

Why this international indifference to Tamil suffering?

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Sri Lankan shells drive 150,000 more Tamils from their homes



Over one hundred thousand Tamils have been displaced by Sri Lankan bombardments in Batticaloa this week, joining 80,000 already displaced in the district. Photo TamilNet

INTERNATIONAL relief agencies expressed alarm Monday at the rising number of civilians forced to flee fighting between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers, and said populated areas were endangered by continued shelling.

As the number of civilians displaced due to the Sri Lanka military's renewed efforts to move into LTTE territory in the Batticaloa district increased to over 150,000, international aid agencies urged both sides to ensure their protection and com-

ply with international human rights law.

The attack began last Thursday when the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) launched heavy artillery barrage towards LTTE controlled territories in Batticaloa district, as the Special Task Force (STF) began a two pronged ground offensive from Chenkalady and Pulkunawa.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Country Team, which is chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator, expressed concern at the number of internal-

ly displaced, warning that this was "creating further pressure on an already difficult situation that will require more resources and capacity from all actors."

"As fighting continues, we are also worried for the safety and protection of all civilians, as reports indicate that shelling is occurring from and to, highly populated areas," the IASC said in a press release.

The ICRC spokesman in Sri Lanka, Davide Vignati, told Voice of America shortages of food and water are emerging at overcrowd-

ed refugee camps since the new refugees arrived. But, he says, the situation has not yet reached the crisis stage.

"This new number of displaced civilians bring(s) the total number up to almost 120,000 displaced people presently sheltering in Batticaloa district," Vignati said, before more people fled.

"The main problem for the time being is food. New tents and shelter camps should be set up in the coming days to accommodate this new population."

Aid workers in Batticaloa said

Saturday that schools and other public buildings were being opened to help accommodate the new influx of refugees.

"Most of them are under trees," said Basil Sylvester, district officer for the main aid agency umbrella group, the Consortium for Humanitarian Agencies in Batticaloa.

"When they get to Batticaloa, they don't know what to do. Some are in schools and churches. Many are staying with relations

Continued on page 3

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NEWS



Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse (R) receives Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Steven Mann in Colombo. The US official was holding discussions on the island's faltering peace process, human rights and access to conflict areas. Photo SUDATH SILVA/AFP/Getty Images

US backs political settlement, war on LTTE

THE United States stressed the need for power sharing in Sri Lanka as a solution to the long standing conflict while reiterating concerns over the negative impact the fighting has had on the human rights situation in the country.

Steven R. Mann, the Principal Deputy Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs said Washington will fully back Sri Lanka's battle against terrorism but said the island's conflict needs to be resolved politically.

Mr. Mann said Washington was fully appreciative of the fact that the Sri Lankan government had a difficult task in fighting terrorism while pursuing a political solution to the dragging conflict.

Mr. Mann was sent by President George W. Bush following a request by the US Congress to look at alleged human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mann also said the US government took the issue of human rights violations very seriously and added this was one of the most important topics of discussion between him and the President.

"Human rights matters greatly to the United States. In the practical circumstances of Sri Lanka it is indelibly clear to us that strong consistent respect for human rights must be an element of successful peaceful resolution to the conflict," he said.

Mr. Mann who was on a two-day visit to Sri Lanka met President Mahinda Rajapakse, Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and several senior government officials and civil society groups during his stay.

"It is an important opportunity that stands before Sri Lanka and it is the hope of the United States that the leaders of Sri Lanka will seize the chance to reach a consensus agreement on power sharing that meets the legitimate aspirations of all the country's people," Mr. Mann said.

The United States believed that the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) was the best platform to arrive at a broad political consensus to end the country's ethnic problem, Mr. Mann said.

Mr. Mann said it was time to seize the opportunity available for a broad consensus with proposals put forward by opposition political parties as well as the government to the APRC.

The US envoy further noted that America's stand on the LTTE, which had been listed as a terrorist outfit since 1997 remains the same, but noted that the efforts on

looking at the whole LTTE issue wrests on pressing towards a peaceful political solution.

Addressing the media after his meeting with President Rajapakse and government officials including Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse, Mr. Mann said: "When I call for a peaceful political settlement this is a powerful message to the LTTE as well as the government to engage seriously in this type of peace negotiation."

"I have looked at the data and institutions estimate that the conflict has held back GDP growth by 2-3 percent per year. And over two decades this constant loss of economic opportunity has resulted in an enormous foregone opportunity of prosperity that should have benefited all Sri Lankans," he added.

Mr. Mann said a resolution to the conflict would unlock even greater potential growth in the North and the East and contribute towards addressing the economic aspirations of all communities island wide and make Sri Lanka an even more attractive destination for trade and investment.

Last week the US state department came down hard on both the government and the LTTE for large scale human rights abuses last year, most notably since the breakdown of the ceasefire agreement and the failed assassination attempt on Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa.

"The government's respect for the human rights of its citizens declined due in part to the breakdown of the [Ceasefire Agreement]," the United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor stated in its 2006 country report on Sri Lanka.

"Credible sources reported human rights problems, including unlawful killings by government agents, high profile killings by unknown perpetrators, politically motivated killings by paramilitary forces associated with the government and the LTTE, and disappearances," the report said.

Rights groups, including the New York based Human Rights Watch, are to discuss the setting up of an international human rights monitoring mission in the country under UN auspices at the fourth UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) session.

Asked if the US supports the establishment of an international monitoring mission in Sri Lanka Mr. Mann said he was not clear on how such a mission will operate with the SLMM and an international presidential commission of inquiry already in place.

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FEATURE

'We did not even take our clothes'

Neomi Kodikara

Norwegian Refugee Council

ALL they wanted was to go home.

But as one man in a camp noted, their 'future is a big question mark', as Sri Lanka is once again on the brink of a bloody war.

Over 200,000 people have been displaced by the recent spate of violence in the north and east of the country, between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government.

As many as 75,000 people were internally displaced and driven into camps, when the Sri Lankan Army attacked Vakarai, a pocket of LTTE controlled land on Sri Lanka's eastern coast.

"We did not even take clothes or food. Nor did we have time to lock our house. We have lost everything," says N. Manjuladevi with a weary smile.

Manjuladevi and her family, along with thousands of others, sought refuge at a camp in Batticaloa after fleeing heavy shelling in Vakarai. She came in mid December, with her family and her 7-day old baby.

"It is almost two months now in the camp," she winces.

"At first we did not want to flee, leaving behind our hard-earned belongings. Everyday shelling and air strikes made people very frightened, and when eight of our neighbours died, we decided to move," she says.

After crossing a lagoon, they had to walk through jungles for two days before reaching government controlled areas.

As the camps are congested with tents too close to each other, families are not yet allowed to cook for themselves, because of fire risks.

"It is too hot inside tents. I do not know what to do during rains, with a baby ... I miss our house, but I am still afraid to go back," she says.

Heat is fierce in these low tents congested in Manmunai North site. Water and sanitation facilities are only basic. Their hardships are endless, the misery continues.

Displaced people are uncertain and afraid about returning home. In addition they have no idea if their homes are safe or destroyed.

Many anticipate that it will be months before they can even think about moving back home, and many are still shaken by the violence that caused them to flee their homes.

Although the camps are intended to be short term, too many displaced persons live in them for months.

The squalid, overcrowded camp situations often lead to psycho-social problems, and subsistence conditions remain critical, particularly regarding access to basic social services such as clean

water and sanitation, shelter, education and health care.

It is therefore important to take prompt action to improve the sites and its-facilities and to ensure that those who live in the camps are protected and assisted with a special focus on the groups most at risk: women and children.

With a crying need for vital assistance for effective camp management, Norwegian Refugee Council extended its camp management activities to address the needs of the newly displaced populations in some 50 camps in seven DS divisions in Batticaloa.

NRC is well known in the humanitarian sector for its expertise in camp management following the agency's training programme for government authorities, NGOs, the UN and other organisations, implemented in several districts in the country to assist people displaced by the 2004 tsunami.

"The standard of living in the camps is also often extremely poor and there is a pressing need for empowering camp residents to maintain their temporary shelter as much as for emergency assistance and," explains Natalia Pascual, Programme Coordinator for Camp Management Training in Batticaloa.

The project does not involve direct administration of the camps by NRC, but rather focuses on gathering information to address gaps and improve protection and facilities, while also strengthening the capacity of existing camp leadership structures to ensure adequate service provision.

Well trained camp managers in the field play a critical role in fulfilling the fundamental rights of displaced people living in camps.

NRC provides comprehensive training in camp management to over 175 staff from NGOs, government authorities (GS and DS), camp management agencies, IDP committees and host community.

They are further trained on-site in more practical manner to meet basic needs and gaps.

Sanitation, protection and aid distribution have all been major issues in these IDP camps over the past two months and before launching the programme, NRC trainers visited sites and met with camp leaders.

The programme, sponsored by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is designed to provide service providers in camps with a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities in improving conditions and delivering services to camp populations.

The NRC programme included provision of a camp management toolkit and case studies relating to site design, protection, community participation and



The displaced live in temporary shelter as they wait for peace and calm to return, but at least an increased focus on security and coordination between aid groups has made life easier in the camps.

camp maintenance.

NRC assists in forming IDP committees in those camps where no community structures are yet in place, and also coordinates and arranges General Coordination meetings at divisional level with government authorities, camp managers and host of other service providers.

NRC ensures efficient and timely delivery of all services in accordance with international standards through coordination,

identification of gaps and monitoring as well as by avoiding duplication.

This has led to an increased focus on camp security and improved coordination of the collaboration between residents and on-site assistance organisations.

Most of the agencies working as camp managers are with little or no experience in camp management, they are quite grateful to NRC for comprehensive, capacity building trainings.

There is much improvement we see among those who have participated in the training workshops, it is very encouraging to see them applying what they learn in their work," says Natalia.

Peace and calm must seem like a distant memory to Manjuladevi and many of those waiting in Batticaloa, but they can now look forward to better coordinated and effective service delivery in camps with the help of NRC's camp management trainings.

100,000 displaced ...

Continued from page 1

and friends."

But others said that aid supplies were already low, particularly water.

"If in the next few days several other thousands are coming, then of course we have a problem," Marcal Luethi, a protection officer with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Batticaloa, told Reuters.

"We are extremely alarmed at the new level of displaced," Reuters quoted U.N. mission spokeswoman Orla Clinton as saying. "It's just going to add more pressure to an already very difficult situation."

On Sunday, a Tamil lawmaker appealed for international intervention in the conflict.

"The artillery shells fired by the military are falling inside civilian settlements and this is forcing the people to flee," said Senadhiraja Jeyanandamoorthy, a member of parliament from the

Batticaloa district representing the Tamil National Alliance.

"The government is not providing them with facilities, therefore, the international community should come forward to stop this," he said.

Military spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe denied that civilian areas were being targeted.

"The Tigers use the civilians as human shields," he said. "They (refugees) want to get out of there and come to safer places."

No independent account of the death toll was available, but civilians in the area said they could hear a heavy exchange of artillery and mortar fire.

On Thursday all the gateways to the LTTE controlled areas in Batticaloa district - Paddiruppu, Vavunathivu, Chenkalady Black and Kiran bridges and Kurumanvely, Ampilanthurai, Manmunai ferries - were closed by the SLA.

The SLA was trying to relocate those displaced in an earlier exodus - when government troops attacked the LTTE in Vaharai -

back to their homes further north, Reuters reported, saying that would free up camps to accommodate new refugees.

"They are doing their best to push the Vaharai people out immediately," Reuters quoted Brigadier Samarasinghe as saying. "They are setting up new camps in Batticaloa."

Calling on both sides to immediately ensure the protection of civilians in these areas, the IASC Team also urged them to comply with their international human rights and humanitarian law obligations, as expressed in the Security Council resolutions on the protection of civilians and the guiding principles on internal displacement.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Country Team in Sri Lanka includes, among others, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, IOM, World Bank, OXFAM, CARE, World Vision, ACF, ZOA, SOLIDAR, Save the Children and MERLIN, while the ICRC is an observer.

NEWS

Police chief admits police, military involved in abductions

SRI LANKAN security forces are involved in abductions of civilians for ransom, the country's Police Chief admitted Monday, saying a 'large number' of officers and troops had been arrested on charges of abduction and extortion.

However Police Inspector General Victor Perera also asserted that "organised groups" were conducting abductions and killings "to embarrass the government."

Sri Lankan policemen and soldiers, as well as underworld figures, have been arrested in connection with a rash of killings and abductions, police said.

The admission comes as the government faces mounting pressure from human rights groups and foreign governments to halt rights abuses blamed on elements of the military as well as paramilitaries linked to the military and the Liberation Tigers, reported Reuters.

"The magnitude of the problem is yet to be assessed. But the fact remains there are a few groups like this operating," Asoka Wijetilleke, Deputy Inspector General of the police's foreign intelligence department, told a news conference.

