The party, along with the monks' party, the JHU, endorse President Rajapakse's efforts to militarily destroy the LTTE.

The JVP has consistently opposed any agreement with the LTTE and has been instrumental in launching legal challenges to past agreements between Colombo and the Tigers resulting in past agreements being abandoned.

Last year the JVP filed a case for the annulment of the 1987 merger of the Northeast province.

Under the Indo-Sri Lanka

Agreement of that year, the two provinces were merged, recognising these were "areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples."

However, in response to the JVP petition, the Supreme Court declared the merger null and void.

Despite international disquiet, President Rajapakse moved swiftly to trifurcate the Northeast province, a move Tamils argue is intended to dilute their claim to a homeland in the island.

In 2005 the JVP successfully filed a case against the Post Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS), an internationally-backed aid sharing mechanism between Colombo and the Tigers.

In the aftermath of the Boxing day tsunami which devastated the coastal areas of the island leaving tens of thousands dead and hundreds of thousands homeless, the international donors pressured Sri Lanka to enter into an agreement

with the LTTE on sharing aid.

Then President Chandrika Kumaratunga succumbed to pressure and signed the PTOMS, however the JVP quit her government in disgust at the deal and then challenged it in court.

For its part, LTTE has repeatedly stated its commitment to the CFA and insists only if the truce holds and is implemented can the peace process advance.

However, just as with the PTOMS and the NE merger, the JVP has filed a petition against the CFA in the Supreme Court.

That comes up for consideration on March 6.

Analysts say President Rajapakse's government, under international pressure over widespread human rights violations by the security forces, will avoid incurring further international ire and not abrogate the pact formally.

Instead, the government will step up its military offensives against the LTTE.

Truce is 'first step' towards a solution - Norway

NORWAY, whose efforts to facilitate peace in Sri Lanka have earned the ire and vitriol of Sinhala nationalists, called last week for the government and the Liberation Tigers to adhere to the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA).

Noting that the 2002 CFA had "put an immediate stop to 20 years of fighting in which tens of thousands of people lost their lives," Norwegian Development Minister Erik Solheim said it had also allowed both sides to hold peace talks.

"Some killings continued in spite of the ceasefire agreement. One killing was followed by

another, and the violence escalated," Mr. Solheim, who was Oslo's peace envoy to Sri Lanka until last year, said.

"The problem started when the parties decided not to implement the agreement into which they themselves had entered."

Last year, a simmering shadow war between the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE exploded into open confrontation, with Colombo launching a series of ground offensives capturing swathes of territory from the LTTE.

"Massive human rights abuses, grave humanitarian suffering and the displacement of over

200,000 people are among the results," Mr. Solheim said.

"It is the responsibility of the parties to put a stop to this and to demonstrate the political will to reach a lasting settlement."

"It is my strong hope that both parties will recognise the need to secure the full implementation of the [CFA] as a first step toward reaching a political solution."

"The government of Norway remains in regular contact with the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. Norway is willing to go the extra mile to assist their peace endeavours at their request."

"As soon as the parties renew

their peace efforts, we will be ready to do all we can to help."

Mr. Solheim hailed the the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) tasked with overseeing the truce.

The SLMM, in its statement, lamented the recent period of bloodletting.

"Nearly 4000 people have lost their lives in incidents connected to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka during the past 15 months. ... In contrast, during the three previous years less than 130 deaths related to the conflict were recorded," the SLMM said.

Hardline President Mahinda

Rajapakse was elected on a pro-war Sinhala nationalist platform in November 2005.

"At the time of the [CFA's] five-year milestone, however; abductions, harassments, killings, shelling and air strikes are taking place at a war like level," the SLMM said.

"The SLMM remains committed to the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, as a neutral party, seeking continuously to develop a deep understanding of the conflict situation, with the sincere aim of finding ways to continue its contribution according to the mandate."

EDITORIAL

TAMIL GUARDIAN

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False Hope

The international community abandoned the Ceasefire Agreement

When the Liberation Tigers and the Sri Lankan government signed the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) five years ago, they justifiably triggered a euphoric wave of optimism across the island. The guns had of course been silent for two months already - the LTTE's Christmas truce had been promptly reciprocated by the UNF government (newly elected with a nod and a wink to the Tamils from the Tigers). Hindsight is a wonderful thing. But when it was unveiled, the CFA had a magical air of finality about it. The international community lavishly praised the truce and called for talks. Norwegian shuttle diplomacy - and not a little input - helped draft it. And, as in all agreements, both the government and the LTTE gained and lost by the ceasefire. But, and this is the crucial truth, both sides were satisfied enough to sign it. They even agreed to international monitoring of their conduct.

Five years on, as the hardpressed staff of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) pointed out last week, bloody battles are once again being fought in the Northeast - alongside a dirty war of terrifying abductions and vicious murders. Since President Mahinda Rajapakse assumed power the simmering 'shadow war' between Sri Lanka's military intelligence and the LTTE has exploded into a major conflict. It is often said that the truce exists only on paper now. In practical terms, this is true. Yet the CFA still has massive potency. Neither side is prepared to serve the two-week notice to quit. That alone attests to the powerful symbolism of the CFA. The agreement is more than a technocratic set of rules. It represents the very principle that negotiation, not violence, must finally settle political questions; that peace is better than war. To abrogate the CFA is to repudiate this. Which is why both the state and the LTTE refuse to do so. It is also why the warmongering Sinhala nationalists have demanded the CFA be torn up from the moment it was inked.

The CFA has been pilloried from the outset. Chandrika Kumaratunga, the President whose abortive 'war for peace' concluded with the truce was its most powerful critic. Yet she never dared exercise her considerable Presidential powers to abrogate it. Her chagrin that Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe usurped her authority and signed the CFA was tempered by a recognition of the extent of international backing for the truce and the mood amongst most Sri Lankans. The question then is why the CFA is now being

ignored so blatantly by both sides?

There are many reasons why the CFA failed to fulfill its promise and pave the way to a negotiated peace. There are other reasons, some of which are related, why it collapsed into renewed war. Naturally, depending on one's political loyalties, blame is apportioned differently. But one thing is quite clear. In the past five years, international support for the CFA has tangibly faded. Nothing symbolizes this more starkly than the international silence that marked the truce's fifth anniversary this month. Norway's lone voice trotted out an obligatory salute and a plea for the ceasefire to be honoured. Meanwhile there is a shameful thundering silence from that mighty institution which appointed itself to manage Sri Lanka's transition to peace: the Co-Chairs. When the United States, European Union and Japan joined Norway in 2002/3 to underwrite the peace process, they put a pile of money on the table and imposed conditionalities on both parties. But unable to micro-manage the outcome they wanted, they simply abandoned the peace-building project. Frustrated at the LTTE's refusal to follow the marked out route to disarmament, they condemned the movement. They also abandoned the conditionalities and gave the money to the Sri Lankan state anyway.

Meanwhile, a peculiar 'counting' of violations was introduced as a much-quoted scale of wickedness by which to judge the two parties. We wonder how many violations the killing of 50 children in an airstrike constitutes? How does this compare with the recruitment and subsequent release of 50 under-18s? Can we numerate the continued occupation by the military of the homes of 30,000 Tamil families, even now, five years on? Yet we are emphatically told that the LTTE violated the truce 'more' than the government. Whilst not the most important aspect of Sri Lanka's fiasco, the impact of the SLMM's methodology on respect for the CFA and especially its own standing, should not be underestimated. How much outrage, really, was provoked when Sri Lankan artillery barrages compelled SLMM chief to huddle in bunkers. Not once, but twice.

Most importantly the CFA's collapse last year can be linked directly to the international community changing its mind on the efficacy of military force. Whilst maintaining the mantra that 'there is no military solution,' the international community has set about helping Sri Lanka unabashedly pursue a mil-

itary victory over the LTTE. Of course the justificatory logic was that the Sri Lankan state had to be helped to defend itself against the LTTE - which is unquestioningly deemed the aggressor in this 'internal' war. The premise that underpinned the CFA (that there are two belligerents) was discarded. Amongst the one-sided condemnations, the exasperating international bias went from being a disrupting influence in the Norwegian peace process to being the underpinning principle of a new round of conflict: President Mahinda Rajapakse would not have resumed a full-scale war against the LTTE without being assured of international support.

Undeniably, both the LTTE and state's armed forces have breached the CFA. However both sides have specific and compelling reasons to court international support and sympathy: the state to retain its diplomatic, military and, above all, financial support; the LTTE to pursue political legitimacy and make a case for governance. Therefore, as long as the international community was committed to opposing the use of military force to settle Sri Lanka's political question, there could be no war. Low intensity violence would continue and occasionally flare, but there would be no return to open conflict.

Yet last year the government launched a full-scale war. The suicide bomb attack on Army Chief Sarath Fonseka last April was the casus belli. Yet almost exactly three years earlier, when the military attacked and sank an LTTE ship in March 2003, restraint, not retaliation was demanded (and exercised). In June 2003, an LTTE oil tanker was similarly destroyed. In each case, a dozen LTTE cadres, including at least four commanders were killed. Yet the truce held. It is precisely because the international community has given President Rajapakse a green light to militarily destroy the LTTE that the ceasefire collapsed so spectacularly last year.

The ramifications of this internationally endorsed new 'war for peace' are exactly the same as the last one. Hundreds of thousands of Tamils will be displaced. Our people will endure starvation and disease amid international embargoes as the world maintains a studied silence - irrespective of Diaspora lobbying. Large numbers will of die or be maimed. And it will continue until either the Tamils end their opposition to Sinhala rule or a new balance of forces emerges from the battlefield our homeland has once again become.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

The LTTE makes its case

Asanga Welikala
Tamil Guardian

THE statement of the LTTE marking the unhappy 5th Anniversary of the CFA is a noteworthy document, coming as it does at this juncture of the current conflict cycle. It is no doubt, a partisan account, but it represents a rather well stated case.

It seeks to give a comprehensive account of events of the past six years or so; engages international humanitarian law in its critique of the conduct of the government and the international community; and reiterates assumptive principles of process such as parity of status, balance of power, and international guarantees (and also, by sleight of hand, 'authentic representative' as opposed to 'sole representative') that underpin the CFA of 2002.

It also contains a succinct restatement of the historical dimensions of the Tamil struggle through peace means to armed conflict; and indicates in outline the substantive parameters of a negotiated settlement acceptable to the LTTE by reference to other international peace agreements.

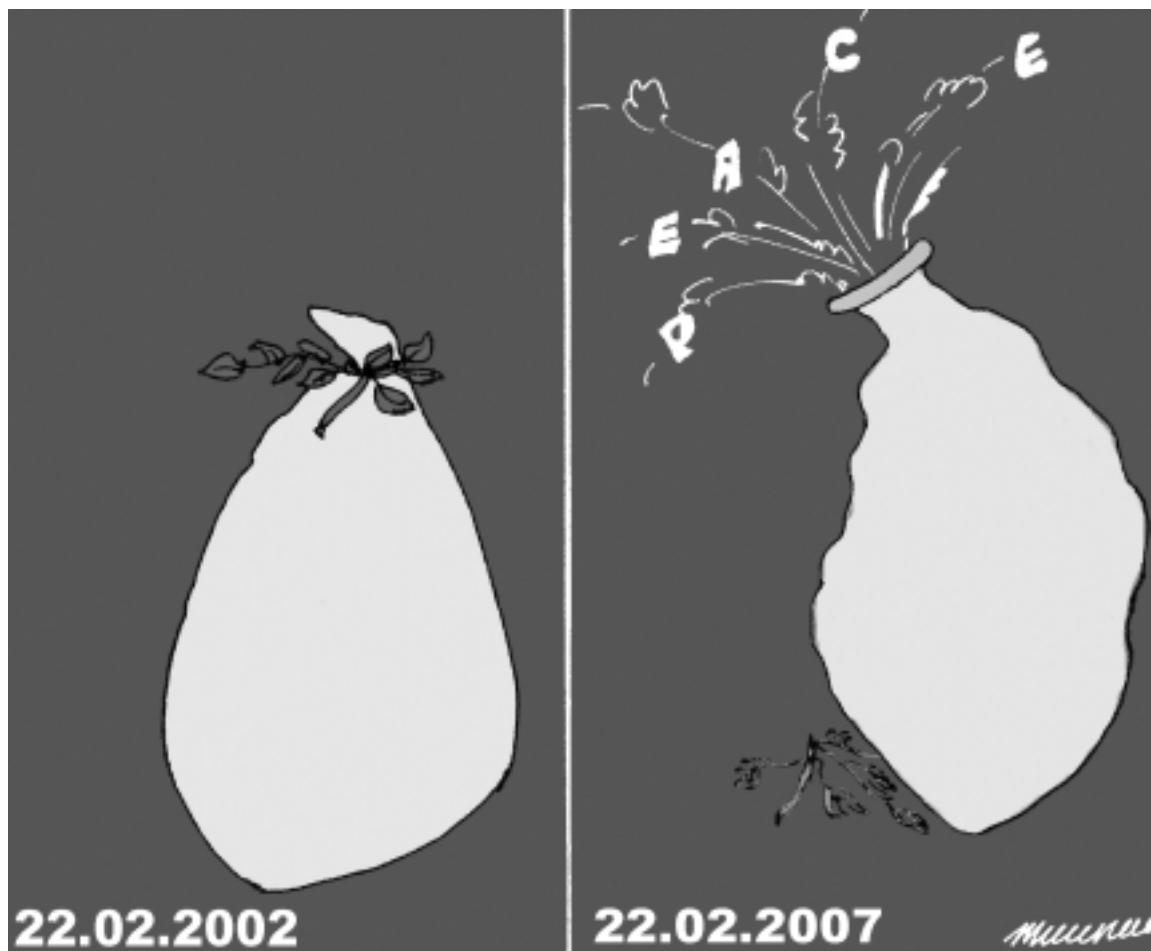
In the absence of Lakshman Kadirgamar, it is difficult to imagine whether the response of the government, if there is one, would meet the LTTE's document on the same intellectual plane, but that is to anticipate events.

In any event, it is the latter set of issues relating to substance that are more interesting.

Clearly, the LTTE wants a resolution to its self-determination claim that goes the way of secession, or graduated secession and earned sovereignty as its invocation of the Machakos Protocol from the Sudan peace process and the Ahtisaari proposals for Kosovo seems to indicate.

Theirs is a freedom struggle for a territory and people entitled to self-determination as articulated in common Article 1 of the human rights Covenants of 1966 and customary international law.

If that was not enough, having met with a repetitive history of duplicity and rejection with regard to federal autonomy, they are now in a position to assert sovereign statehood by virtue of control over territory and population and capacity to enter into international agreements.



The LTTE is the 'authentic representative' by virtue of not only the indirect democratic mandates gained by the TNA, but also by having delivered to the Tamil homeland the trappings of a de facto State.

All this is fine as the articulation of a position. But in practice, there are several obstacles that may prove very difficult to overcome in the LTTE's quest to place itself in the position of the SPLM/A in Southern Sudan or the KLA in Kosovo.

As a matter of international law, the preponderance of the debate on self-determination is about the development of the right to internal self-determination within existing States in meeting collective claims such as those of the Tamils of North-eastern Sri Lanka.

Unilateral secession is without question actively discouraged in international law.

In turn, this is an aspect of the ongoing development of democracy as a principle of international law, wherein internal self-determination is advanced as inherent to emerging entitlements of democratic self-government within States.

This is where the 2003 Oslo Declaration with its reference to

internal self-determination was an outstanding contribution to good sense as a framework for peace in Sri Lanka, but which both parties abandoned on zero sum calculations.

In this context, the LTTE's own conduct with regard to human rights, democracy and political pluralism in the Northeast creates difficulties for itself in engaging international law in its cause.

International politics is, often more important in strategising secession than rigid concepts of international law.

On the other hand, as the examples of Southern Sudan and Kosovo demonstrate, international politics is more often than not, more important in strategising secession than rigid concepts of international law.

Nothing in international law entitles the Kosovars or the Southern Sudanese to the strategic autonomy and progressive sovereignty deals they have achieved, but for the odium and international revulsion that Serbian nationalists and Khartoum Arab-Islamists had brought upon themselves by their treatment of the former.

The adroitness of the LTTE statement lies precisely here.

What appears to be a

plaintive lament about the international community's abandonment of the Tamils is in fact a strategically skilful and legally astute ploy designed to exploit the fundamental weakness of the Colombo regime.

That is, Colombo's reliance on the notoriously fickle support of the international community in the pursuit of a military solution that is accompanied by serious and systematic human rights violations and no ideas on a political settlement.

Staying this course on the part of Colombo, would have a very high probability of legitimising the case for a level of autonomy so extraordinary that even if the LTTE never quite circumvents the geopolitical considerations in realising full legal sovereign statehood, the Northeast would certainly reach a kind of state-like character ipso facto.

The LTTE therefore has studied its situation in comparative context and learnt the lessons well.

If there is such a thing as a policy-making mind in this administration, it would do well to keep these considerations in mind.

Asanga Welikala is a Research Associate with the Legal & Constitutional Unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), Colombo. The views expressed here are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of CPA.

The full text of the LTTE's statement is available at <http://www.ltteps.org/?view=1877&folder=17>

Terror and silence

Sunil Ranasinghe
Tamil Guardian

MORE than two hundred journalists, trade union workers demonstrated in central Colombo on February 6 to condemn the growing harassment and intimidation of the media and left wing activists through killings, abductions and death threats.

On the Feb 5, Sri Lankan army intelligence had kidnapped two trade union activists and a left wing activist.

Two were abducted at work, the other from home. There was no warning; they were not read their rights, they were simply taken away.

They were forced to 'confess' to involvement in recent bombings in the south of Sri Lanka and to links with the LTTE.

Through such forced 'confessions', the Sri Lankan state is trying to destroy all left wing and working class activism and to criminalise left wing activists in the popular press.

As President Mahinda Rajapakse has intensified the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), his government and the military have imposed what amounts to a regime of de facto censorship.

In December, Rajapakse reintroduced and extended the notorious Prevention and Prohibition of Terrorist Activities legislation. New regulations have extended the law to allow for the prosecution of anyone, including journalists and media organisations, on the vague charge of "supporting" terrorism.

President Rajapakse, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse and army chief Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka have called meetings of media representatives on several occasions to warn them against criticising the war on the grounds that it will affect national security and the morale of the security forces.

There is little doubt that many of the attacks on journalists and left wing activists have been carried out either by the security forces or associated chauvinist thugs.

For the most part, the Sri Lankan media establishment has lined up behind the renewed civil war and acts as little more than a mouthpiece for the government's chauvinist propaganda.