"Some of them, which include ex-soldiers, serving soldiers, police officers and underworld gangs and other organized elements have been arrested," he added.

"That does not mean we have fully and completely investigated the whole thing."

Among 433 people arrested since September over the abductions, a large number were either policemen, soldiers or deserters from the police and armed forces, Perera was quoted by AFP as saying.

But he gave no breakdown of those arrested.

The kidnappings of wealthy businesspeople or their relatives for ransom has become widespread in the past year.

The victims are mainly Tamils, Muslims or Upcountry Tamils and some Sinhalese, monitoring groups say.

In some instances ransoms had been paid abroad, Perera told reporters Monday.

Reporters say there are suspicions of the collusion of senior government officials in the kidnappings for ransom.

Especially terrifying for the victims and their families, these



Protestors gathered in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo to demand an immediate stops to human rights violations and disappearances, after the country's police chief admitted his officer have been implicated in the abductions. Photo TamilNet

abductions are taking place amid soaring numbers of disappearances and extra-judicial killings, with increasing numbers of bodies being found dumped.

The Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) says nearly 100 abductions and disappearances have been reported to them so far this year in the capital Colombo, the eastern district of Batticaloa and the besieged northern Jaffna peninsula.

Some see a parallel between abductions in well guarded government-run areas and a rash of disappearances when the then government crushed an uprising by hardline Marxists in the late 1980s - and see state involvement.

Local and international human rights groups and some governments have expressed concern

at abductions and killings which have shot up since the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse stepped up its military campaign against the Tamil Tigers last year.

Perera admitted the government was under international pressure over the deteriorating human rights situation.

"There is a lot of attention by foreign organisations on the human rights situation here and these killings and abductions cause big problems for the government internationally," Perera told the AFP.

"We suspect that these crimes are being committed by organized groups to embarrass the government," Associated Press quoted Perera as saying.

Perera said his officials are trying to resolve the killings and several abductions and offered "unlimited money" as a reward for information leading to the arrest of those involved in kidnappings.

Meanwhile DIG Wijetilleke also said elements in the service were working together with "underworld gangs" to abduct, extort money and kill people, but there could be other groups also operating with impunity.

"The magnitude of the problem is yet to be assessed. There are... groups which include ex-servicemen, serving soldiers and policemen and underworld gangs," he told AFP.

He said there had been arrests, but added: "that does not mean we have fully and completely investigated the whole thing."

Wijetilleke said the police were yet to complete investigations into the involvement of their own men in the extra-judicial killings and abductions, while authorities were yet to start investigations into "other groups."

The comments by the police chief and investigators come as the five year old daughter of a popular Tamil businessman was

abducted Monday in Negombo, with the abductors demanding ransom to release her.

And five bullet-riddled bodies of unidentified men turned up in the north central district of Anuradhapura.

This follows a similar discovery of five bodies near the capital Colombo Saturday and a sixth body found at the same site Monday (see page 13).

Meanwhile, the New York based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Tuesday it would continue to pursue proposals for the creation of an international monitoring mission in Sri Lanka as the assurances given by Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to address human rights concerns was not enough.

Senior HRW legal advisor James Ross told the Daily Mirror newspaper further needless suffering among the population should stop and real efforts must be made to prevent future abuses from occurring and that would require a longer-term UN monitoring mission on the ground.

Mr. Ross welcomed the statement made by Minister Samarasinghe at the Human Rights Council announcing the government's decision to invite the UN special representatives on torture and on internally displaced persons to Sri Lanka.

"Given the seriousness of these problems, we hope they are able to visit at their earliest opportunity," Mr. Ross said while emphasising that it would not be enough to report on serious abuses by the government and the LTTE.

Speaking at the UNHRC sessions, the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Micheline Calmy-Rey, said her government was also worried and called for an intensification of bilateral cooperation between the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Sri Lanka.

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NEWS

Acrimony flares as US says diplomats were not target of LTTE shells

TamilNet

AMID growing acrimony within the Sri Lankan government over the LTTE mortar attack last Tuesday on military helicopters carrying foreign ambassadors and UN officials to Batticaloa district, the American ambassador to Sri Lanka, Robert O. Blake, contradicted Colombo's assertion that the Tigers had tried to assassinate the diplomats.

Meanwhile Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary says the diplomats should share the blame for the near-disaster for asking to visit Batticaloa.

He slammed as "interference" attempts by foreign dignitaries and NGOs to visit the war torn Northeast.

Two Sri Lankan military helicopters ferried several international diplomats, including the Ambassadors to the United States, Germany, Italy and Japan along with several UN officials to the restive Batticaloa district.

However an LTTE mortar attack struck the military airfield and stadium converted into a military base as the helicopters and a fixed wing aircraft carrying more officials landed there.

'Everything which could go wrong did go wrong. This was a very foolish thing.'

Italian Ambassador Pio Mariani was slightly wounded by a piece of shrapnel which lodged in his scalp while the US Ambassador's arm was grazed by a stone or piece of shrapnel.

The shelling ceased when a UN official alerted LTTE headquarters in Kilinochchi.

The Tigers said customary operational protocol whereby the government notifies them of impending flights into the war-torn Northeast by international officials was not followed.

The Sri Lankan government admitted the LTTE had not been notified but denounced the shelling as a deliberate attempt to kill the Ambassadors.

However, speaking to the Sunday Times, Mr. O'Blake said: "while I do not believe the LTTE intended to target diplomats and UN officials, the United States strongly condemns all terrorism and calls on the LTTE to renounce terrorism and violence."

The LTTE attack has embarrassed the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse, which had been making political capital in the south on the basis of a

series of successful military offensives over the past few months which it claimed had cleared the LTTE from the east.

A senior diplomat who was part of the delegation, expressing his wish to be anonymous, told The Nation newspaper: "It was a careless and reckless operation [by the government]. Everything which could go wrong did go wrong. This was a very foolish thing."

"It was very embarrassing for the Sri Lankan government."

The incident is now evolving into a diplomatic and domestic row with the Foreign and Defence Ministries saying that the Human Rights and Disaster Management Ministry had not heeded their advice on the diplomats' trip.

"Defence Ministry officials say even though they approved the trip they had advised against it from the very beginning," The Nation newspaper said.

Army Commander, Lt. Gen Sarath Fonseka advised Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe against this particular tour "since the ground environment was not conducive for such VIP movement," the paper said.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rohitha Bogollagama, who had to rush back from China where he had landed Monday that week as part of President Rajapakse's 100-strong delegation, criticized the diplomats for not following "traditional procedure."

According to Mr. Bogollagama, any diplomat leaving the capital city of a country must seek the clearance of the Foreign Ministry.

In this instance, permission had only been obtained from Sri Lanka's Defence Ministry, he was quoted as saying.

Minister Samarasinghe, denying that he was advised against the particular trip said he would have cancelled the tour if that were the case.

He also refuted Mr. Bogollagama's claims that the Foreign Ministry was not briefed, citing the presence of the ministry's Additional Secretary at the planning meeting.

Meanwhile Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa said that the diplomats should also share the blame for the incident since they wanted to visit the Northeast.

"I'm not responsible for this [incident] since I'm always against these INGOs, NGOs and even the diplomatic missions interfering [in the Northeast]," Mr. Gotabhaya told The Nation.

"I have told them not to travel to these areas but they don't listen. When I tell them this I'm accused of many things. They say I'm against the Tamil people and do not allow these people to go to



US ambassador for Sri Lanka, Robert Blake (front-L) talks to Sri Lanka's Disaster Management minister Mahinda Samarasinghe (front-R) as Italian ambassador Pio Maniani (CR) and Japanese envoy Kiyoshi Araki (CL) look on as the group walks away from a military helicopter in Colombo. Mr Blake later stated that he did not believe the shelling was targeted at the diplomats. Photo Getty Images/AFP

these areas and that I'm covering up," he said.

Mr. Gotabhaya says he had refused authorization for the American Ambassador to go to Mannar on several occasions.

"I have advised the Nether-

land's Ambassador against travelling to certain areas in the Ampara district."

"When I say this some of them think that I'm hiding things from them" he added.

"When the President went to

Vakarai, he took that risk," Mr. Gotabhaya, who is also President Rajapakse's brother, said.

"Likewise if these people want to go to these areas they should be ready to take certain risk also."

US and Sri Lanka sign military agreement

PK Balachandran
Hindustan Times

THE United States and Sri Lanka on Monday signed the much delayed and controversial Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) providing for mutual logistical support during humanitarian missions, peace keeping operations, and joint military exercises.

ACSA was signed in Colombo by the US Ambassador, Robert Blake, and the Sri Lankan Defense Secretary, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, a release from the US embassy said.

But the release made it clear that the agreement was not a military one by any means.

This is critical since anything to the contrary can complicate the

ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, where the LTTE has been insisting that the very basis of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) or peace is balance of military power between itself and the Sri Lankan armed forces.

"The categories of allowable goods and services include food, petroleum and transportation. The provision of weapons systems or ammunition is expressly prohibited under this agreement. Each nation's forces can support the other during contingencies, such as disaster relief, or peace keeping operations, which reduces the logistics requirement for each nation," the US embassy said.

"The agreement will be in effect for ten years, and all transactions must be mutually agreed upon before any transfer is made," it added.

Giving an example of cooperation and exchange under ACSA,

Ambassador Blake said that if Sri Lankan troops, going to assist Pakistan in its earthquake relief work, wanted winter clothes, the US could supply these, and in return, get fuel and foodstuffs when a US vessel called at Colombo port.

According to political sources, ACSA between Sri Lanka and the US had been on hold for years because of India's objections. Earlier, India thought that it would give the American military a foothold in its backyard or area of influence.

But since the great improvement in relations between India and the US in recent years, and since the US and India began to see each other as strategic and economic partners in the emerging Asian order, India shed its objections to the agreement.

The US has ACSA with 89 other countries.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

TAMIL GUARDIAN

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WEDNESDAY MARCH 14, 2007 No. 344

Double Exposure

Why this international indifference to Tamil suffering?

This week Sri Lanka unleashed a massive bombardment of Tamil Tiger-controlled parts of Batticaloa. The targets were not LTTE camps, but Tamil villages. Within days 150,000 Tamils have been driven out of their homes, seeking safety in areas where the shells are not following - those held by the government. They join another 80,000 Tamils in the district and 150,000 elsewhere that the Colombo government has blasted from their homes since April last year. The targeting of Tamil villages and towns is not new. Every Sri Lankan President, beginning with J. R. Jayawardene in the early 80's has punished the Tamils for their defiance of Sinhala rule. President Mahinda Rajapakse's cruelty is not novel.

International aid agencies and NGOs have expressed alarm and are pleading for financial assistance. The Sri Lankan state, which starved and bombarded the Tamils of Sampur and Vaharai throughout much of last year, is unconcerned by the humanitarian crisis unfolding this time in western Batticaloa. But here is the rub. The international community has endorsed this collective punishment. The rhetoric of the 'war on terror' legitimizes the deprivations being visited on our people. The deliberate inaction by the international community is brought into stark relief by events in the east. For once the international community is a visible witness to what Sri Lanka is doing to our people. During President Chandrika Kumaratunga's ruthless 'war for peace' the international community endorsed and assisted the state's campaign of collective punishment. But this time it is different. The international community, led by the very actors who preached non-violence and negotiation to us for the past few years, has a grandstand view.

For many years now the Tamil Diaspora has actively sought the support of the international community for their struggle. This has been particularly so since the 2002 Ceasefire. International support was sought not only for the political demand of Tamil self-determination, but for practical steps towards Tamil wellbeing: to restrain the state's chauvinism, to end the impunity enjoyed by the Sinhala security forces, to ensure international aid was equitably distributed across the island, and so on. Across the world our people have lobbied government lead-

ers as well as media and NGOs. We have been received and listened to. The sufferings of our people were sympathized with. We were told that the matters we raised would be taken up with the Sri Lankan state.

In our hearts we knew this would not happen. The selfish interests of international actors are not served by pressuring the state on our behalf, but by courting the state and sacrificing us. That is why throughout the past three decades Sri Lanka's security forces were able to murder, disappear and rape with brazen impunity. It was only when the Sri Lankan military exhausted itself in the 'war for peace' (but not before spurring the LTTE's ascendancy) that the international community decided to take our interests into consideration. But that was not to ensure our future, but to blunt our progress towards self-rule.

Those Tamils who denounced the Norwegian peace process as a project of containment, designed to weaken and emasculate the LTTE, were dismissed as sightless hardliners wedded to violence. But they have been vindicated. Nothing gives their analysis greater resonance than the complicity of the international community in the horrors the Tamils are being put through by the Sri Lankan state today. There is no media blackout or lack of information which we can tell ourselves was the reason the world stood by during the 'war for peace' until the Tigers defeated the Sinhala military. Nor is there confusion about what the Tamils want. Nor why there is a major war in the island. Everything has been explained at length. The facts and figures have been placed before the world.