Rajapakse is distinctly nervous that any critical reporting of the war, rampant official corruption, worsening living standards and attacks on democratic rights will only inflame popular discontent, including in the military's ranks.

That is the reason for the escalating crackdown on the media and left wing activism.

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OPINION

Britain mulls bigger role in Sri Lanka

UNDERLINING Britain's intent to play a bigger role in Sri Lanka's ethnic question, visiting junior foreign minister Kim Howells announced London's readiness to facilitate peace talks with the LTTE, which is proscribed in UK as a terrorist group.

Mr. Howells also declared that his country would be cracking down on the LTTE's ability to raise funds abroad and accused the LTTE of extorting money.

Wrapping up a three-day visit mid-February to assess the impact of renewed war on thousands of displaced families in the island's restive east, Mr. Howells said Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse had given the green light to the idea of talks with Tigers.

"We'd be delighted to become more involved in helping to facilitate the peace process," Mr. Howells told reporters.

"We asked the president a very specific question. We said how do you feel about a situation where we might talk to the LTTE and he said: 'As long as it's part of the peace-building process, we have no objections to that.'"

Asked about Britain's possible role as facilitator, a role hitherto performed by Norway, Mr. Howells said "we have no objections to doing it. It is important for us as well, since Britain only talks to terrorist groups if they are part of the peace process."

"We certainly are prepared to engage in conversation with representatives of the LTTE if those conversations are part of the peace process, which we believe will lead to peace," he said.

Britain banned the LTTE in 2001 and pushed hard for the EU-wide ban in 2006. Saying UK was determined to cut off the LTTE's access to funding and weapons, he accused the Tigers of extorting money from Tamils in Britain.

"We certainly want to squeeze their [Tigers'] ability to buy guns

and explosives to murder Sri Lankans," Howells said.

"There are about 200,000 Tamils living in Britain and we take a very serious view to the way the LTTE extorts money. It's not part of British life," he said.

The British offer comes as Norway, which has been facilitating peace in the island since 1999, is adopting a low profile following years of criticism by Sinhala nationalists, including those now in government in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's hardline President Rajapakse was elected in November 2005 on a platform denouncing the Norwegians as biased towards the LTTE.

The international community, which has long backed Norway's initiative, has in recent months also avoided explicit endorsement of Oslo's efforts.

Before his visit, Howells said Britain's experience in Northern Ireland was proof that violence is not the way to achieve peace.

He warned Sri Lanka's international reputation would be tarnished if the war continued, referring to widespread human rights abuses and humanitarian crises in the Northeast.

"There are similarities with the conflict here and what we had in Northern Ireland. But the important thing to keep in mind is that war is not the answer."

In a written commentary released before his visit, Mr. Howells also called for a cease-fire to pave the way for talks.

"[In Northern Ireland] we learned that there had to be a working cease-fire in force in order for meaningful peace talks to be possible. Politicians cannot be expected to make the compromises necessary for peace against a backdrop of violence and the public outrage this causes."

"If adhered to, Norwegian-facilitated cease-fire of 2002 would offer a good base from which to



Mr. Howells visited British-backed projects in Sri Lanka's embattled eastern province. Photo FCO

launch a new peace initiative."

Urging all parties to build trust and remain committed to resolving the conflict, Mr. Howells called for sustained peace talks, in an implicit criticism of recent Norwegian efforts.

"It's not good taking people to Geneva for two or three days every six months. You really need to have a go at it, ensure people trust each other and that there is an urgency for an eventual outcome."

"You can't do peace talks on a

part-time basis."

In his written commentary, Mr. Howells hailed the UK's friendship with Sri Lanka, a former colony which gained independence in 1947, but since then has been ruled by Sinhala dominated governments which have discriminated against the Tamils.

"Britain has long been a friend of Sri Lanka. That friendship is built on a wide range of shared interests and contacts, not least the large number of people of Sri Lankan origin who have made

Britain their home," he wrote.

Since the early eighties, large numbers of Tamils fleeing persecution in Sri Lanka have sought refuge in Britain, joining earlier waves of Tamil immigrants.

Before the UK's 2001 ban, the LTTE maintained offices, including its International Secretariat, in London.

London was also home to the LTTE's late chief negotiator and theoretician, Mr. Anton Balasingham, who passed away a brief illness last December.

'Ceasefire is needed for meaningful peace talks'

Dr. Kim Howells
FCO, UK

BRITAIN has long been a friend of Sri Lanka. That friendship is built on a wide range of shared interests and contacts, not least the large number of people of Sri Lankan origin who have made Britain their home.

Today's British government has no greater wish for Sri Lanka than that it should find a peaceful solution to its conflict.

This should be a solution with which all the people and communities in Sri Lanka feel comfortable and which enables them to develop their full potential, becoming a more prosperous, healthier and more highly skilled society.

On the other hand, if things continue as they are the current escalation of the conflict and its

impact will hold back Sri Lanka's development, corrode the quality of its democracy and tarnish its image in the international arena.

Only Sri Lankans can ultimately resolve the conflict in their country. But Britain and others in the international community can help.

Many countries, international agencies and non-governmental organisations are already working with Sri Lankans to help create the conditions needed for peace and long-term development. I believe their work is invaluable to the people of Sri Lanka.

As part of this, the British government's political and development efforts in Sri Lanka have a single aim. To help create the conditions in which a lasting peace can be achieved.

We in Britain have some experience of resolving conflict, in Northern Ireland. That

province is now at peace. It took about 30 years to get to that point.

We learned the hard way that security measures will only get you so far and eventually you must - if you wish to move towards a lasting peace - be willing to address the underlying causes of the conflict.

Last year the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, offered to share this experience with President Mahinda Rajapakse and his government.

Accordingly, the Rt Hon Paul Murphy, a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, visited Sri Lanka in November.

One of the most important things we learned in Northern Ireland is that peace won't happen until the parties to the conflict understand that nothing can be gained by continuing violence.

It is worth stating the obvious: a military victory for one side is

very unlikely to produce a lasting political solution. Our experience tells us that a 'war for peace' approach inevitably means more war, rather than peace.

And violence comes with too high a price. It is the people who suffer, as human rights are eroded, the humanitarian situation deteriorates and mistrust between communities increases. This, in turn, damages Sri Lanka's image in the eyes of the world.

Similarly, we learned that there had to be a working cease-fire in force in order for meaningful peace talks to be possible. Politicians cannot be expected to make the compromises necessary for peace against a backdrop of violence and the public outrage this causes.

The Norwegian - facilitated ceasefire of 2002 offered breathing space from the effects of the conflict. If adhered to, it would

offer a good base from which to launch a new peace initiative.

The parties to the conflict need to develop a degree of confidence in one another in order to be able to move forward to reach a common understanding of their shared future. That confidence can't be built in an atmosphere where violence and fear flourishes.

A broad political consensus for peace is essential. We hope that the new coalition government will be able to enable the parties to work together for the common good of the country.

I am looking forward to my time in Sri Lanka. It will be my second visit to this country. My fervent wish is that my visit may contribute to bringing the island's tragic conflict to an end.

Dr Kim Howells MP is the British Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

NEWS



(left) President Rajapakse (r) with Champika Ranawaka, one of his closest advisors. Photo Daily Mirror. (right) The poster by the National Movement Against Terrorism.

Annihilate traitors by any means - Champika

ASKED to respond to a poster campaign by the National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT) calling for the "annihilation" of "white Tigers, media Tigers, left-ist Tigers," Champika Ranawaka, Minister Environment and Natural resources, endorsed the hard-line Sinhala organisation's message, saying if the law can't crush such traitors, it must be done another way.

The poster in question, plastered in several parts of Colombo and the Sinhala south, exhorts the people to identify and annihilate those opposed to the government's military drive.

Ranawaka, known to be a close associate and advisor to President Mahinda Rajapakse, emphatically endorsed its message: "I am not a member of the

National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT). However, I am totally in agreement with the poster."

"Who the hell are these so called journalists in Sri Lanka? Who are these 'Tamil Youth'? There are no such people. They are all NGO scum who depend on foreign money."

"What these newspapermen are doing is the selling this country to Tigers under the guise of peace and anti-war."

"We know about Ravaya [newspaper] and we know what Ravaya is up to. We know that Ravaya sheds tears when Tamils get killed," he said, using a derogatory term for Tamils.

"This is the same thing done by the bunch of so called Leftists."

"Nothing can be done because of the wild ass freedom in this country. If these treacherous bastards cannot be crushed by the law, whatever possible method should be employed."

"If those can't be dealt with existing laws we know how to do it. If we can't suppress those bastards with the law we need to use any other ways and means, Yes".

"Of course, people will die. What can we do about it? Are you asking us to leave them alive? These are traitors to the nation!"

"Here, this is what I am saying. If not by poster, we should use other methods to annihilate them. That is why I say that I agree to this poster politically."

Patali Champika Ranawaka belongs to the ultra-nationalist monk's party, the Jathika Hela

Urumaya (JHU).

In January, the JHU joined President Mahinda Rajapakse's government.

In the past, Ranawaka has also expressed anti-Semitic statements comparing Tamils to the Jews and has been advocate of 'Aryan Sinhalese supremacy'.

Minister Ranawaka's comments were condemned by a group of prominent local media groups saying it "violates basic and inviolable principles of public office and grossly irresponsible for a member of parliament."

The Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association, Federation of Media Employees Trade Union, Sri Lanka Muslim Media Forum, Sri Lanka Tamil Journalists Alliance and Free Media Movement signed a statement of protest.

They condemned the minister for backing the elimination of "those the JHU and NMAT perceive to be aiding and abetting the cause of the LTTE, including all pro-peace civil society activists and media activists."

"Champika Ranawaka has himself as well through his political party named dozens of prominent human rights and media rights activists, journalists and civil society leaders as terrorists on many occasions in the past," they said.

"We request all local and international rights and media organisations, as well as the democratic forces within the Government, to be vigilant in a context of heightened threats towards human rights and media freedom activists."



JVP Leader Somawansa Amarasinghe (c) chats to US Ambassador Robert Blake and Pakistan's High Commissioner Shahzad A. Chaudhry at an event to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and Sri Lanka. Photo Indraratne Balasuriya/Daily Mirror



JVP strongman and Patriotic National Movement (PNM) General Secretary Wimal Weerawansa shares something amusing with PNM Working Committee member Cyril Wickramanage when he joined the National Bhikkhu Front Satyagraha against the ceasefire agreement on Feb 22, 2007. PNM President Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekera is also in the picture. Reports p3-5 Photo Dinuka Liyanawatta/Daily Mirror

NEWS



Vaharai people's misery

Over 70,000 Tamils driven from their homes by Sri Lankan military offensives are not being allowed to return to their homes a month after troops captured the region from the Tamil Tigers.

Nearly 40,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) are staying in 49 temporary shelters and with friends and relatives elsewhere in the military controlled part of Batticaloa district.

Conditions in the tent camps like this one are quickly becoming squalid amid heavy rain.

Whilst Sri Lankan troops build new camps in the region, the government has left Vaharai's residents, along with those displaced in other parts of the Batticaloa district to struggle in wretched conditions.

Despite international urging over the displaced, Colombo is also hampering the activities of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), many of whom have either pulled out of the Northeast or reduced their activities.

Editorial, p6

Violence round up - w/e 25 February

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since 19 February

25 February

● Armed men shot dead S. Sathiyaseelan, 24, a daily wage earner of Veeramunai, as he was riding his bicycle to purchase goods at Veeramunai, Sammanthurai, Amparai. Sathiyaseelan's brother is a LTTE cadre and the killers may have interrogated him about his brother and then shot him dead.

24 February

● Palaly SLA announced that troopers conducting a sudden search at Kopay Training college found a T-56 type rifle concealed in the roof of the students hostel. Last week troops claimed telecommunication equipment and hand grenades were found in a room in a catholic church near the residence of Bishop of Jaffna. Also, SLA alleged hand grenades were found in a Hindu temple in Neervely. The claim of finding weapons in the midst of HSZs has raised suspicions among the local residents that the SLA is seeking excuses for the harassment of students and religious dignitaries, who have lead civil rights campaigns against abuses.

● Batticaloa district plunged into darkness due to interruption of electricity supply following a 15

minute heavy artillery and Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher barrage by the SLA from Batticaloa Brigade camp and Mylambaveli SLA camp on LTTE held territories. SLA shells exploded in Ayithiyamalai, Karadianary, Pan-kudaveli and other areas in the LTTE held territory.

● The body of a young man with gun shot injuries to his head was found dumped at 8th lane in Vepankulam, Vavuniya. The man was wearing denim jeans and his hands were tied together.

● Two 15 year old students of Udupiddy American Mission College are missing. Poovathasan Yaseetharan and his friend Kunasekaralingam Sivaroopan, both from 15 mile post Udupiddy in Vadamaradchy, disappeared while riding bicycles to attend class at a local private education centre. Family members said they suspect SLA troopers had arrested them, as SLA troopers were conducting an extensive cordon and search in the area where the students were last seen and local witnesses say they saw SLA troopers taking two boys away.

● SLA soldiers cordoned off and searched Kondavil, Mallakam, and Tellipallai in Jaffna soon after the expiration of the overnight curfew. Soldiers entered residential houses, and examined the

National Identity Cards of residents. Several road blocks were placed along Jaffna-KKS Road where the troopers checked the documents of all passers-by.

● SLA soldiers fired artillery and multi-barrel rockets towards jungle areas of Kumburupiddy, Trincomalee, from their camps at Monkey Bridge, Morawewa and other surrounding areas.

● Batticaloa District TNA parliamentarian S. Jeyanandamoorthy charged that SLA soldiers are dismantling civilians' homes in Vaharai and stripping them of furniture and equipment. IDPs who fled Vaharai before the SLA entered the area have been prevented from returning by soldiers guarding the entry points. Refugees from Sampoor had complained that the SLA has also removed the roofs of their houses.

● Nine Tamil civilians from Valaichchenai, Batticaloa, were arrested by the Sri Lanka security forces in a cordon and search operation in Hatton, Nuwara Eliya. Police said they were taken into custody and detained as they did not possess national identity cards and also failed to provide valid reason for their stay in Hatton.

● 24 Tamil civilians arrested in several search operations in Hatton were produced in Court and remanded for fourteen days on an application by the police. Majority of them are natives of north-east province and a few are resi-

dents of Hatton.

● Sivarajah Kokilaraj, 23, was critically injured when men on a motorbike fired at him at Thulasipuram, Trincomalee, while he was walking along the road.

● Iyathurai Rathakrishnan, 28, of Suthumalai, Manipay, Jaffna, was abducted. Although extra judicial arrests, killings and disappearances have escalated in Jaffna, and the Sri Lankan armed forces and collaborating paramilitaries are alleged to be behind the disappearances, no actions have been taken.

23 February

● SLA Jaffna command in Palaly announced that in addition to the 11 hour night curfew already in place, there will be further restrictions of civilian movement during the day. SLA directed the public to avoid certain roads during a three and a half hour period, between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon and 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. The announcement also advised the public to avoid using main routes including Palaly Road, KKS road, Jaffna-Point Pedro road passing through Vadamaradchi and A-9 Highway, pointing out that these are the main SLA supply routes. Though the announcement from Palaly 'advised' the public to avoid these roads, SLA troops patrolling these areas began to strictly impose the new ruling.

● S Kesavan Jeyakumar, 23, was

abducted on Nallur-Saddanathar road, within Jaffna municipal council area.

● SLA troopers, stationed at Thenmaradchy FDL in Muhamalai and adjoining areas, unleashed a barrage of artillery fire and Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher shells towards LTTE held areas. Despite the intensified attack, the SLA and the Liberation Tigers avoided direct confrontations. SLA forces posted along the coast also continued to launch artillery and MBRL fire towards LTTE areas. Areas around the Jaffna lagoon including Pooneryn and other places were also attacked.

● Armed men shot dead Ravichandran Ashok, 27, of Palugamam, a member of paramilitary Karuna Group, in Kaluvanchikudy as he was on his way to market.

● Several plantation Tamils were taken into custody in cordon and search operations by Sri Lanka security forces in Talawakelle, Pundoloya and Lindula in the central province. All were released after their identities were checked except three Tamils who remain in detention.

● The body of a Tamil youth, residing in Parapankandal, Man-nar, with his family after being displaced from Jaffna, was recovered at Palaikudi Junction in Nantattan with severe cut injuries. Unidentified persons had abducted Mariyathas Girithas, 26, and killed him by inflicting severe wounds to his neck and chest with a

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sharp instrument, before dumping his body at Palaikudi Junction.

● Gunmen shot dead Stanley Robert, 42, a resident of Annai Velankanny Road in Trincomalee, a three-wheeler driver, at Palay-oothu, Trincomalee.

22 February

● Armed men lying in ambush opened fire on SLA troopers at Chenkalady public market, Eravur, Batticaloa, killing one - M. Saman Navaratne, 36, of Komant-hurai SLA camp. SLA troopers fired at random and more troopers were deployed at the site. A cordon and search was also launched though no one was arrested.

● The SLA conducted a house-to-house search with the assistance of local police in Bogowantalawa, central province. Most Bogowantalawa residents are Tamils of Indian origin. Police took several residents, mainly Tamils, into custody for interrogation. Police said the search was conducted on a tip off about LTTE infiltration in the town. A special sentry was put up at the entrance to the town during the search operation and all vehicles entering and exiting Bogowantalawa town were subjected to severe check.

● Fifteen Tamil civilians, majority of them residents of northeast and Colombo, including a woman, were released from Boosa detention camp in Galle after about one month detention, as no evidence to implicate them with terrorist activities were found after extensive inquiry. About 95 Tamil civilians, including women, are detained in the Boosa camp and are being investigated to ascertain if they are involved in terrorist activities.

● Atchuvally police recovered the body of a male aged around 30 from shrub land close to a civilian settlement at Vatharavathai, Puthur East in Valigamam East, Jaffna. The body, bearing gun shot wounds, was handed over to Jaffna Teaching Hospital for post-mortem examinations. Residents said they observed the presence of SLA troopers the previous night at the site where the body was found and heard gun shots from the area.