It was only the sense of the insurmountability of the LTTE's military power that produced the Norwegian peace process. It is a sense the LTTE can be defeated that has ended it. The rhetoric is that the interests of the Tamils are separate to the interests of the LTTE. But nothing reveals the invalidity of that premise than how, in the cause of defeating the Tigers, it is the Tamils on whom pain is primarily inflicted. We know all the talk of a political solution being needed is nonsense: it cannot be offered at the end of a bayonet. And we know under what circumstances the international community will again insist Sri Lanka negotiates a peace with the Tamils.

Three-pronged strategy to undermine the Tamils

J. S. Tissainayagam
 Northeastern Monthly

THERE is every possibility that the Government of Australia will ban the Tigers. The Sri Lanka government is lobbying Canberra using the usual cocktail of issues - child soldiers, constraints imposed by the LTTE on movement of Tamil civilians and attacks on civilian targets.

The Tamil lobby in Australia is countering these allegations by presenting the horrendous human rights record of the Sri Lankan government, thereby claiming that adequate attention has not been paid by the international community to the suffering of the Tamils; that the Tigers perform an important function by the Tamil people; a proscription by the Australian government would only exacerbate tensions between communities in Sri Lanka.

Though there is no certainty as to who will win this contest, it clarifies issues (if they needed clarification at all).

Moves by Australia towards imposing this ban come at a time when Tamils in Sri Lanka are confronted by government- and paramilitary-inspired atrocities. Extra-judicial killing, disappearances, arrests and extortion both in the Northeast and Colombo have reached an explosive point.

However, Tamils have no recourse to justice because the rule of law is near absent, while the legal system is undermined by security-related legislation such as emergency regulations and the PTA.

Worse, the lack of political will among the governing core of the country - President Mahinda Rajapakse and his advisors - has resurrected the political environment of the early 1990s under President R. Premadasa, of absolute impunity enjoyed by those working for the president and his cohorts (and not necessarily the government), to do as they please.

Meanwhile, the Vaharai operation is seen by the Sri Lankan government and sections of the international community that gave it tacit support despite paying lip-service to "human rights violations," as a successful military move in dislodging the LTTE.

What is interesting though is,

strictly speaking, the military component of the confrontation was minimal. Though there were skirmishes and ground engagements by infantry, most of the fighting was confined to artillery duels and aerial bombardment by the Sri Lanka Air Force.

What was more important was the privation the Tamil population of Vaharai - both the displaced fleeing from the Trincomalee District and residents of the area - was subjected to.

Though aerial bombardment was used to hit civilian targets, including the environs of Vaharai Hospital and a school in Kathiraveli, it is not a tactic unknown in the 20-year-old war in Sri Lanka.

What was new was the government's willingness to starve a civilian population to its knees, deprive it of medicine, fuel and access, while the international community turned a blind eye to these atrocities.

In other words, starvation of the civilian population was made an accepted counterinsurgency tactic in the war in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, the use of Tamil civilians as human shields, which the government deplores as a human rights violation by the LTTE, is now being practiced by the government.

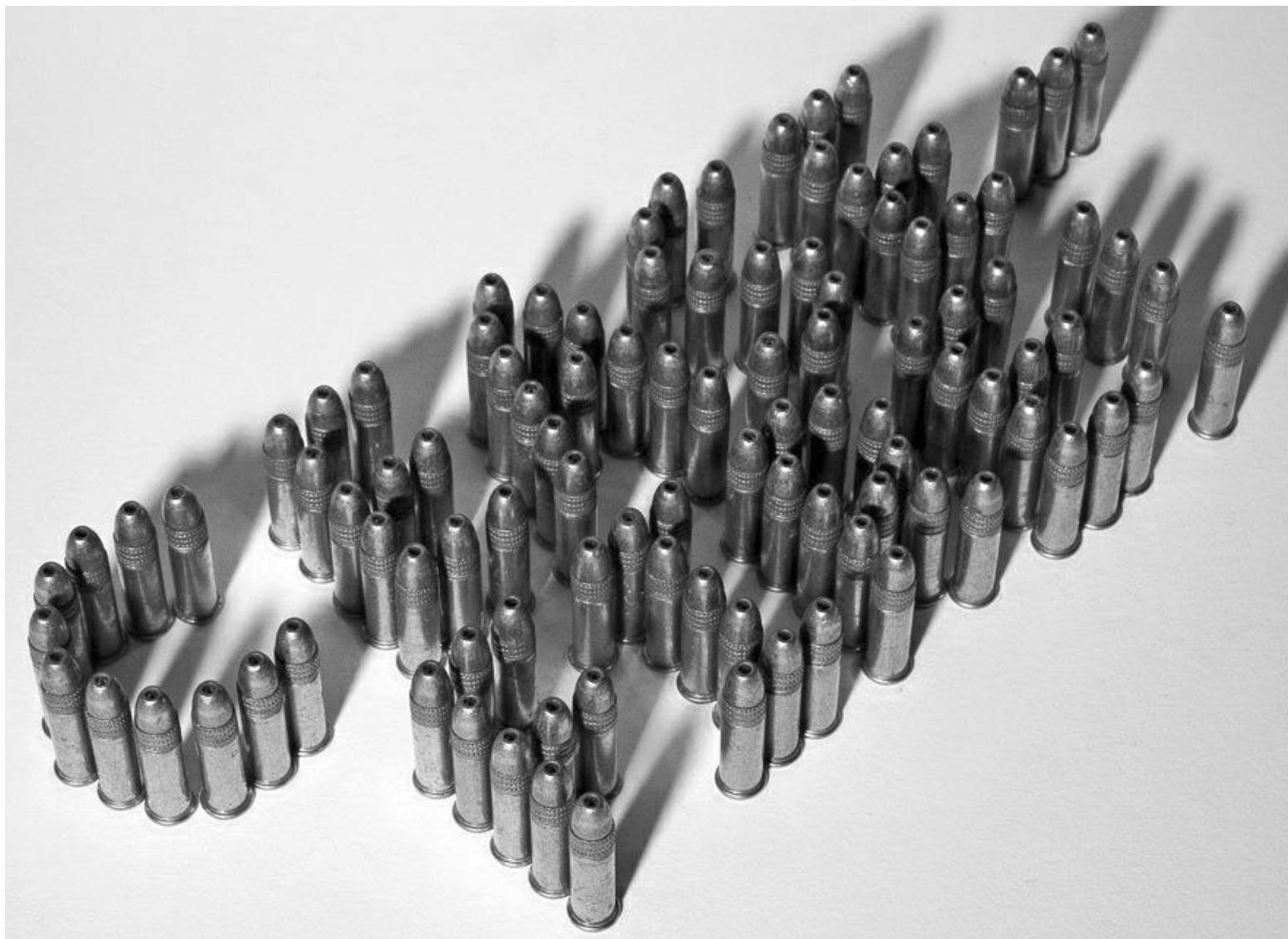
Forcible relocation is underway to designated areas in the Trincomalee District, of Tamils that fled from Trincomalee to Vaharai and then to Batticaloa.

About 4000 Tamils are earmarked to be resettled in the Kiliveddi area in Trincomalee. It is important to note that most of these people are not from Kiliveddi but Muttur. Obviously it cannot be difficult to resettle them in Muttur because the Muslim families displaced from there have been allowed to return to their homes.

Tamils of course are not being permitted to return because they are deemed a security threat in Muttur that borders the high security zone (HSZ) by the coast of Sampoor.

These Tamil families expressed deep reservations about going to Kiliveddi but significant numbers have been relocated - that is forcibly. The

EDITORIAL & OPINION



army arrived at the welfare centres IDPs were staying in Trincomalee town and threatened them with arrest if they did not consent to be relocated.

Tamils feel disturbed because the Kiliveddy area is highly populated with little room or opportunities for new settlers, and worse, near the HSZ surrounding the Kallar and Somapura military camps.

Their fears are well founded: they are forced to resettle in Kiliveddi precisely because they have to protect these camps.

This group of civilians, numbering over one thousand, will form a human wall around the camps and act as a civilian shield to the military contingent stationed there. The moment the LTTE shells the area, the government will allege the Tigers are attacking Tamil civilians.

All this only goes to show that Canberra is considering proscription of the LTTE at a time when the Tamil population is engaged in a desperate struggle for survival under the murderous regime in Colombo.

If the past is taken as a guide, the result of banning the Tigers has been skewed. It has caused dismay among Tamil civilians by what they perceive is a lack of sensitivity on the part of the international community to their woes, while it exasperates the LTTE, because it dents its political legitimacy.

But governments in Colombo have regarded LTTE proscriptions as an imprimatur to pursue the military option to settle the ethnic problem.

The international community's stock reply has been that

bans are against the LTTE, not the Tamils. This argument sucks because the roots of the ethnic war in Sri Lanka, is not that of the Sinhala-dominated state against the LTTE; it is the Sinhala-dominated state against the Tamil people.

The LTTE (and other militant organisations) emerged because the state was not fulfilling its function of protecting its population (or a section of it) *but was actively targeting it*.

Since then, the state's targeting of Tamils has declined or grown depending on the strength of Tamil armed militancy to withstand government forces. Today, it is the military balance - fear by the government and the Sinhala population of a backlash - that has kept the state from turning the screws tighter on the Tamils.

If the Sinhala-dominated governing elite were inherently fair and was not reacting to the military capabilities of the Tigers, how come that every significant peace process has followed a major military onslaught by the Tigers (barring the Indo-Lanka Accord that was externally imposed)?

In 1989-1990 it followed the LTTE's capture of the Northeast once the IPKF withdrew; 1994-1995 after debacles at Pooneryan and the ill-fated Operation Yal Devi; in 2002 at the wake of a string of defeats that began with capture of the Wanni, overrunning of the Elephant Pass camp and attack on the SLAF's Katunayake base.

Proscription of the LTTE by different countries and regional organisations has been imposed

with the fell purpose of de-legitimising the Tigers by questioning their political credentials and demonising them as a mere terrorist outfit.

If after doing all that the international community can guarantee the security of the Tamil people or pressurise the Sri Lankan state to do so, it might be acceptable.

But lack of commitment to such standards is quite evident in that the state cannot even ensure humane treatment to Tamil

As of now, Sri Lanka and the international community have, by pushing a military solution, driven the Tamils to the wall, forcing them to turn to the LTTE.

refugees in camps in the government-controlled areas!

The line is therefore very clear: the target is the LTTE, but if we cannot get the Tigers through military engagement we will destroy the civilian population by starving and killing it slowly, while of course paying lip-service to humanitarian law, human rights standards and other piffle international diplomacy employs.

All this goes to show that Canberra, like other members of

the international community, is not acting in the interests of conflict transformation. Its actions are partly due to domestic political pressures upon the conservative government of Prime Minister John Howard.

But the more important reason is that Australia has treaty ties with the US, which places great burden on the Australian government to be in consonance with the foreign policy of the world sole superpower.

While positions of certain western powers have hardened, there is a perceptible change in India's stand on the Sri Lankan question. Ever since the CFA was mooted, paving the way for increasing international involvement, India tried to play a lone hand in Sri Lankan affairs. Seeing the Indian Ocean as its backyard it remained largely aloof from being part of the co-chairs who symbolise western power projection into Sri Lankan affairs.

But of late, New Delhi's stance seems to be wavering. On the one hand it appears to understand that Colombo's chauvinistic Sinhala-led political leadership and the anti-LTTE Tamil groups such as the EPDP, the Karuna faction and TULF leader V. Anandasangari are finding it difficult to deliver a lasting political solution to the Tamil question: which means bringing a weakened Tiger to the table to accept sharing power with Colombo.

At the same time, the presence of refugees in Tamil Nadu is putting pressure on Tamil political parties in India - both in the state assembly as well as

those propping up the union government in New Delhi - to restrain the Sri Lanka government's killing spree.

India's interest in cooperating with the West is augmented by Colombo's dalliance with Islamabad and Beijing to buy military hardware, which is something New Delhi is reluctant to sell Sri Lanka due to pressure by Tamil Nadu.

It appears that the present scenario will remain for the next six months or so, during which time the international community and India will, very probably, try out a combination of the following strategies.

First, see that sufficient military pressure is brought to contain the Tigers within the Wanni. This is the motive behind the government carrying out a war of attrition on the LTTE areas: shelling Kumburupiddy, upping military engagements in Vavuniya and carrying out operations in Thoppigala.

If liberally supplied with hardware Colombo is confident of keeping the LTTE quiet. In the mean time pressure will be brought on the Tigers internationally by proscriptions and undermining their worldwide network in other ways.

Second, misery will continue to be heaped on the Tamils through systematic human rights abuse, starvation and military attacks on civilians.

This will reduce the population to its knees, create disenchantment between it and the LTTE and bring about a situation where any glimmer of hope would be welcome.

Third, a glimmer of hope for the Tamils will be kept alive by the political package crafted by the All Party Conference.

Though Minister Tissa Vithana has been pretending the APC is an 'independent' exercise, Tamils know it is a Sinhala government-driven initiative with marginal input from the Muslims and the Tamil EPDP.

The experts group of the APC is, in the name of 'southern consensus,' putting together a watered down version of devolution and trying to sell it to the Tamils. If the UNP too takes part in the exercise it could be seen as an initiative of the Sinhala ruling class, but the UNP remains aloof.

However, regardless of whether it has UNP support or not, the political package will be presented to the Tamils as a fait accompli. And needless to say, it is unlikely to be the basis of which negotiations could begin.

Therefore, as of now, the Sri Lanka government and the international community have driven the Tamils to the wall by pushing a military solution.

What is dangled as a political way out (devolution package) is a joke. This has only forced the Tamils to look at precisely the solution that the international community does not want them to - that the LTTE breaks out of the shackles of containment to reconfigure the present politico-military balance and then talk to a Sinhala leadership, hopefully a reconstituted one.

(Edited)

Whither Karuna, three years on?

Tamil Guardian

WHEN Karuna (Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan), then one of the Tamil Tigers' top commanders, broke away from the LTTE, exactly three years ago, his rebel yell was 'freeing the east from the domination of the north.'

At the time, the expectation amongst many - not just his fellow rebels - was that Karuna, as leader of a new Tamil outfit in the east, was going to play a role comparable to LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan.

Karuna attempted to gain recognition as another party, alongside the LTTE and the Sri Lankan state, to the protracted conflict. He asked Colombo, foreign governments, including peace-broker Norway, and other international actors to treat his breakaway faction accordingly.

Meanwhile, Karuna's fellow rebels and supporters addressed him as 'thalaivar' (leader). A new oath of allegiance was drawn up for them. Their new goal was to liberate the Tamil people of the east from the oppressive Sinhala state and northern Tamil domination.

Karuna named his new movement 'Tamil Eela Makkal Viduthalaai Pulikal' (TMVP) - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam People.

But Karuna's fiefdom collapsed after just six weeks. But even after fleeing the east with a handful of loyalists and going underground, he did not abandon efforts to (re)establish a bastion in the east.

Karuna knew only solid control over a piece of territory, no matter how small, could ensure him a respectable position in any future bargaining.

Vowing to 'liberate the eastern Tamils from Vanni domination' Karuna and his cadres began launching raids against the LTTE.

The TMVP projected these attacks in which a few cadres were killed from time to time as significant military achievements. He projected his group as a parallel to the LTTE, asserting that it was essentially a liberating force of the eastern Tamils.

Copying Pirapaharan, Karuna even issued a policy statement on Nov 27, 'Heroes Day' - the day on which the Tigers remember fellow fighters killed in three decades of struggle and the LTTE leader makes his much-anticipated annual speech.

With a measure of territorial control his primary goal, Karuna based his strategy on his own military experience and his group's military capability.

Aware of the latter's limitations, he exchanged his inside

knowledge about the LTTE and the services of his men in exchange for the protection, weapons and other assistance that Sri Lankan Military Intelligence (MI) was eager to provide him.

Since then, the Karuna Group as the TMVP has come to be known, has engaged in a murderous dirty war against the LTTE with the active support of MI.

But last year the Sri Lankan government launched direct military offensives against the Tigers.

And with the fall of Vahari in January, Karuna's position regarding his political goals and bargaining power has changed drastically.

This was starkly apparent when Karuna appeared on Derana TV, a Colombo based private channel. In an interview, Karuna was now advocating 'peace.' His agenda for the east was, notably, 'development and education.'

Amid the socio-economic conditions of the east, such pledges have long been the mainstay of political campaigns there.

What was curious in this instance was a liberation war veteran promising to court the state.

His 'liberation force' would, he said, solicit governmental assistance to 'satisfy' the people of the east.

The Tamils of the eastern, he argued, would have quit their freedom struggle once the government commenced social development and educational programmes. They would not even ask for federalism or devolution, he asserted.

Meanwhile, his group's name had become 'Tamil Makkal Viduthalaai Pulikal' with 'Eelam' notably being dropped.

Karuna went on to praise President Mahinda Rajapakse and his policies as outlined in the hardline Sinhala-nationalist election manifesto, 'Mahinda Chinthana.'

Karuna even denounced former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe for betraying 'Mother Lanka' during the Norwegian-brokered peace talks.

Questioning Ranil's loyalty to the nation, born-again Sri Lankan patriot also cast aspersions on the credibility of the Norwegian facilitators.

Karuna then thanked the Sri Lankan Army for 'liberating' the Tamils of Vaharai from the LTTE and said the Sinhalese should be assured of his determination to engage in peaceful politics.

Last weekend Karuna came out in public and visited some of his camps in the east. Wearing a pistol belt and accompanied by



Paramilitary leader Karuna (c) amidst armed cadres visiting one of his camps in the east (left) and Karuna Group's conscripts and recruits await Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan's speech during his visit to the paramilitary camps in the east. The Sri Lankan military has been accused of forcibly abducting young boys for the group, which works closely with the Sri Lanka Army against the Liberation Tigers. *File photo TMVP*

heavily armed guards, he addressed hundreds of unarmed conscripts.

"We believe today in the rule of law, democracy and pluralism," he declared.

"Sri Lanka is our Motherland. We consider that it is our duty to respect the country's Constitution and also the President and the Government of Sri Lanka," the liberation fighter said.

"The liberation of the Tamils of the east was possible because of the correct political leadership of President Mahinda Rajapakse and his Army commander Lt-Gen, Sarath Fonseka."

"The Tamils should remember the few hundred soldiers who sacrificed their lives to liberate Vaharai from the ruthless Vanni Tigers."

This drastic about turn in Karuna's policies can be illuminated by an examination of the recent and drastic changes in his circumstances.

Unfulfilled military promise

When Karuna decided to split from the LTTE, he invited the media to his stronghold in Batticaloa. Protected by grim-faced guards, he gave interviews with hundreds of well-trained fighters and 120mm heavy mortars lined up in the background.

The message was clear: whoever (the government, the LTTE or the Norwegian facilitators) considering negotiations should bear in mind my military assets and 6000 strong military force.

To his then numerous admirers' dismay, the only negotiation Karuna was to have turned out to be with the Jeyanthan Regiment and that was not conducted

around a table.

Prior to his rebellion, Karuna had been the Commanding Officer of the Jeyanthan Regiment. At the time of the split, this elite force was deployed at Nagerkovil in northern Vanni.

Six weeks later a sizeable contingent of the Jeyanthan Regiment advanced past Karuna's defence lines in Verugal and bore down on his main camp, Meenakam, warning strong action against those who opposed its intent to bring the east under the control of the LTTE's central command.

Ahead of the offensive, the LTTE had appealed through the media for eastern community leaders to encourage Karuna's cadres to desert.

Shortly after the collapse of Karuna's frontlines at Verugal, a large crowd of local people forced their way into Meenakam, where for many weeks newspapers had been barred and radios confiscated.

Upon hearing of the LTTE offensive from the civilians, the fighters vacated the Meenakam camp, leaving their weaponry behind. (According to Karuna, he disbanded and released them to avoid a battle).

Karuna, with a handful of his loyalists, fled to Colombo. He was now without any independent military capacity.

Nevertheless, he continued to believe that he could rebuild this capability and eventually claim equal status to the LTTE.

Sri Lankan military intelligence, believing Karuna could pose a challenge to the LTTE whilst being kept under their control, began to assist him.

Camps were established for

Karuna's cadres in the jungle on the border between Batticaloa and Pollannaruwa districts. MI assisted Karuna overtly (for example to forcibly recruit Tamil youths - including minors) and covertly assisted him to attack LTTE border positions.

Though Karuna was able to kill a number of LTTE officials and fighters, it was at a heavy price to the TMVP. He lost most of his key loyalists including his brother, Reggie (Vinayagamoorthi Sivanasathurai) in a series of clashes.

Meanwhile LTTE intelligence infiltrated into Karuna's hideouts, as deep as Koddawa in Colombo and Vannathurai in Welikanda, and inflicted severe losses.

These developments alarmed MI's commanders. Concerned the TMVP could be a conduit for LTTE penetration of their own structures, they limited contact with the Karuna Group to specific operatives and started to keep it at arm's length.

Rather than allow Karuna free rein against the LTTE, when MI thought his recruits were sufficiently trained, they took them along on attacks and ambushes against the LTTE.

In late 2006, as the Sri Lankan military stepped up direct offensives against the LTTE in different parts of the east, Karuna Group cadres were incorporated into the attacks.

On Sep 6, 2006, Karuna Group sub-commanders Jeyam and Pillaiyan jointly lead Karuna men in an operation to capture an LTTE base in Kanchikudicharu area. (Before the split, Jeyam was an LTTE company leader and Pillaiyan was in the finance sec-



tion.)

They were given a temporary operational base in the Kanchi-rankuda Special Task Force (STF) camp. From there, they gave orders to their 150-strong unit.

But the Tigers had mined their own base and set up an ambush with mortars and snipers. As Karuna's men began torching the unprotected huts, claymores went off followed by a barrage of 60mm mortars.

In their hasty retreat, the Karuna Group team ran straight through an STF unit functioning as a rear guard and forward control post for artillery in Kanchi-rankuda and Thandiyadi STF bases.

Caught in LTTE heavy weapons fire being directed at the Karuna Group, the STF took heavy casualties.

Subsequently, when the STF launched a final push to capture the LTTE bases as Kanchikudicharu and Vinayagapuram LTTE bases, they avoided using Karuna Group cadres.

In neighbouring Batticaloa, an infantry unit of Sri Lankan Army (SLA) had a similar experience.

Though a Karuna Group team and a rearguard unit of SLA soldiers managed to infiltrate as far as Aliyavodai in Thoppikkal jungle, they triggered an LTTE response and staged a chaotic retreat.

They barely escaped a cordon and search operation led Colonel Jeyam, the LTTE's special commander for Batticaloa in the Vadamunai bush. Supporting SLA artillery killed four LTTE cadres, but still a Karuna Group cadre was captured and the body of another left behind.

In the early phases of the Vaharai offensive, SLA units operating under the instructions of Major General Pannipitiya, Commanding Officer, Security Force (East), deployed Karuna Group men differently.

They were given specific tasks such as neutralizing an LTTE position or establishing one of their own one at a location within LTTE-controlled area.

Karuna Group cadres, given their knowledge of the territory and the Tamil language, scored a success in an initial mission on Oct 6, 2006. Masquerading as LTTE fighters, Karuna Group cadres approached an unsuspecting group of Tigers and shot them all at point-blank range. The Tigers lost eleven fighters in that incident.

But the element of surprise was now lost.

In the subsequent phases, in a series of fire-fights with LTTE cadres, the Karuna Group sustained heavy losses. Over forty cadres were killed, seriously wounded or captured in different attempts to infiltrate Vaharai.

The losses led to friction with the SLA amid the Karuna Group's complaints that the extent of artillery and air support being extended to them was much less than that received by SLA units.

Just as the STF had done in Amparai, in the final stages of the Vaharai battle, the SLA removed Karuna Group cadres from the area of operations.

Limited options

However, despite the dismal performance of his fighting cadres, maintained a high profile in the media. The TMVP's media

reports about operations jointly carried out with the SLA against the LTTE, often contradicted with the military's versions.

Each claimed the anti-LTTE operations were carried out without the others assistance. The contradictions came to a head when four Tiger dead bodies were recovered along with some weapons near Miyankulam on A11 highway on December 13, 2006.

The matter was creating concern in the south and undisguised irritation within the military. The issue went up the chain of command to President Rajapakse himself.

The instructions from the top were clear and final. In contrast to the early days of the 'shadow war', Karuna was instructed not to make any claims on recent successes against the Tigers. Further publicity for the Karuna in the south would be unhelpful, he was told.

Indeed in his interview in early February on Derana TV, Karuna disclaimed involvement in the Vaharai battles.

"The SLA is now capable of handling these matters," he said. "They did not ask. ... We did not go."

On Oct. 8, 2006, when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) collected the bodies of eleven SLA soldiers from the LTTE in Vaharai. However, they were not permitted to collect another six bodies of Karuna Group cadres killed alongside.

Meanwhile, amid increasing complaints of criminal activity, Karuna was asked to discipline his cadres, whose conduct was

embarrassing the security forces in the Muslim area of Kattankudi.

In general, the TMVP was told, it should concentrate on its political agenda for the time being.