21 February

● Twenty Tamil detainees, taken into custody by the Sri Lankan police and military since 2003 and detained in Magazine prison in Colombo, began a fast-unto-death campaign urging Sri Lankan authorities to expedite the investigations against them or release them if there were no charges against them. The fasting detainees are Arumugam Senthil-

kumar and Murugathas Sivaroopan from Jaffna, Isidor Arokyanathan from Kotahena, Muthai-ah Sahathevan from Kirilapone, Iyampillai Rajkumar from Bog-anthalawa, Manickam Thamili-nian from Pasarai, Solaimalai Jegatheeswaran and Thevarajah Kirupakaran from Mannar, Than-karasa Surenthiran from Well-ampity, Rohithan Thineshku-mar from Vavuniya, Arumugam Sash-ikumar from Kilinochchi, Kanth-asamy Paheerathan from Poonery, Anthony Sathiyathan from Mulankavil, Rangan Janahan of Badulla, Rathinam Ananantharajah of Mallakam and Perinpanath-an Kangatharan, Sebastian Soha-spiriyam, Mahendran Puvitharan, and Mahenthirasa Paranthaman, all from Batticaloa.

● Unidentified persons detonated a cycle bomb, killing a police inspector and two civilians, and injuring 14 including 5 Police officers, at Ottamavadi, Valaich-enai, Batticaloa. The attack targeted a jeep carrying a police team that was relieving the constables stationed there. The dead were identified as Karuna-ratne, 39, Inspector of police, and civilians Meera Lebai Ahamed Usanar, 45 of Piranthuraichenai and Sehuth Ali Kileel Rahuman, 32, father of 1 of Ward No. 4, Valaichenai.

● Five students including two girls, and a teacher were injured in a bomb explosion in front of the SLA sentry post which guards the Main Office of the EPDP in a Jaffna HSZ. The SLA said that a hand grenade lobbed into the sentry missed its mark, landed in front of the sentry and exploded. Eyewitnesses and the injured however said that no one had lobbed the hand grenade into the SLA sentry post. P. Muhunthan, 33, teacher from Annaikottai, Jaffna, V. Gowritharan, 19, of Madam Street, Kantharmadam, Jaffna, R. Janakan, 17, of Jaffna town, M. Sinthuja, 19, of KKS road, Jaffna, G. Thanusha, 18, of Vannarpannai, Jaffna and T. Thamonathan, 17, Point Pedro Road, Jaffna, were injured. The teacher and students had finished their class at a private education centre near the SLA sentry post and were on their way home when the explosion took place.

● Thiyagarajah Mahendrarajah, 28-year old family man, was shot dead by men riding a motorbike, at Ukulankulam, Vavuniya. The carpenter, working at Kovil Kulam, was taken on motorbike by armed men to Thiruchenthur Mill junction in Ukulankulam and executed. A SLA captain was shot dead at the same place recently.

● Armed men shot dead a woman at Gandhinagar, Trincomalee. Five men on two motorbikes called P. Sivatharshini, 33, out of her house and shot her dead.



The campus had been closed for six months. Troops shot dead another student on reopening day.

Jaffna University reopens

JAFFNA University re-opened after six months on 19 February, but it was a sombre occasion as the students mourned a colleague shot dead by the SLA a day earlier. Black flags were flown on the campus as the students observed a remembrance event paying homage to Krishnan Kamalathas 24, at Kailasapathy stadium in the Jaffna University.

However, SLA troopers deployed around the University premises forcibly removed the black flags hoisted Monday evening and Tuesday morning at the entrance of Jaffna University.

The students boycotted educational activities for the first three days to protest against killing.

Jaffna University Student Union (JUSU), in a statement to the press, said that the killing of their fellow student by the Sri Lankan soldiers, a day before the

long-awaited opening of the University, was deliberate, and intended to disrupt the smooth functioning of the University.

The statement further said that the educational authorities should show the bona-fides of their 'genuine concern' in Jaffna student education by taking urgent steps to identify and prosecute the killers.

The Acting Vice Chancellor Prof. K. Kumaravadivel acknowledged that Jaffna University was reopened officially on Monday and said that he believed the boycotting students will attend lectures on Thursday.

He also said that he expects all educational activities to fully return to normal in one week.

Kamalathas, a final year Art faculty student, was shot dead by SLA soldiers close to the SLA 52-4 Brigade Head Quarters and

near his house in Iyattalai, Varani, Thenmaradchi. He had been going towards a private tutoring, where he taught classes.

Jaffna University which had remained closed for the last six months since the eruption of clashes between the SLA and LTTE in August 2006, reopened Monday. The reopening was held in a low key manner, affected by the killing of Kamalathas.

More than 60% of the students, mainly from the peninsula, were present at the Jaffna University while more than 250 outstation students were not able to attend due to the SLA closure of the A9 route.

The affected outstation students were still waiting for transport arrangements to Jaffna peninsula after having registered their names in the list of passengers to travel to Jaffna by ship.

● Armed men shot dead a Tamil youth on the border of Thuwarankadu-Anpuvalipuram, Trincomalee. Ponnann Mahendran, 28, three wheel driver, was a resident of Uppuveli.

● Armed men shot dead a farmer at Potkerni, a suburb in Thampalakamam, Trincomalee. The victim was identified as Sinnathamby Thevapalan, 51.

● Eight fishermen who left from Kalpity for fishing went missing, relatives complained to the police. The fishermen are residents of coastal areas in Negombo, Kudakarai and Kalpity. The SLN has deployed several fast attack crafts to patrol the seas from Colombo harbour towards Kalpity following recent skirmishes.

● Additional troops and police were deployed in Minuwangoda, western province, to quell any racial disturbance following the killing of Mohamed Fazil, 38, a member of the main opposition UNP and a former Muslim coun-

cillor of the Minuwangoda Pradeshya Sabha. Tension prevailed in the area between the Sinhalese and Muslim communities. Minuwangoda Police took a Sinhalese person, Sooti Malli, into custody. Black flags were seen on houses and shops and business establishments were closed down as a mark of respect to the murdered local politician.

● Unidentified persons stabbed a Tamil civilian to death on at Kandiah Road in Mihinthupura, Trincomalee. Kathiravelu Paramanathan, 56, and a retired watcher of a state bank branch in Trincomalee, had been a resident of Channel Lane in Trincomalee and was killed with a blunt weapon.

20 February

● Two SLAF Kfir bombers attacked Parasankulam, Vavuniya, killing 2 civilians and wounding one. Two hours later, the bombers dropped 12 bombs in another

location, at Karipadd-amurippu where a civilian house was narrowly missed.

● A van belonging to Nedunkerni hospital narrowly escaped a claymore explosion triggered by a SLA DPU at Manavalanpaddamurippu, Mullaitivu. Nine people, including the driver, were in the van, travelling from Nedunkerny to Puthukudirippu. The attack was triggered at the same place in Nedunkerny where in August 2006 five people including the doctor were killed in a similar attack on a Nedunkerny hospital ambulance. That attack too was carried out by a SLA DPU team.

● A civilian vehicle on Nedunkerni Periyakulam route narrowly escaped from another claymore allegedly triggered by a SLA DPU

● SLA soldiers were seen moving heavy military hardware, including more than fifteen T-54

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

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W/E 25 Feb

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type tanks and Main Battle Tanks along Point-Pedro Kodikamam road towards Thenmaradchy FDL, further fuelling speculations of renewed war in Jaffna.

● Sri Lankan armed forces stationed in Jaffna were placed on red alert in the aftermath of a claymore explosion in the heart of the city Saturday, and another unexploded claymore recovered 300 meters from the 51.2 Brigade head office on Monday. The armed forces ordered all civilians and vehicles to keep a distance of at least 100 meters when a military convey passes along a road.

● Immanuel Kenthira Vivilian, 28, of Hospital Road, Jaffna and David Arulnesan, 36, from 5th Cross Street, Jaffna are missing after they left to Jaffna town from their homes.

● SLA troopers in a Hiace white van arrested Thiagarajah Saran, 25, at his home in Avarankal East.

● Thavarajah Subramaniam, 48, was arrested by SLA troopers in a white Hiace van at his house in Atchuvally South.

● Visuvasam Amalraj 19, a resident of Navakiri, riding on motorcycle along Rasa Veethy in Navakiri is missing and is thought to be abducted by SLA troopers in a white van.

● A group of armed men attempting to rob a house at Arumugathankudirippu, Eravur, Batticaloa, shot dead two civilians who tried to prevent the robbery. The victims were identified as Mamankam Vadivel, 41 and his cousin Kanapathy Kandiah, 60.

● Armed men on motor cycles, alleged to be members of Karuna paramilitary group, abducted two youths at gun-point at Temple road in Kalmunai in Amparai district. The two youths are Sivarasa Denish, 18, the owner of a video shop close to Kalmunai police station, and Suveehan, 19, both residents of Temple Road in Kalmunai. The armed men called the youths out of their house and abducted them, threatening them with pistols.

● Vavuniya police recovered bodies of three youths with several cut wounds to their neck and chest, inflicted by sharp instruments, near Pandarikulam Amman temple in Vavuniya. Local residents informed the Vavuniya Police of the abandoned bodies lying in the area. A written note, signed 'Peoples Well-wishers,' was found beside the bodies said the three are being punished for their involvement in extortion of money from the public.

● Two armed men on a motorcycle chased a fisherman on his motorbike along Thumpalai road in Point Pedro, Vadamardchi, Jaffna and shot him dead ten minutes after he returned from the SLA 524 Brigade camp close to his house, where he had sought permission to hold his sister's wedding. Jaggopu Iruthaya Jenyraj, 32, a bachelor of Manal Lane in Point Pedro, was on his way to

the Village Officer's office to get a ration card for food items needed for the wedding.

● A 24-year old from Allaippiddy in the Jaffna islets was staying as an IDP at a camp in Our Lady of Rosary church when he sought safety with the Jaffna SLHRC. He told officials that unidentified men had come to the camp in search of him. Fearing for his life, he with his wife and two children called in at SLHRC office next to the church and in front of the 51.2 Brigade Head office.