Karuna is thus in a bind. Unlike Douglas Devananda, who heads the paramilitary EPDP or the militant turned politicians in the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), he is not used to parliamentary politics.

Without no credible and sustainable military capability, Karuna desperately needs a political support base for his survival. But that produces another problem: what political slogan can woo the eastern Tamil constituency?

The Tamils in the east have too many stakeholders for a newcomer, especially one with a track record of cooperation with the Sri Lankan military which has a particularly brutal history in the eastern province.

Even in last year's local government elections in Ampara and Trincomalee, the Tamils demonstrated they were not prepared to vote for the parties backed by military. Instead, the LTTE-backed TNA did well.

As the results show, the majority of the Tamil community are likely to continue taking this stance. The remaining votes will be equally contested by anti LTTE groups - PLOTE, EPRLF (Varathar) and EPDP - other than the Karuna Group.

Even if, as has been unsuccessfully tried before, Karuna unites the anti-LTTE Tamil groups in the east behind him and with the help of the military gets a sizeable electoral backing, this alone cannot give him control of

the east.

Over the years the demography of the Eastern Province has been deliberately and (often) violently manipulated to create equal representation of all three communities: Muslim, Tamil and Sinhalese.

Karuna therefore cannot afford to make political statements that could undermine his possible future alliance with other communities' representatives. Such an alliance would be unavoidable to secure even a provincial portfolio for the TMVP.

Which is why, addressing his recruits this weekend, Karuna asserted: "We want to live equally with the majority Sinhalese and minority Muslims."

There is one other, time proven, way for Karuna to establish himself in the east: to strike a bargain with Sri Lanka's most powerful office, the executive presidency.

Which is why Karuna is unabashedly singing hosannas for Mahinda Rajapakse. The oddity of the former Tamil liberation fighter praising 'Mahinda Chintana' is not entirely inexplicable.

His overt praise of his former foes, the Sri Lanka Army and its commander, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, is a strategy of exaggerated subservience to defuse rising Sinhala doubts that one day this 'Tamil terrorist will 'revert to type' - or perhaps, by his actions, invite unwanted external interventions.

As he told his cadres last weekend in comments reported in the south: "When we left the LTTE on 3 March 2004 we decided to enter into the main stream politics of Sri Lanka."

"When we left the LTTE, we also gave up the policy of Separate state or Tamil Eelam. We do not believe in such a utopian politics any more."

Three years after launching his rebellion against the LTTE, Karuna is very far from where he was on March 2, 2004.

For Rajapakse, he is a fortuitous dual-purpose (military and political) tool. Though Wickremesinghe's party claimed credit for creating the split in the LTTE, Karuna belongs exclusively to the President.

For the TMVP's sub-commanders, his personal political ambitions are the only means by which financial security and legal immunity (an increasing necessity amid rising accusations of murder and gang-rape) are possible.

For the Sri Lankan military he is an initially welcome but now problematic counterinsurgency asset that needs to be handled with care: on a tight leash, but at arm's length.

For the Sinhala polity, he is another element to undermine the 'Tamils' unity against the discrimination of the Sri Lankan state.

For the other anti-LTTE Tamil groups, he is an unwelcome - and dangerous - player in their limited political pool.

For the Tamils of the east, he is the latest in a long line of Army-backed militants whose extortion, conscription and unrestrained violence they must continue to endure.

For the LTTE he is one more informant to eliminate.

NEWS

Australia pressured over Tamil refugees

AUSTRALIA will undermine international agreements to protect refugees if it sends a group of Sri Lankan asylum seekers, all Tamils, who were sailing for Australia back to Indonesia - their last port of call before leaving for Christmas Island - critics warned.

An Australian naval ship intercepted the 83 Sri Lankans and 2 Indonesians in international waters last week heading for Australia.

They are being held on Christmas Island while Canberra decided whether to process them off shore, as asylum seekers typically are, or return them to Indonesia.

But Australia can only return them if Indonesian authorities agreed to apply United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) protocols - which say the men should not be sent back to Sri Lanka if there was a risk they would face persecution.

The UNHCR warned in December that the security situation in Sri Lanka's north and east was so volatile that refugees from those areas, particularly ethnic Tamils, faced serious dangers and persecution.

Indonesia, which is not a signatory to the UNHCR protocols, has indicated that the Tamils would be deported to Sri Lanka immediately, regardless of any concerns for their well-being.

Australia does have alternatives: it still maintains camps for asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea and on the tiny South Pacific island of Nauru, established in 2001 as part of a tougher border protection regime.

Australia's conservative government, which takes one of the world's toughest stands against illegal immigration, said a range of options was being examined but that the men would not be sent back to a country where they would face persecution.

"Preliminary discussions have commenced with both Indonesia and Nauru," Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews said.

"While the government is considering options, clearly no action would be taken which would breach our international obligations," he said.

The Sydney Morning Herald had reported that a secret deal was being struck with Jakarta to send the asylum seekers back to Sri Lanka via Indonesia.

The newspaper said talks took place between Indonesian and Australian law enforcement and immigration officials in Jakarta last Friday, two days after the boat was intercepted.

The Herald quoted Sri Lanka's ambassador to Indonesia, Major-General (retd) Janaka Perera, as saying that Australia and Indonesia had agreed to assist in

the repatriation of the group back to Sri Lanka.

The men on Christmas Island say they fled Sri Lanka as they feared being targeted by Sinhala-dominated security forces because of their Tamil ethnicity.

Minister Andrews said he had been told the two Indonesians were not making claims for protection and wanted to return to Indonesia.

Most of the men being held are in their 20s. One is 17 and is in separate accommodation outside the detention centre and being handled under special guidelines because of his age.

Sri Lankan officials insist the men need not fear being repatriated. Major-General (retd) Perera said the Tamils would have nothing to fear if they were sent home and added that he would guarantee their safety.

"Sri Lanka's position is that they have traveled illegally to another country and they should be returned to Sri Lanka," he said.

Both Australia and Indonesia had stated they would assist the repatriation, he said.

When asked if the Tamils would be able to apply for asylum in Indonesia, Major-General (retd) Perera told ABC radio: "Asylum for what? On what basis? For economic reasons?"

He insisted Sri Lanka could guarantee the men's safety if they were sent back to Sri Lanka.

"Yes, of course. I mean why should we persecute our own people?" he said.

Major-General (retd) Perera is considered a war criminal by

Tamils, as troops under his command have been responsible for numerous human rights abuses including massacres of civilians, torture, summary executions and disappearances.

Australian Greens party leader Bob Brown said Canberra may be acting illegally if it sent the asylum seekers back to Indonesia under these circumstances.

He questioned the involvement of the Ambassador Perera in the reported deal to send the men back to Sri Lanka, where the war between government forces and the Liberation Tigers has escalated in recent months.

"How could we be arranging with him [Perera] for the potential illegal repatriation of these asylum seekers?" Senator Brown asked parliament.

"It would be an outrageous thing for the government to do. They should be brought within Australia's immigration laws and given the rights that are available under those immigration laws."

"Otherwise this country will not only be breaking international law, it'll be turning its back on the very basis of United Nations protection for refugees fleeing violence."

Democrats senator Andrew Bartlett said the men should be given a favourable hearing, particularly in light of reports some may be Tamil people who could be targeted by Sri Lankan government forces.

"There should be no doubt at all about the reasonable prospect that these are genuine claims," he said.

TNA urges Australia: "do not repatriate Tamil asylum seekers"

TAMIL parliamentarians in Sri Lanka urged the Australian and Indonesian governments not to repatriate the Tamils intercepted by the Australian Navy in the Australian seas.

Stating that the lives of the 83 Tamil asylum seekers would be in danger from Sri Lankan armed forces and collaborating paramilitary groups if they were sent back to the country, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) wrote a press communiqué warning of the consequences if the men were sent back to Sri Lanka.

Noting that the Sri Lanka government is trying to get the men back to Sri Lanka, the TNA states "We fear if they were sent back according to the request, all of them would be either kidnapped and tortured or killed by the Sri Lankan armed forces and their allied paramilitary groups."

The TNA also cited examples

of other returnees who had been killed, in their press communiqué released last Wednesday.

"Rasenthiran Ilanghelvan of No 23, Kandy Road, Nunavil, Chavakachcheri, who fled Sri Lanka in 2002, applied for asylum in France in May 2002 and was sent back to Sri Lanka on 31.08.2005, after his request was turned down."

"On 28.02.2007, some Sri Lanka army soldiers and EPDP paramilitary members went to his house around 5:30 a.m. and shot him dead," the communiqué said.

"As such, we request both Australian and Indonesian governments not send back the 85 Tamils to Sri Lanka."

"The Sri Lankan armed forces and paramilitaries are involved in the human rights violations against the Tamil people," the TNA warned.

"The reintroduced Emergency

'Massacre probe flawed' - ICJ observer

CRITICIZING the probe into the massacre of 17 aid workers in Muttur, one of the international observers said investigators had acted hastily and the mid-hearing substitution of a magistrate was 'unlawful'.

The official observer of International Committee of Jurists (ICJ), Michael Brinbaum QC, said the investigation into the killing of the Action Internationale Contre la Faim aid workers in their office compound last August was flawed. Sixteen of the victims were Tamil, four were women and one was Muslim.

He said the investigators had hastily acted on the presumption that the killings were done by the LTTE and criticised the mid-hearing change of magistrates.

Following the conclusion of the official Magistrate's inquest, the ICJ called for a prompt, independent and thorough investigation by a body that has the trust of all Sri Lankans and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

"The inquest Magistrate has pointed out flaws in the investigation so far and indicated the next steps in the investigation", Brinbaum said.

"The Sri Lankan Government needs to dispel serious concerns about whether the justice system is now able to carry out independent and credible investigations into who was responsible for these killings and to mount effective

prosecutions", he added.

He also criticised the mid-hearing substitution of a Tamil magistrate with another, Sinhalese magistrate, as being "unlawful."

"To appoint a new magistrate to hear a case that is well under way is virtually unprecedented," he said.

"In my view, this mid hearing substitution of magistrates ... was unlawful under Sri Lankan law and without justification. Worst of all, the way it was done might well undermine the confidence of the Tamil minority in the system of justice."

However, Michael Brinbaum paid tribute to the sensitivity and fairness with which the two magistrates handled the case.

He advocated the use of Australian experts to analyze ballistic evidence and said it is imperative the Sri Lankan Government acts to "dispel serious concerns about whether [its] justice system is now able to carry out independent and credible investigations."

The ICJ supported the Magistrate's ruling that the investigation of the case had been inadequate.

"I believe it was right for the Magistrate to order that the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) should seek the assistance of Australian expertise to reinvestigate the ballistics evidence", said Michael Brinbaum.

"I am particularly concerned that despite a Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Sri Lanka and Australia, whereby Australian experts would assist in the analysis of bullets found at the scene and recovered from the bodies, the CID has unilaterally arranged the ballistics examination", added Michael Brinbaum.

"Involvement of independent, outside experts would have helped to allay any suspicion of tampering with evidence - an issue which has been raised in at least one other similar case."

The ICJ also welcomed the Magistrate's order that further steps should be taken to protect the identity of the witnesses who are willing to come forward with additional evidence and also residents living near the crime scene.

"Unless the Government of Sri Lanka implements a witness protection programme, witnesses will rarely come forward in any case where they feel themselves to be in peril. Measures that should be considered include: the use of evidence by video link, the physical protection of witnesses by a body independent of the police and army, and the temporary or permanent relocation of particularly vulnerable witnesses", said Michael Brinbaum.

NEWS

Violence round up - week ending 11 March

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

10 March

● The SLA and Police Saturday conducted a cordon and search operation in Sinnakadai, Bazaar in Mannar town. More than seven hundred civilians, men and women, were ordered to leave their houses and workplaces, and assemble in the Mannar common playgrounds and were subjected to severe interrogation. Their national identity cards were checked. Civilians were allowed to leave the playground after registering their names and other details with the military authorities.

● The body of Mayura Murugaiyah, 22, a first year female undergraduate from Jaffna campus, was discovered in a derelict well 500 meters outside the Tellipalai HSZ in Valigamam North, Jaffna. The Management Studies student had disappeared the previous morning while riding her bicycle from her home in Allaveddy towards Jaffna campus to attend lectures. After locating her unattended bike along the roadside in Ampanai, residents discovered the body inside the unused well nearby.

● SLA soldiers arrested 6 youths in Aanaikkodai, Jaffna, during the funeral of Theiventhiram Shanmugarasa, a fish trader who was shot dead the previous day, after angry relatives allegedly assaulted SLA intelligence operatives in civilian cloths.

● SLN personnel arrested Ranjithkumar, Dhamikka Chinniah Lakshman Yootan, R. Fernando, D. Fernando and V. J. Chamintha along the coast of Negombo following an attack on suspected fishing boats on the western coast.