19 February

● Nine Tamil civilians including seven from Vaharai, Batticaloa, were arrested at Norwood in Hatton Police Division in a cordon and search operation by Sri Lanka government security forces. Police said they were taken into custody as they failed to produce necessary documents for their visit to Norwood area.

● Government troops conducted another search operation in Bogantlawa in central province and arrested fifteen upcountry Tamils.

● Sri Lanka's Post Master General directed all post offices not to accept medicine or food parcels addressed to Jaffna residents until further notice. He told the media that the Commissioner General of Essential Services has informed him that enough food is available in Jaffna. He also said the postal department had incurred heavy expenditure in sending food parcels by air and sea. People are sending food parcels more than 5 to 6 kg, he said.

● The body of a fisherman, who was reported missing with another fisherman in Mullathivu since Saturday, washed ashore at Koriyadi, Vetrilaikeni, Vadamardchi east. SLN gunboats had fired at the fishermen in the seas off Mullaithivu. Sivananthan Suresh, 32, father of one, displaced from Maruthankerny in Vadamardchi East, was missing with fellow fisherman Karunaharan Jegatheeswaran, 22, from Vathirayan north in Thlayady in Vadamardchi east. The decomposed body, with gunshot wounds in chest, was handed over to the family. Suresh and Jegatheeswaran had not returned home from the sea until Friday and fellow fishermen went looking for them in Mathalan Sea. They were able to find only their fishing net and not their boat with the outboard engine worth more than 200,000 thousand rupees.

● Thirty Tamil civilians were arrested in Kandy and Teldeniya in the central province in a cordon and search operation by the SLA and police. Most of the arrested are natives of North East and Colombo. Government security forces blocked all roads and searched all vehicles on a tip off. Police said the detainees taken into custody as they gave contradicting statements as reasons for their stay in the locality. Tamils who proved their identity were also taken into custody.



Pupils pictured last week at their dilapidated school in Jaffna. Years of underfunding by Sri Lanka's Sinhala-dominated civil service has added to the ruin of war in Tamil areas. *Photo Tamilnet.*

Violence round up week ending Feb 18

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since 12 February

18 February

● SLA soldiers shot dead a final year Art faculty student of Jaffna University close to the SLA 52-4 Brigade Head Quarters and near his house in Iyattalai, Varani, Thenmaradchi. Krishnan Kamalathas 24, was shot dead while he was going towards a private tutoring to teach classes (see separate story).

● A SLN sailor was killed and nineteen others injured when the bus transporting a group of sailors from Habarana to Trincomalee met with an accident at Kantalai. The sailors were returning to report to the Trincomalee navy headquarters after vacation when the bus carrying them ran off the road.

● A Muslim civilian was killed and a Tamil man injured when police fired indiscriminately following a grenade attack by armed men at Chenkalady Police Post in Eravur, Batticaloa. Mohammad Cassim, 60, of Kaththankudy, who died, and Samithamby Thanabalasingam, 44, of Batticaloa,

who was injured, were both bystanders when the police started firing.

● Armed men shot and seriously injured Kanapathipillai Thiagarajah alias Ananda, 67, at Central Camp in Amparai. The armed men called him out of his house and searched his house before shooting him.

17 February

● Two SLA soldiers of the 51-2 brigade were killed and 12 troopers wounded in a road side claymore ambush along the A9, 300 meters from the Jaffna District Secretariat and inside a SLA High Security Zone. A child, believed to be around 5, was rushed to hospital with shrapnel wounds, but died at the hospital. SLA soldiers opened fire, cordoned off the area and launched a search operation. Three civilians were wounded. The injured soldiers were identified as Soorasinghe, 32 and Premadasa, 42. The injured civilians were identified as A. Chithra, 24, of Ariyalai, K. Mohan, 46,

and E. Jesuthasan, 55.

● One civilian was killed and two injured when the SLA opened fire in Kumankulam, Vavuniya, but Vavuniya Police said they did not know about the incident. Sinnarajah Suresh, 18, was killed, and Kumar Raguvaran, 17, and Logeswaran, 36, were injured.

● Assaults triggered a claymore mine in Pandarikulam, but no injuries to SLA soldiers or Police officers were reported. Residents of Pandarikulam said SLA soldiers fired indiscriminately for 30 minutes after the attack, but no one was injured.

● A male body with gunshot injuries recovered from Uppuveli, Trincomalee, was identified as Sivalingam Senthooan of Aathimodai village along Trincomalee-Nilaveli road. His body was found blindfolded and with hands tied behind and he had been shot dead by unidentified persons. His wife said three unidentified persons went to her house Friday night and abducted him.

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Violence w/e Feb 18

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16 February

● SLAF bombers attacked Muhamalai, Kilali and Vadamradchi East as the SLA launched a heavy Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher barrage. Four SLAF jets dropped more than 20 bombs, while the SLA stepped up its artillery barrage on the two separate FDL positions, one from the northern FDL towards Muhamalai, Kilali and Vadamradchi east and the other from Manalaru SLA camp in Mullaitivu towards LTTE held areas.

● The SLN attacked two fishermen, fishing in deep seas from Vadamradchy east coast, and arrested both with their boats. Two other fishermen witnessed the incident and fled to safety. The arrested fishermen, Karunakaran Jegathesan, 27, from Vathirayan, and Sivanantharajah Sureshkumar, 30, from Maruthankerni, were internally displaced from Vadamradchy East region and lived temporarily at Puthu Maththalan in Mullaitivu.

● An attempt by Jaffna Police to send youths who surrendered to police fearing for their lives from SLA and paramilitaries working with SLA, to rehabilitation centres in the South, was stopped by the intervention of the Jaffna District Judge. The Police tried to send the youths to rehabilitation centres in south for further interrogation and "rehabilitation." Their parents took the matter to Jaffna Court, and the judge, with the support of the Sri Lanka Attorney General, ordered the police to keep them in Jaffna. Although people who fear for their lives seek refuge in prisons, prisons themselves are not safe in Sri Lanka. On 23 and 25 July 1983, Sinhala prisoners at Welikada Prison beat 53 Tamil political prisoners to death. On 25 October 2000, 25 Tamil detainees were hacked to death and 16 others were seriously wounded when hundreds of Sinhala villagers assisted by Police attacked the Bindunuwewa detention centre.

● Kandy Police and SLA soldiers arrested 14 civilians, including nine Tamils, three Muslims and a Sinhalese, in a cordon and search operation following a tip off that a bomb had been placed in the Kandy bus stand. The SLA bomb disposal squad rushed to the site, but no bomb was found. Police took the civilians into custody as they failed to prove their identity and the purpose for the stay in the

area. Of the three Muslims one is a woman. The Tamil suspects are all natives of Jaffna or Vavuniya, and were taken into custody when they were returning to their temporary residences after attending Maha Sivarathiri poojah at the Hindu Temple in Kandy town. The police arrested them even after they showed their national ID cards to prove their identity.

● Vavuniya Police said armed men gunned down a former PLOTE cadre, Kumaraswamy, in Thirunavatkulam in Vavuniya.

15 February

● Three LTTE cadres and a Home Guard were killed, and two other Home Guards wounded in a fire fight at a remote boarder village in Amparai. The policemen and Home Guards manning Komattalawa sentry point foiled an LTTE attack, killing three attackers. The Police recovered the three bodies and two T-56 assaulted rifles. Amparai police said, but the LTTE has not commented on the incident.

● Moratuwa Police took into custody 19 Tamils, all of them from areas of NorthEast, in a midnight to dawn cordon and search operation in the Soysapura Flat area in Moratuwa, Colombo. The police said the suspects, aged between 19 and 40, were taken into custody as they failed to produce legal documents to prove their identity and the reasons for the stay in the locality.

● The Colombo Chief Magistrate ordered the release of 18 Tamil civilians arrested on February 9 in a cordon and search operation in Borella and Mirihana, Colombo, after police said there was no evidence to implicate the suspects in any offence. The Sri Lanka government troops and police took the civilians into custody on suspicion and they were detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and interrogated.

● A decapitated body washed ashore at Nadukkudah in Mannar. Fishermen in Pesalai witnessed more than four dead bodies, packed inside polypropylene fertilizer bags, floating in the sea. More than 10 persons had been reported missing in Pesalai area in the previous 20 days, according to the Mannar SLHRC. Fishermen from Vankalai, Thalvupadu and Southbar reported bodies floating at sea to the Sri Lankan Police, but were told that they had to report to the SLN as the police would only handle bodies once they reach the shore.

● A journalist working as Vadamradchi correspondent for two Tamil dailies, Thinakural and Valampuri, went missing after ending his private tuition class. Subramaniam Ramachandran, 37, a father of two, who also runs the private education institute at Arasady, Karaveddy, Vadamradchi, went missing after he closed his institute and was on his way home on his bicycle. Ramachandran, described as an "energetic correspondent," by the editorial staff of Yarl Thinakural, worked for the two dailies for 5 years since the signing of the Cease Fire Agreement in 2002.

14 February

● Ten SLA soldiers were injured when more than forty shells fired by the LTTE hit their camp in Meesalai, Jaffna. SLA command did not release details of the attack and casualties. Shells were also directed towards several other key camps in Kodikamam and Meesalai. An elderly pedestrian, C. Kulasekaram, 64, from Allarai North, Kodikamam, was seriously injured and several civilians sustained minor injuries when a shell fell near the main road in Kodikamam.

● Armed men shot dead Somapala Wijepalan in Anpuvallipuram, Trincomalee. No other details about the victim or the motive were released.

● The SLA conducted a cordon and search operation in Vankalai, Mannar, following an attack on the sentry point the previous night. The sentry was attacked with small arms by a group of three who travelled in a boat by sea. The SLA said the attackers had fled from the shore, leaving the boat, when they retaliated. Soldiers had recovered two T56 rifles, two hand grenades and five magazines with live bullets from the boat they captured.



Hundreds in Jaffna flocked to see a statue of St. Mary which had reportedly shed 'tears of blood.' Some local people believe this is a bad omen for the people of Jaffna. They recalled a similar 'miracle' that occurred before the military offensive in 1995 which displaced the city's entire population. Due to the crowds, the statue has been moved to St. John's Baptist Church. Report, Photo TamilNet

● The SLN in Delft, an islet of Jaffna, issued a directive banning fishing and using boats on the Delft Sea between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Ninety percent of the population of Delft depend on fishing for their livelihood, and are seriously affected by the ban. Delft, under the control of SLN and SLN-backed paramilitaries, has until now escaped SLN restrictions on fishing.

● Armed men in a white van, alleged to be members of Karuna Group, abducted five youths from the Central camp in Amparai over two days. The parents of T. Srit-has, 17, Thambipillai Sritharan, 18, Tharumarajah Thayaparan, 20, all from Sangapura area, lodged complaints with Central camp police. Parents of the other two abducted youths are hesitat-

ing about making complaints as they fear retaliation.

● A special police team from the Criminal Investigation Department arrested three Tamil teachers in Ragala, Nuwara Eliya and took them to Colombo for interrogation. Police said the three were arrested on information from one of the three Sinhala journalists, arrested earlier in Colombo, on charges of having received arms training from the LTTE. Vaithilingam Mahendran of Alkaran-oya Barathi Vidyalayam, Suthanthirakesari Sugaseenan of Konai-pitty Tamil Vidyalayam and Rajaretnam Jeyaseelan of Mahauwa Tamil Vidyalayam, are all said to be members of the New Democratic Party (NDP). The national

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EPDP - Eelam People's Democratic Party
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SLN - Sri Lanka Navy
STF - Special Task Force

NEWS

Violence round up - w/e Feb 18

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organizer of the NDP appealed to Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse to release the teachers, saying they were innocent. Meanwhile, the police arrested two Sinhalese civilians in Ratnapura in Uva Province also for having connections with three Sinhala journalists.

13 February

- Gunmen shot and killed Ariyaratna Silva, a Dehiwela-Mount Lavinia Municipal Council member of the main opposition UNP, inside his office in Dehiwela, a suburb of Colombo.

- Two youths from Sirupiddy, Valigamam east, Jaffna, fearing threat to their lives from the government armed forces and allied paramilitaries, sought safety at the SLHRC and were placed under the protective custody in Jaffna prison. The parents said that armed persons were searching for their sons at nights following an incident where the bodies of two men abducted from their homes in Sirupiddy were found dumped in Nilaavarai. The parents were scared that their sons' lives were also in danger, and sought safety with the help of the SLHRC.

- Armed men on a motorcycle chased a youth and shot him dead as he was returning from Kodikamam town to Kachchai along the road behind Kodikamam police station in Thenmaradchi, Jaffna. Kasipillai Vasanthakumar, 17, had more than six gunshot wounds on his dead body.

- Gunmen shot dead a man driving his tractor along Navatkuli-Kerativu road, one hundred metres from the Navatkuli SLA camp in Thenmaradchi, Jaffna. Rasathurai Thavanesan, 26, a father of one, from Thachanthopu in Kaithady, had been stopped by his assailants, who spoke to him before opening fire.

- Six troopers were injured in a mortar attack by the LTTE on the Vavunativu STF camp. The STF retaliated but information on LTTE casualties was not released.

- Two family men, one aged 34, from Kalvayal in Chavakacheri in Thenmaradchi, and the other aged 32, from Kokuvil area in Jaffna, fearing threat to their lives from Sri Lanka armed forces and allied paramilitaries sought safety at the SLHRC and were placed under protective custody in Jaffna prison.

- Sri Lanka Police recovered a decomposed male body from a well in Vaharai. The body was bound inside a sack. The SLA has not permitted former residents to resettle in Vaharai after LTTE cadres withdrew from the region and the SLA took control last month. Only the armed forces and allied paramilitaries are currently

in the area.

- Armed Karuna Group paramilitaries in military fatigues waylaid a Colombo bound civilian bus from Kathankudy, Batticaloa, and robbed Rs. 1,500,000 rupees, several national identity cards, 15 hand phones and jewellery from the passengers. The robbery took place between Mavadi and Murakodanchenai SLA camps, near which there is an office of the Karuna group. The bus had left Kathankudy to Colombo with 45 passengers and was waylaid near Sithandy Murugan temple junction in Eravur. Police said that small vans had been robbed at the same place, but this robbery was the biggest.

12 February

- Six Sri SLAF Kfir bombers dropped 18 bombs in LTTE controlled Visvadamu, Mullaitivu, Vanni, near civilian settlements.

- Sri Lanka government security forces conducted a cordon and search operation covering fishing hamlets in Kallaruwa, Pudavaikattu, Pulmoddai and other coastal areas of Kuchchaveli, Trincomalee town.

- Sri Lanka military reports from Colombo claimed that they had destroyed one of the two LTTE boats sailing towards Pulmoddai from Mullaitivu, and taken the other boat into custody. The LTTE did not comment on the claim.

- Two gunmen pretending to be customers entered a meat stall in Chavakacheri Modern public market and shot rapidly with pistols, killing an employee on the spot and seriously injuring another, who later succumbed to his wounds. The victims were identified as Rajendram Tharsan, 22 of Madduvil, Chavakacheri and Sellathambay Selvarupan, 27 of Allary.

- The bodies of two unidentified men were recovered by police at two different locations in Colombo. One body was found at Kettarama bridge area and the other at Galkissa seashore.

- A Jaffna employee of the international humanitarian de-mining organization, Halo Trust, was reported "missing" since Friday. Nagarasa Narenthiran, 27, of Temple road, Nallur went to work as usual to the Halo Trust head office at Nallur Cross road, Friday morning, his wife told the SLHRC. But never returned. Eleven Halo Trust workers have been either reported "missing" or killed during the past 6 months.

- Kanapathippillai Kirushnapavan, 35, a family man, who went to see his abandoned house situated near a SLA camp in Thondamanaru in Vadamarachchi, has not returned home. His wife told the SLHRC officials that his motorbike, the house key and some clothes were seen at the entrance to the house.



Jaffna residents queue for scarce tickets on flights and ships out of the peninsula. Photo TamilNet

Violence round up - week ending Feb 11

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since February 05

11 February

- Police in Valikamam East recovered the bodies of two men with gunshot wounds and torture marks. Chelliah Mylvaganam, 53, and Navaratnam Arultheepan, 27, were abducted from their homes in Sirupiddy by armed men driving a white van half an hour before being killed.

- Sri Lankan forces in a cordon and search operation arrested 3 upcountry Tamils, Madavan Naguleswaran, Madavan Maheswaran and Uthayakumar of Hatton, who were waiting at Kandy railway station to travel to Colombo.

- About forty-five persons were taken into custody by the police in cordon and search operations in Chilaw. Although the ethnicity of the arrested were not fully revealed, residents in Chilaw said only some of the arrested are Tamil. Many of the arrested were accused of engaging in criminal activities in the area.

- In Mylankadu, Chunnakam, Jaffna, armed men in a white van abducted Nagalingam Yoganathan, 45, father of three.

- Rajalingam Suresh, 19, was abducted from his residence in Mulli Road, Ariyalai Jaffna, by men in a white van.

- Armed persons shot dead N. Gunadasa near Vipulananda School in Pandarikulam, Vavuniya, after hiring his auto.

10 February

- Armed men shot dead a trader at Aiyankerny in Eravur, Batticaloa. The killers called Maheswaran Uthayasekaran, 32, of Kommanthurai, a father of two, out of his house as he was having dinner saying they wanted to buy a phone card and shot him.

09 February

- The train service between Dematagoda and Maradana in Colombo was halted for several hours following a tip off that an anonymous parcel was lying on the track between the stations. The SLA bomb disposal squad rushed to the site and stopped all public movements in the area. Railway authorities were warned

not to allow trains on the track till the investigations were over. On examination security forces found no explosive in the parcel - only some pieces of paper.

- Sri Lanka Government forces arrested 11 Tamil civilians during cordon and search operations in Munthal, Uddapu and Munneswaram areas in Chilaw. The detainees are from Killinochchi, Jaffna, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu in the Tamil dominated northeast province. Police said they were taken into custody as they failed to produce documents to prove their identity and credible reasons for their stay in the locality.

- Two SLA soldiers were injured when gunmen fired at a foot patrol in Nellukulam, Vavuniya. Sri Lanka Military high command strengthened security and increased the number of road patrols amidst escalating violence in Vavuniya district.

- A Tamil youth, recently returned from working abroad, was shot dead in Madduvil North, Thenmaradchi, Jaffna. Gunmen stopped Rasaratnam Pushparajah, 30, from Musiri in Madduvil North,

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as he was riding his motorbike, shot him dead at point blank range, and absconded on his bike, which was abandoned nearby. Police found five gunshot wounds on Pushparajah's body.