● Unidentified persons triggered a claymore device at Pandirippu in Kalmunai, Amparai, killing two STF troopers and injuring one and seriously injuring three civilians. The attack targeted a STF road patrol unit. Following the attack, STF troopers assaulted civilians passing by while all shops closed in a hurry.

● Jesuthasan Jeyasuthan, 25, from Nethar Lane in Manipay, Jaffna, was abducted by armed men who entered his house.

● Marimuthu Kumutharaj, 28, from Kandy Road, Ariyalai, Jaffna, was abducted by armed men wearing black.

● Armed men in two cars shot dead a youth, aged about 30, at Anna Nagar in Poonthodam, Vavuniya. The body was recov-

ered the next morning with his hands tied behind his back. The youth was not a local and residents speculate he may have been brought from elsewhere and shot dead near Muthmari Amman Temple in Anna Nagar.

● SLA soldiers arrested four Tamil men in a two-day cordon and search operation in Manatsenai and Peruvelli, two government held Tamil villages in Muttur, Trincomalee. They were taken to army camp in the area for further questioning.

● A 60 year old man was killed while two students and a woman were injured when shells fell and exploded on Chempity area in the SLA controlled area on the border of Batticaloa, Amparai districts. Ten houses were damaged in the shelling.

● Five SLA troopers were injured when unidentified persons attacked an SLA patrol unit at Komaskanthalawa, on the Amparai border.

9 March

● Four youths who had set out from their homes to Jaffna town from different suburbs on different errands disappeared. Jayachandran Prathap, 29, from Atchuvally, disappeared while travelling to Jaffna town. So too did Maiyoor Chandramohan, 27, from Aavarangal in Puthur Devadas Christy Prasanna, 26, from Nallur, and Balasingham Surendran, 25, from Thirunelvally. The four youths are not related and had independently left for Jaffna but not returned home.

● Paramasamy Visaharan, 25, was abducted from his home in the Jaffna peninsula.

● Amirthalingam Alaheswaran, 29, was abducted from Nedunkulam, Ariyalai Jaffna.

● A SLA trooper was killed and two soldiers injured in an attack on a SLA road patrol in Vadamaradchy, Jaffna. Jaffna SLA command did not officially confirm whether the casualty was from a hand-grenade or a claymore attack.

● Armed men on a motorbike rode into Chavakkadu Market at Aanaikkodai, Valigamam, Jaffna, and shot dead Theiventhiram Shanmugarasa, 46, a fish trader from Chavakkadu, Aanaikkodai.

● An auto-driver was shot dead at his home in Aanaikkodai, Jaffna.

Parents visit Sinhala soldiers in LTTE custody

PARENTS and relatives visited five Sri Lanka armed forces soldiers in the custody of the LTTE in Kilinochchi last Wednesday, in a visit facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The group arrived in Kilinochchi from Vavuniya and met the soldiers at a Thamileelam Police remand prison around 11:00 a.m. in the presence of V. Aravindan, Thamileelam Police Probation Officer, Kumarasamy Kanagalingam, Thamileelam Police Chief Inspector and Selvaretnam Jeyapalan, Chief Prison Guard.

The parents and visitors had meal together and stayed until 2:30 p.m., before returning to Vavuniya.

Samantha Weerasinghe of Gemunu Watch was arrested with serious injuries when the LTTE repulsed a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) advance at Muhamalai FDL.

The Sea Tigers captured the other four sailors - P. Samiththa Kumarasevake, M. A. M. Kumarasri, Indika Dishanth Pitiyakumbara and Anil Priyanke Madathe-niya - in a battle with the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) on Point Pedro Sea.

Mrs. Ariyadasa Surendrapadmini, the mother of Madathe-niya, spoke to the media after the visit.

"My son joined the service not with the intention of fighting the Tamils. Our family is very poor. This poverty compelled him to join the Navy," she said.

"Though I have heard that my son participated in a sea battle, I was not aware what had happened to him. When I went to the Naval office and enquired about my son, they told me that my son went missing following the battle with LTTE. Later we found out from newspapers that he was captured by the LTTE."

"Today, I am relieved to see my son alive. My son said that he is being looked after well and not to worry about him. I wish there is an end to this conflict, and Tamil and Sinhala people live together in peace," she said.

Mr. Kumarasevake said, "My wife is living alone at home. We are a very poor and my family depends only on my income. I have been in the Navy for the last 8 years."

"During the sea battle the Tigers attacked our Dvora and the ship started to sink. We jumped into the sea to save our lives. However, we were unable to swim and the Tigers saved us.



A Sri Lanka military trooper consoles his mother when parents and relatives visited 5 troopers in LTTE custody. The relatives complained they have had no government help towards getting their sons released. Photo TamilNet

The LTTE is treating us as one of their own people not as prisoners of war. The government should take actions to obtain our release," he added.

Mr. P. Weerasinghe, the father of Samantha Weerasinghe, said: "My son was arrested by LTTE when he was engaged in a military operation in the Tamil area. Many of my son's comrades died in the fighting. I am happy my son is alive, even though he is in the custody of LTTE. I have talked to the Army about the release of my son. However, they are not interested in obtaining his release and tell us that the ICRC

is talking to the Tigers.

"The Sri Lanka government should release the Tamil prisoners in the prisons in South and obtain the release of my son. I will never allow any of my other sons to join the armed forces. When I visited the first time, I was very happy to see my son receiving the needed treatment in the hospital. I went home and told everybody about this.

"None of the media in South is helping us to obtain the release of my son. Although I am worried, I am happy on the other hand that the Tigers are looking after him well," he added.

● The SLA commander of the Anuradhapura Saliyapura Gajaba Regimental Headquarters, Colonel Jayantha Shurawera, and three of his men including a Major, and four national park employees were killed in a gunfire ambush inside the Wilpattu wildlife sanctuary. Wilpattu national Chief

Warden, Wasantha Pushpananda, employees M. D. Withana, Pradeep Navaratna and Kalum Anjana Jawardana, were killed in the ambush. The SLA major was identified as Major Jayaratna. The vehicle in which they were riding, was missing in the park, bordering Anuradhapura, in Puttalam

district. SLA soldiers searching for their missing commander spotted the 8 dead bodies.

● 3 STF elite troopers were killed and 12 injured when attackers detonated a claymore mine, targeting a Buffel Armoured Perso-

Continued on page 12

NEWS

Violence - w/e 11 March

Continued from page 11

nnel Carrier in Periyapullumalai, Batticaloa.

● Two SLA troopers died and ten were injured when their Buffel Armoured Personnel Carrier crashed against an electricity post at Chalampaikulam in Vavuniya. Over speeding is reported to be the reason for the accident.

● The partly decomposed body of Lakshumanan Uthayakumaran, 52, was found at Musalkutty Kulam, Vavuniya. The dead man was a resident of Muhathankulam in Vavuniya and had been missing for a few days.

● Sri Lankan forces conducted special cordon and search operations in Goonesingapura, Colombo central and Galle Road in Colombo city. Police said the search was conducted with the aid of sniffer dogs on a tip off that two men wanted by the security forces were seen in the area, but no one was arrested.

● Two SLA soldiers were taken into custody in connection with the murder of a fellow soldier in Teldeniya, Kandy. All three soldiers had been attached to the Maveriyadenne SLA camp, close to Victoria Reservoir hydro power plant in Teldeniya. The three soldiers had decided to desert the army and left the camp the previous night but were caught in a police search when it was discovered they had disappeared. Police discovered the body of one soldier in the shrub jungle close to the camp, and arrested the other two soldiers. Preliminary inquiries suggest the two suspects had strangled the third due to a dispute while they were decamping.

8 March

● The SLA launched a heavy artillery barrage towards LTTE controlled territories in Batticaloa as STF troops began a two pronged ground offensive from Chenkalady through A15 and from Pulkunawa and Syambalanduwa. Around 10 000 civilians were forced to flee from inside LTTE territory to escape the shelling.

● Unidentified persons shot dead a Muslim woman, Aiysha Umma, 45, at Iqbal Nagar, Nilaveli, Trincomalee. She had worked abroad for some years and returned recently.

● The owner of a private Telecommunication centre in Mallakam, Jaffna, was shot dead by gunmen. Four armed men on

two motorbikes arrived while Karthigesu Lankapathi, 62, was opening for business and shot the owner at point-blank range before escaping. The business premises are 75 meters east of an EPDP camp where Police and SLA soldiers are deployed for security duty. Erlalai SLA camp is to the west of the building.

● Natkunam Navaneethan, 24, from Mallakam, Jaffna, went missing after he went to the bank.

● Nadarajah Thayaroopan, 24, from Kilner Lane, Jaffna, left for work saying he would return home after visiting his relatives, but was reported missing when he failed to return.

● Sachithananthan Vithyasagar, 19, from Neerveli north is reported missing from 2nd March after he went for interrogation at the Neerveli SLA camp where he had been ordered to report by SLA troopers who had earlier confiscated his National identity card.

● More than five armed men in a white van abducted a mason in Manipay, Jaffna, as he was returning from his mother's house in Manipay to Alady camp for IDPs in Uduvil. Nadasigamany Vasantharajan, 30, was temporarily living at the Alady IDP camp. When Vasantharajan tried to escape from the abductors, they fired shots in the air and in his direction. He fell flat on the ground to escape being hit and the armed men apprehended him before hurling him into the van.

● Armed men in a white van abducted an elderly Tamil trader from Fussels Lane in Wellawatte, Colombo. The abductors forcibly dragged out Nadesan Velautham, 73, out of the three-wheeler in which he was returning home from his business in Colpetty and whisked him away in the van.

● Sri Lankan armed forces arrested 7 Tamil civilians at Teldeniya in Kandy in the Central Province in a cordon and search operation. Teldeniya police said they are interrogating the arrested as they failed to establish their identity with valid documents.

● 38 civilians from Dambulla and its suburbs in the North Central Province were arrested in a cordon and search operation. Majority of the civilians are natives of the north, east and other parts of the country and were taken into custody as they had failed to give valid reasons for their presence at Dambulla and to prove their identity, police said. Later all but 6

were released.

7 March

● The SLA launched indiscriminate artillery fire on LTTE held villages in Mannar, forcing several hundred residents from Palai-kudi, Parapukadanthan and Adamban to flee from their houses and seek refuge in Madhu church.

● A police constable, S. P. Tissera, was killed when a police party was attacked by a group with small arms at Parapankandal, close to Uyilankulam in Mannar. The Uyilankulam SLA sentry, the gateway to LTTE territory in Mannar, was closed immediately after the incident.

● One policeman was killed and three injured when unidentified persons triggered a claymore device near Velikulam junction along Vavuniya-Mamadu Road in Vavuniya. One civilian was also injured in the attack. The attack targeted a jeep carrying a group of policemen stationed at Mamadu to Vavuniya town.

● A Tamil milk vendor, Tharmu, 52, was shot dead by armed persons in Sambaltivu, a Tamil village north of Trincomalee town. Armed persons on a motorbike shot him dead when he was returning home from Trincomalee town on his motorbike after selling milk from Sambaltivu.

● A Christian Pastor, Victor Paul Yogarajah, 51, attached to Thandikkulam Church, Vavuniya, his two sons and two aides who went to Colombo to attend a religious event, were reported missing after they arrived in Colombo. The group set out by train on 28 February and called their relatives the following day, 1 March, to say they had arrived in Colombo safely, but there have been no other communications to Vavuniya after 1 March, relatives told the SLHRC. The others missing were identified as the Pastor's sons Yogarajah Daniel, 22, and Yogarajah David, 19, and an aide Joseph Sugantharajah, 20. The name of the other aide was not released.

● Three persons were killed on the spot and two others injured when a parcel floating in the Uma Oya (river) in Uva-Paranagama area, Badulla district in Uva Province exploded. An elderly father, his daughter, and another youth, all Sinhalese residents of Horathotta village in Badulla, were killed. On seeing the mystery parcel floating in the river, the victims had recovered the parcel, and attempted to open it when it exploded.

6 March

● Sri Lanka Air Force Kfir bombers bombed Vallipunam, Mullaithivu. No casualties were reported.

● A SLA DPU detonated a claymore mine targeting a van carrying civilians from Mallavi to Palappani in Mullaithivu district. The civilians escaped unhurt.

● Villagers in Sembukulam, Anuradhapura, found 5 male bod-

ies bundled together. The upper parts of the bodies had been burnt in a pyre of tyres.

● Artillery shells launched by the LTTE hit the SLA's 52 Brigade Head Office at Manthuvil, Thenmaradchy, Jaffna. Two shells fell inside the base and one outside it, and an ambulance was seen rushing out of the base towards Palaly Military Hospital following the attack.