● Gunmen shot dead a teacher in Pattanichchur Puliyanakulam, Vavuniya, making him the sixth person to be killed by armed men in Vavuniya in February. Thambirajah Thileepan, 40, was a teacher at the Vavuniya Poonthottam Government Mixed School. Of the six victims killed by armed men in Vavuniya this month, four were identified as civilians, one was a SLA officer, and the last was a home-guard.

● Pulmoddai police recovered the body of Sinniah Palaniappan, 59, along the beach in Pulmoddai village, Trincomalee. There were injuries on the body but the exact cause of death was not revealed.

08 February

● Several SLA troopers were feared killed in a claymore attack on a bus carrying soldiers along Palaly Road, Jaffna, less than 50 meters from Urelu SLA camp. Palaly military command did not release official details on the attack. The damaged bus, belonging to the Ceylon Transport Board, was taken inside Urelu camp, which is a key SLA camp and serves as the main camp of the SLA intelligence wing.

● A husband and wife, parents of two children, were shot dead in Maharambaikkulam, Vavuniya. Aarumukam Sakthivelai, 47, and his wife, Maheswaray Sakthivelai, 42, were shot in the early hours while they were sleeping.

● Seven STF troopers and three civilians were injured in a mortar attack from LTTE held areas on the Vavunathivu SLA camp. The SLA fired mortars in retaliation. A new STF camp is being constructed near the current SLA camp.

● Armed men abducted a fisherman at Santhiveli, Eravur, and shot him dead later in the day near his house. Myilvaganam Ravichandran, 33, is the neighbour of a Hindu priest, Chelliah Parameshwara Kurrukal, shot dead the previous day, allegedly by armed men attached to SLA military intelligence.

● Three civilians, fearing threat to their lives from Sri Lankan armed forces and allied paramilitaries, took refuge with the Jaffna SLHRC, who handed them over to the Jaffna prison officials to be kept in protective custody. Prison officials have warned of a possible humanitarian crisis in the prison as youths seeking protection, and criminals are kept in the same facility. Jaffna prison, which is already in a deplorable condi-

tion without adequate facilities, will struggle to accommodate any additional youths, prison officials said.

07 February

● SLA troopers lying in ambush along an interior road in Thatchanthoppu Pillayar temple area at Karaveddy, Vadamaradchi, Jaffna, opened fire on a youth, killing him on the spot. However, military reports from Colombo said the SLA killed a youth who had attempted to hurl a hand grenade at the troopers.

● Armed paramilitaries visited the house of Kiddinan Kirushnarasa, 34, a civilian in Paththini Amman Kovilady, Valvettiththurai, Vadamaradchy, and forcibly took him away.

● A shell exploded near the Navalar Community Development Centre in Velanai, on Kayts island off the Jaffna peninsula, forcing the villagers to scatter in panic. No one was injured in the explosion, but some nearby buildings sustained minor damage.

● Ramachandran Jeyachandran, 33, an auto-rickshaw driver and father of two, was shot dead at Kooman kulam, Vavuniya. Jeyachandran had previously lost a leg during the war.

● SLA troopers of a field motorcycle unit opened fire on a farmer at Mirusuvil in Thenmaradchi, Jaffna. Kurnaathy Muhunthan, 24, of Kudavian, Varani, was seriously injured in the shooting.

● SLN marines shot and seriously injured a man driving a tractor in Ward 4, Velanai east, Jaffna, allegedly for not giving way to SLN marines on a motorcycle behind the tractor. The SLN, however, said that the firing was a warning shot and was not intended to harm Kailayapillai Balachandran, 47.

● A Hindu priest, who had been forcefully taken to Vaharai from Santhiveli by the SLA to garland Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse during his visit to Vaharai on February 3, was shot and killed by armed men allegedly attached to SLA military intelligence. Chelliah Parameshwara Kurukkal, a father of three, was shot near his house, a few meters from the Santhiveli SLA camp. He had been taken to Vaharai by the military under the pretext of performing a pooja and made to garland the visiting president. Santhiveli residents alleged that the priest, who was unhappy over the forced pooja in Vaharai, has been victimized by the military intelligence. Dignitaries of all faiths have been forced to be present at the opening ceremonies of various paramilitary offices in Batticaloa and Amparai during recent months.

● The body of an unidentified male was found washed ashore in the Salaipaiaru seacoast in Kuchchaveli, Trincomalee.

● Six Tamil youths were arrested in Dankotuwa in a cordon and search operation by the Sri Lankan forces. All were employed in a bakery and are natives of upcountry and eastern province. Police said they were taken into custody as they failed to prove their identity and the reason for staying in the area.

06 February

● SLAF MI-12 helicopters fired rockets in Kadawanaikulam and Morawewa areas of Trincomalee for more than 30 minutes. Military sources in Colombo claimed the attack was aimed at a concentration of LTTE cadres in Kadawanaikulam, close to Kalmuttiyanikulam reservoir where a SLN camp is located. The town is also close to Morawewa where a SLAF camp is located.

● Armed men shot dead two youths in Kankeyan Odai area, Kathankudy, Batticaloa. Preliminary police investigations revealed that Kirupairatnam Sathurik, 24 and Sivaramalingam Govintaraj, 23 were abducted and shot.

● Armed men abducted a married man from Kuruchi Four Tamil village in Eravur, Batticaloa. Veerapan Uthayakumar, 36, a father of two, is a native of Hatton who had been a resident of Kuruchi Four Tamil village for six years. He was abducted on his way to the shop from his home.

● Armed persons, who identified themselves as SLA soldiers, took Sinnathurai Vijayaruban, 23, of Kadduvan Road, Mallakam in Valikamam, for questioning in the presence of his parents. Vijayaruban's whereabouts are unknown.

● Unidentified men abducted Louis Moraes Satkunanathan, 59, retired Grama Sevaka Officer and father of three from Sinnakadai in Mannar town, with his motorbike as he was going along Mannar-Talaimannar main road to supervise construction work he had

undertaken in Talaimannar.

● Anestine Kathirkumar, 31, and Christie Balendran Croos, 29, were abducted when they were returning home on motorbike on Mannar-Talaimannar main road after buying provisions at Mannar bazaar. The two fishermen are residents of Pesalai.

05 February

● Three Sinhala friends, all leftist journalists or activists were abducted in Colombo. Leftist activists have alleged that the three friends were kidnapped by an abduction squad operated by the Sri Lankan military.

● A SLA officer was killed and a trooper injured when armed persons attacked a road patrol unit at Pandarikulam road in Vepankulam, Vavuniya. The body of the officer, Captain Dammika Kumara, was taken to hospital and then the SLA camp, while the trooper was rushed to Vavuniya Military hospital. The SLA claimed the ambush was launched by LTTE cadres who escaped.

● The SLA said three troopers were injured in an attack by the LTTE at Macanar road in Sector 5, Vavuniya. Vavuniya police claimed that an LTTE cadre was killed in SLA retaliation.

● The decomposed body of a young man, believed to be about 25, washed ashore at Karaithivu beach, Samanthurai, Amparai. The body had gunshot wounds, its hands tied behind and its throat tightly bound by rope. The unidentified body was buried at the site due to its decomposed state.

● Sri Lankan government security forces arrested 42 Tamils, including female students, in a cordon and search operation in Kothuwela, Colombo. Police allege those arrested failed to prove their identity and the purpose of their stay in the area, but relatives said the police refused to release the detainees even after these details were supplied.

● Thirteen upcountry Tamils were arrested in Dankotuwa in a cordon and search operation by Sri Lankan forces. Although

Police allege the detainees were taken into custody as they failed to produce their identity and reasons for their stay in the area, relatives said they were employed in Dankotuwa and that they had submitted legal documents to prove their identity.

● Seven upcountry Tamils working in a coir factory were taken into custody by government security forces in a search operation in Nattandiya, Negombo.

● Armed men shot dead a Tamil, believed to be a resident of Killiveddy, Serunuwara, Trincomalee, at Kantalai railway station. He had gone to Kantalai, accompanied by his mother, to go to Batticaloa by train. He was shot while coming out of the station rest room.

● A SLN sailor was seriously injured in grenade attack on a group on security duty at Pesalai, Mannar. About four thousand Pesalai residents sought refuge in the local church soon after the grenade attack, fearing increasing violence.

● Two unidentified youths were killed and one civilian critically injured when LTTE cadres and members of the paramilitary Karuna group engaged in a fire fight in Kaluthavalai, Kaluwanchikkudy, Batticaloa. S. Jegajothirajah, 50, the Depot Manager of Kaluwanchikkudy Peoples Transport Board, was injured while travelling in a bus along the main road to Colombo.

● A Home Guard trooper was killed in an attack on the 18th guard post at Kurumankadu, Vavuniya. The Home Guards, paramilitary fighters deployed in the Sinhala border villages of the northern and eastern areas, are trained by the SLA and police. The Home Guards Service was formed in 1985 as a supplementary force to support and assist the three forces and the police by protecting border villages and the main supply routes.

● Men dressed in military fatigues abducted Selliah Siventhiran, 25, from his home in Maduvil East, Chavakachcheri, Thenmaradchi, Jaffna.

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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



Buddhist monks started a fasting protest on Feb 22 against the Ceasefire Agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers. Reports p3-5. Photo TamilNet



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