● The owner of a private telecommunication in Kannathiddy, Jaffna town, was killed by gunmen while returning home. Visuvalingam Nishanthan, 30, was about to enter his house near Kannathiddy junction when assailants stalking him fired at point blank range.

● Unidentified men shot dead an auto-driver at this home in Aanai-koddai in Valigamam, Jaffna. The armed men called Krishnavaratharajah Kanthanesan, 23, an auto-driver living near the old post office in Aanai-kodai, outside his house and shot him dead at point blank range before escaping.

● Residents discovered the decapitated body of a youth in a farmland in Mylankadu in Erlalai, Jaffna. The youth was brought to the area the previous night and murdered at the crime scene.

● Thangavadeivel Gajan, 20, from Ranjana Theater area in Valvetiturai, Jaffna, was abducted by SLA soldiers according to a report with the SLHRC.

● Esthar Christopher, 25, was reported abducted by armed men in a white van near Eechamoddai beach, Jaffna. Armed men in a white van forced Christopher into the vehicle and drove away.

● Amirthalingam Santhakumar, 18, was abducted by a group of armed persons in Nanattan, Mannar. A group of armed men had entered his house at Aandarchettivel, Nanattan and forced him into a vehicle before fleeing.

● Gunmen shot dead a SLAF airman near the Mosque junction along Vavuniya-Horowapothana road in Vavuniya. Assailants on a motorcycle approached a Medical Clinic where W. M. A. K. Kumara, 31, was buying medicine and shot him dead.

● Three suspects, including a police constable, arrested on suspicion that they attempted to transport banned goods to LTTE controlled areas in Mannar, were remanded by a magistrate. The police constable had been working in Mannar Police and the other two are the driver and cleaner of a lorry seized with banned goods.

● A woman, Uthayakumar Sasikala, 30, was shot dead by gunmen at Periyakulam in Kuchchaveli, Trincomalee.

5 March

● The SLA arrested five two youths from Chunnakam town and Chunnakam north in a search following a claymore attack at Kothiyalady in Chunnakam, Jaffna.

● Sellamuthu Manoharan, 31, from Kalvalai Road, Chunnakam,

Mannar toll: 170 in 14 months

OVER 170 Tamil civilians have been killed, disappeared or injured in Mannar over 14 months in military operations carried out by the Sri Lanka armed forces.

55 civilians were killed, 105 injured, and 16 reported missing in Mannar between January 2006 and February 2007.

15 civilians were killed, 47 injured and 11 reported missing in Mannar division.

11 civilians were killed, 15 injured and 6 reported missing in Nanattan division.

3 civilians were killed, 5 injured and one reported missing in Musali division.

18 Tamil civilians were killed and 39 injured in Manthai West division in LTTE held territory.

10 civilians were killed - two by shooting and 8 in claymore attacks by SLA DPUs - 9 injured and one person reported missing in Madhu division in LTTE held territory.

Jaffna, was abducted from a relative's home close to his house by uniformed SLA troopers. Two other youths have also disappeared after a cordon and search operation by the SLA in Chunnakam, Jaffna.

● Navaratnam Sivatharsan, 19, from Poovatkarai in Alvai, Pulolay West, Jaffna, was abducted by the SLA.

● Balasubramaniam Sujevan, 19, from Kundukulalm in Chunnakam, Jaffna, was abducted by men in a white van.

● Police recovered the body of a youth in decomposed state from Kelani river at Kohilawatte in Wellampitiya. Police said that the Kelani victim may have been killed elsewhere and dumped later into the river. The incident raises the specter of 1995 when tortured bodies of Tamils were found floating in waterways and the terror era of 1987, 1988 when many Sinhalese youths were killed and their bodies thrown in Kelani river.

● Unknown persons abducted the five year old daughter of a popular Tamil businessman in Negombo and demanded ransom to release her. She was later released, allegedly with no ransom paid.

● A decapitated body found in a tobacco farm in Mylankadu Erlalai, Jaffna, was identified as belonging to one of five Chunnakam youths abducted by uniformed SLA troopers between 4th and 6th of March. Thuraiarajah Sasikaran, 26, from Station Road, Chunnakam was abducted by armed SLA soldiers the previous day and his body was discovered the following day in Erlalai.

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

NEWS

Violence round up - week ending 04 March

Summary of incidents - apart from major clashes - since 26 February

4 March

● SLA soldiers driving four motorbikes abducted three manual labourers in Kambarmalai, Vadamadachy, Jaffna, while they were doing farm work on a private property. The men were identified as Kovintharajah Kirubakaran, 22, from Puloly, Point Pedro, Kandiah Selvakumar, 21, from Puloly, Point Pedro, and Velayutham Krishnamohan, 19, from School Lane, Viyapari-moolai, Point Pedro. Relatives said officials at the Point Pedro SLA camp denied arresting them. Local residents who know the abductees said that they were poor labourers struggling to make ends meet, and the families will be pushed into dire poverty without the earnings.

● Velautham Amalathas, 28, a resident of an IDP area in Jaffna, was arrested by the SLA as he was going to church. His mother complained to the SLHRC that the SLA denied they had him in their custody. The SLHRC took statements from eye witnesses who are said to have seen the SLA taking him.

● The SLA arrested five youths from Uduvil, Jaffna, in connection with claymore attacks the previous night. Thurairajah Sasikaran, 26, from Station Road, Chunnakam, Jaffna, was one of the men abducted by armed SLA soldiers.

● Thavakulasingham Sutharsan, 21, from Viyapari-moolai in Point Pedro, Jaffna, was abducted by SLA troopers.

● Amid an escalating number of killings and abductions in Thenmaradchy, Jaffna, Rajaratnam Shekar, 28, a young family man, was shot dead by gunmen along Dutch Road in Chavakachcheri. The mason, was riding his motorbike with his wife and two children from his home in Meesalai when the gunmen stopped the motorbike and shot him at point blank range, killing him on the spot.

● A young man was tied to an electricity post and then blown up by exploding a hand grenade near LTTE's Heroes Cemetery in Kopay, Valligamam, Jaffna. Kopay police recovered the remains of Nagalingam Naguleswaran, 26, from Church Road, Palaiyootu, Trincomalee, from the post.

● Gunmen called a trader out of

his house for interrogation and shot him dead in Chundukuli, Jaffna. A. Sureshkumar, 26, had a shop along A9 road close to the Jaffna Secretariat.

● The bodies of two youths with gunshot wounds to the heads were recovered by Vavuniya police in Karupanjankulam, Maharambaikulam. Police said the youths were shot dead the previous night and left at the scene. The bodies were identified as belonging to Maduraiveeran Mahendran, 24, and Premajeevan Ranjan, 23.

● Two cadres of the paramilitary Karuna group were injured when their camp at Mylambavely, adjoining an SLA camp, came under attack. Four IDPs staying in a nearby school building were injured in the counter attack. The camp, 100 meters from the SLA camp, was destroyed in the sudden attack that lasted 15 minutes. A woman and three men who had fled from LTTE controlled areas recently due to the shelling and bombings by the Sri Lankan armed forces were injured.

● Unidentified armed men took two family men from their house for interrogation and shot both dead some distance away from the house at Kendayankerny, Valaichenai, Batticaloa. Thambyaiyah Mohan, 44, auto rickshaw driver and a father of two, and Kurukulasingam Srikumaran, 30, a mason by profession and a father of a six months child, were both cousins and were at Mohan's house when the armed men took them away, saying they have to be interrogated. Srikumaran, from Kallaru in Batticaloa, had been living at Eechilampathai in Trincomalee district after his marriage there. He and his family being displaced to Vaharai had again moved to Kendayankerny because of the recent SLA offensive. He was living with his relatives with his wife and child.

● Nine civilians including Tamils were arrested in cordon and search operations in Kalutara and Matugama police divisions.

3 March

● The bodies of five men were recovered from Mutturajawela marshy land in Kandana police division north of Colombo (see box story).

● Unidentified persons shot dead Abdul Razak, 24, and Priyantha,



Police photograph bodies of Tamils from Batticaloa found in swamps near Colombo. Photo AFP

Investigations continue into bodies found in Colombo

SIX male bodies, recovered from near Colombo over three days in earlier this month, have been identified as belonging to the paramilitary Karuna Group, but investigations continue as speculation mounts that they were LTTE cadres who had infiltrated the paramilitary group.

Two bodies were recovered from Muthurajawela swamp in Kandana on March 2, another two were recovered on March 3 and a final body was found on March 4.

The bodies were bullet riddled and the faces blind folded and disfigured and most were in a highly decomposed state.

The police suspect the bodies had been dumped in the marshy land after being executed elsewhere.

The bodies were first discovered by a boy who was flying his kite close to the marshy lands of Muthurajawela, reported The Sunday Times.

"The string of the kite had got entangled on a tree near the swamp. When the boy went up to retrieve the kite he had stepped on a body. He later saw a hand sticking out of the swamp," the

paper said.

Preliminary investigations by Pamunugama police revealed that the killers had submerged the bodies in the marshy bog that is shrouded by trees and bushes, the paper added.

The five bodies recovered first were later identified as belonging to persons from Batticaloa. Relatives of the victims had travelled from Batticaloa and identified the bodies, the MTV-Sathi news broadcast said, quoting a police officer, G. Amarathunge of Pamunugamuwa Police.

However, the Sunday Time quoted the police as saying an intelligence operative for the Karuna Group had identified the bodies as members of their organization.

The bodies were identified as Karanasingham Suresh from Karadiyanaru, Subramaniam Prabhakaran from Karadiyanaru, Siva Prakashan Madiruban from Kokkadicholai, Kandasamy Vellayan from Kanankuda and Ponnaia Kamalkarthik from Unnichimalai.

The leader of the Karuna Group, Vinayagamoorthy Muralidaran alias Karuna, told The

Sunday Times that seven members had come to Colombo from Batticaloa in the last week of February and he believed it was five of them who had been killed while the other two had been abducted by the LTTE.

"The LTTE has been behind the regular killings and abductions of our members and supporters. These seven people were facing threats from the LTTE. So we got them down to Colombo to find them jobs in the middle-east where they could live safely," Karuna said.

The two who Karuna claims have been abducted by the LTTE were identified by the paper as Raj Kumar from Unnichimalai and Prathipan from Kanankuda.

However, investigators are probing whether there were other motives behind the killings amidst speculation that those killed were LTTE cadres who had infiltrated the Karuna Group, the Sunday Times also reported.

The Sunday Times reported that the two people reportedly kidnapped by the LTTE are in the Karadiyanaru intelligence camp commanded by a Karuna Group leader identified as Keerthi.

23, at Salaipaiaru, Trincomalee. Both victims were businessmen.

● The SLA arrested a Ponniah Satyaraj, a resident of Poovarasanthivu, Kinniya, Trincomalee, following the recovery of a live claymore mine along Alankerni-Poovarasanthu road. The claymore mine weighing about 10kg

was allegedly laid targeting a SLA foot patrol unit.

● A SLA vehicle sustained severe damages, and an unknown number of SLA soldiers from the intelligence wing were feared injured or killed in a claymore attack near Uduvil junction in Jaffna. Although the SLA claimed

that the explosion occurred after the vehicle had passed the area, local residents said that there was evidence of blood and shattered glass fragments indicating serious vehicle damage and injuries to personnel.

Continued on page 14

NEWS

Violence w/e March 04

Continued from page 13

● Two SLA soldiers were killed when the vehicle they were travelling in as part of a military convoy allegedly collided with another vehicle near Kurumbasiddy, Punnaikadduvan, Jaffna. Convoys often travel at great speed due to the threat of claymore mines.

● Two SLA troopers and an officer of the Intelligence unit were killed in a claymore attack targeting the vehicle carrying them, near Kothiyaladi, Jaffna, between Maruthanamadam junction and Chunnakam along KKS road. The SLA soldiers in the vehicle had rushed to where gunmen were exchanging fire with the SLA soldiers for more than 15 minutes.

● Gunmen shot and seriously injured a young woman and her husband at Urani Housing Scheme in Valvettithurai, Jaffna. The woman, Nirthika Paramsothi, 21, succumbed to her injuries at hospital, while her husband, S. Paramsothi, 23, was in a critical condition. The young couple were shot at when they went of their house to wash their hands after dinner.

● Three Tamil youths, natives of Jaffna, were arrested in a house close to Chilaw town in north western province. One had arrived from abroad a few days previously and the other two had been staying in the area for the last two years, renting the house. Chilaw Police said they arrested the youths on information from local residents and also recovered a laptop and cell phones from the youths.

● Armed men called Thilainayagam Theepan, 18, out of his house at Karaithivu, Amparai, and shot him dead with a pistol. The mason was a resident of the tsunami refugee camp in Karaithivu.

● Six fishermen from Battalakuandu, Kalpity, Mannar, were reported missing after they had gone fishing. They left in boats for fishing in Kalpity sea but did not return. Police said they have begun investigation to find out whether the fishermen had been abducted or are missing in the sea.

2 March

● SLAF Kfir jets dropped bombs on the villages of Tharavai and Kudumbimalai in LTTE controlled Batticaloa. Meanwhile, SLA soldiers at 23-3 Brigade Headquarters in Batticaloa, Valai-

chchenai Paper Factory, Chenkalady, Vavunathivu and Mylambavelly Army Camps fired artillery shells into LTTE areas.

● Two SLA soldiers were killed when unidentified persons threw a grenade on a patrol unit at Namalwatte, Morawewa. The soldiers, who were admitted to hospital in critical condition, succumbed to their injuries.

● Two Sri Lanka police constables were injured in a grenade attack on a police post at Munthal in Chilaw police division in the northwestern province. Unidentified persons on a motorbike had flung the grenade and proceeded towards Chilaw.

● A police constable and a home guard posted at Railway Station area at Eratperiyakulam in Vavuniya were injured when a shell fell and exploded.

● Five Tamil fishermen who went fishing from Vidathaltivu in Mannar district in February were reported missing at the Mannar SLHRC and Mannar Centre for Co-Existence. Two are residents of Vidathaltivu and the other three are displaced from Pooneryn and residing in Vidathaltivu. The fishermen left in their fibreglass boats on Friday, February 23 and failed to return.

● The SLN has denied permission to Tamil Catholic pilgrims to participate in the annual festival of the St. Antony's church in Kachchathivu, an isle in the Palk Straits between Sri Lanka and India.

1 March

● Hundreds of families from LTTE controlled Vavunathivu, Mankikattu, Eechchenthivu, Navatkadu and Vilavedduvan in Manmunai West division fled to government controlled areas due to heavy shelling by the SLA from the 23-3 Brigade Headquarters at Batticaloa, Valaichenai Paper Factory Camp and Mylambavelly SLA Camp. Several houses were damaged and four residents of Pankudavely village were injured in the attack.

● A youth working as a night-watchman at Chavakachcheri Hospital was shot dead by two gunmen (see separate story).

● A van carrying civilians from Nedunkeni to Mankulam escaped a claymore attack by a SLA SPU at Olumadu, Nedunkeni in the Vanni. The vehicle sustained minor damage but the civilians escaped unhurt.

● A SLAF flying instructor and a

pilot trainee died instantly when the PT6 training aircraft they were in crashed into the airfield in Anuradhapura airbase.

● SLAF Kfir bombers dropped at least 8 bombs in a civilian settlement, including farmland, in Therankandal, Thunukkai, Mullaitivu district.

● Lawyers in Vavuniya boycotted the district and high courts protesting against the persistent demand for ransom and the death threats issued by a paramilitary group. The Lawyers Association submitted a written appeal that they need security arrangements and assurance of safety to conduct their legal work.

● T. Nirojan, 14, succumbed to injuries caused by SLA mortar fire launched towards Vantharumoolai west, Eravur, Batticaloa, from Mavadiyembu SLA camp. Nirojan was first rushed to Chenkaldy hospital and later transferred to Batticaloa Teaching hospital for further treatment where he succumbed to his injuries.

● Two policemen and a five-year-old boy were injured when unidentified persons threw a hand grenade to the Mancholai Police Sentry Point at Oddamavadi, Batticaloa. The attackers pursued three policemen returning from Oddamavadi market after their routine purchase, lobbed a grenade at them and escaped. The injured boy was a passer by at the time of the attack. The injured policemen, S. Jeyapala and S.W. Srisena and the boy Mohammed Rizwan were admitted to hospital.

● Fourteen security officers employed at Vantharumoolai Eastern University, detained by Eravur Police since a January 31 claymore attack, were released on bail. Acting Vice chancellor N. Pathmanathan had earlier announced that the academic activities can resume only after the release of these employees and meanwhile, only the administrative functions will be conducted. Eleven people including civilians, police and SLA troops were killed during the claymore attack on a military convoy opposite the university campus while 15 others were injured.

● A businessman from Kanagaratnam Road in Ariyalai, Jaffna, was shot dead by gunmen. The gunmen went to Manikkam Manoharan's house on a motorbike, called him to come outside, and shot him at point blank range before escaping. Manoharan was 44 years old and married.

● Armed men shot dead Yogarasa Yogeswaran, 25, a father of two, at his house in Kaluvankerny, Eravur, Batticaloa. The armed men called the victim to come out of his house, and shot him dead at point blank range. Yogeswaran did not go to sea but had been asleep with his wife and children in his house.

28 February

● The Sri Lankan military claimed the SLN destroyed a sus-

picious boat 230 nautical miles off Matara on Sri Lanka's southern coast. Sri Lankan officials later said that the incident occurred 180 nautical miles from Dondra Point. The boat had failed to stop following the warning shots fired by the SLN at the international waters. The vessel took fire and exploded when SLN fired at the boat, military officials said.

● A 4-year-old girl, 15-year-old boy and their parents, riding a motorbike to Madu church from Andankulam, were wounded in a SLA DPU claymore attack 6 km from the church. Henry Anthony-muttu, 40, a farmer, his wife Henry Uchrista, 42, and their children Angele Shiami, 4 and Sam Surendran Henry, 15, were wounded.

● SLA soldiers on a foot patrol panicked and opened fire when a civilian suddenly emerged from a lavatory adjoining his house. The patrol, along the A9 highway, 300 meters from Chavakachcheri town in Thenmaradchy, killed Rasenthiram Ilanchelvan, 32. More than 15 bullet wounds were found in his body.

● STF personnel shot dead three Tamil men near their Kallady camp in Batticaloa. The STF said that the three youths had approached their camp intending to attack the camp and the troopers lying in ambush had opened fire, killing all three. Kathankudy police said they recovered a claymore device, a T-56 type rifle with cartridges and 4 hand grenades lying near the bodies. The LTTE has not commented on the incident.

● The SLN is constructing a large guard post at Point Pedro Munai area near the light house with the aim to reopen Point Pedro harbour which remains closed after the attack on 'City of Liverpool' ship. The new SLN guard post, while guarding ships unloading at Point Pedro harbour, is also meant to obstruct any Sea Tiger attacks.

● Sri Lanka Police conducted a door to door search in the Tamil dominated towns of Dehiwela and Kalubovila in Mount Lavinia Municipal limits, and arrested ten Tamils including three women. Ms. Kirushnaveni Rangarajah, 26, from Jaffna, Miss Kanishka Sebastian and Ms. Reetamma Antony, 33, from Hatton, were released the next day after Mano Ganesan, Member of Parliament for Colombo district and the Leader of Western People Front, and P. Rathakirushnan, Deputy Minister, contacted the Police and demanded their release. The other seven male detainees are still being detained for further interrogation. The Police said the suspects were arrested under PTA, which enables the armed forces to detain a person for 18 months without producing in Courts, but did not reveal the reason of the arrests. Meanwhile, Mr. Mano Ganesan said that actions are underway to obtain the release of the other seven.

Jaffna toll: 87 in 69 days

87 YOUTHS have either been abducted or disappeared in the first 69 days of 2007, records at the Jaffna SLHRC revealed.

The figure includes 37 in January, 35 in February and 15 in the first ten days in March.

416 civilians disappeared in 2006, according to the same records.

The escalating numbers have raised the spectre of 1997, when Amnesty declared "of 600-odd people who have "disappeared" in the last 18 months after their arrest by the security forces, nearly all have died as a result of torture or been deliberately killed in detention."

27 February

● The US and Italian ambassadors to Sri Lanka were slightly injured by shrapnel of shells fired at an SLAF airfield in eastern Batticaloa (see separate story).

● A Muslim civilian was found dead at Akkaraipattu in Amparai district with injuries to his body caused by beating. The body of Naina Lebbe Casim, 44, a firewood seller by profession, was found on Akkaraipattu-Amparai road at Akkaraipattu.

● SLA soldiers cordoned off Jaffna Hindu College and surrounding areas and asked the students and staff to assemble at the School play ground, before conducting search of the premises. The SLA ordered school closed and sent the students home after the search. Residents said they heard sounds of gunfire near the school the previous night, and this may have triggered the SLA search. Several student organisations in Jaffna, including the Tamil Student Union, accused SLA of searching the college as reprisal against the student community and a pre-planned measure to disrupt their educational activities.

● A newly appointed principal on his way to Vilathikulam from the Zonal Education Office in Madhu was killed, and an Divisional Education Officer was wounded following a claymore ambush by a SLA DPU. Siluvairasa Amalanesan, 33, was killed on the spot and Christian Rajakone, 47, was rushed to Kilinochchi hospital. He later succumbed to his injuries while in hospital. They were traveling by motorbike, driven by the deceased, to attend an event at the school.

● A Sinhalese man, arrested in November 2006 in Valaichenai, Batticaloa, on suspicion of working closely with the LTTE and held in custody at Police Headquarters in Colombo, was found dead in the toilet. O.G. Chandrasena was a resident of Colombo. Two police officers were inter-

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

Continued on page 15

NEWS

Violence round up - w/e March 04

Continued from page 14

dicted from service in connection with Mr. Chandrasena's death

- Eravur Police recovered the body of a young mason with gunshot wounds by the Thalavai-Punnaikkudah road in Eravur, Batticaloa. Selvarasa Sivanathan, 31, a father one, was from Iyan-kerny Barathi Village in Chenkalady and his wife is employed in the Middle East. Sivanathan had left home the previous morning to work and as he failed to return, his mother and other family members searched for him in vain. Eravur police recovered Sivanathan's body on information given by residents of a corpse lying in Punnaikkudah area.

- A Tamil teacher working in Maskeliya, Nuwara Eliya district in the central province, was arrested in a search operation by the police. The teacher is a native of Kaluwanchchikudy, Batticaloa, and had been working in Maskeliya for the last five years.

- The police arrested another Tamil civilian, a native of Killinochchi, at Dummalasuriya in Nattandiya division in the northwestern province, and four other Tamil civilians in Kandy in a cordon and search operation.

26 February

- A hoax caller warning of bombs inside the Peoples Bank and Bank of Ceylon branches in Vavuniya caused panic among the staff and customers as they vacated the buildings. SLA soldiers and police cordoned off the area and searched the buildings, but no bombs were found.

- Armed men on motorbikes shot dead two police constables, Vickremasinghe and Seniveratne, at Muthalikkulam, Vavuniya. Chettikulam police claimed that LTTE pistol group cadres on motorbike had shot the constables while they were on duty.

- The two Uduppiddy American Mission College students abducted last Saturday while on their way to tuition classes at Uduppiddy, Vadamaradchy, were returned home safely. The abductors returned both 15 years old boys blind folded in a white van, and left them in the Uduppiddy area in the early hours. The boys waited until sunrise and then returned home. The boys said armed men took them to an old building, which looked like a military camp, where they were showed photographs of persons and asked to furnish information on them.

- A security guard attached to the Commercial Bank in Jaffna is reported missing. The family members of Vijayaratham Ahilaraj, 26, of Arasadi Road, Nallur,

lodge a complaint at the Jaffna Branch of the SLHRC that he went missing while on his way to work after having had lunch at home.

- The Financial Director of the Sinhala language "Mawbima" weekly, Dushantha Basnayake, was detained by the Sri Lankan Terrorism Investigation Division (TID) at his workplace in Colombo. President Mahinda Rajapakse, in a televised address Saturday, had charged that the weekly was "pro LTTE." The paper is owned by Tiran Alles, a close confidante of Mangala Samaraweera, the former SL Foreign Minister who was recently sacked by Mr. Rajapakse. Mr. Alles was also removed from Sri Lanka's Civil Aviation Authority this month. TID officials interrogated Mr. Basnayake, 40, a father of two, at his office and detained the director according to "direct instructions," from the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry. Mawbima has carried articles that criticized Mahinda Rajapakse's brothers as being responsible for the hardline approach of the Rajapakse government and human rights violations. Three months ago, on 23 November 2006, TID officials arrested Parameshwary Munusamy a Tamil reporter attached to the Mawbima paper. Ms. Parameshwary is still detained.

- Sri Lanka police arrested 11 Tamils in during a search operation at Lunugala Upper Division in Poonagala, Bandarawella. The persons arrested are: P. Sivalingam, 60, retired worker, K. Kathirval, 54, retired worker, K. Mylvaganam, 45, retired worker, M. Viswanathan Vijenthiran, 26, S. Johnson, 26, M. Stalin, 38, P. Selvakumar, 25, K. Puniyamoorthy, 32, K. Mylvaganam, 45, M. Viswanathan, 30 and S. Pushpa-aj, 32.

- Karantheniya police arrested 4 youths, Muthu Inpathayalan, 22, Asok Vijayaratham, 24, Velu Chandramoorthy, 20 and Krishnasamy Parthipan, 25. A Muslim man, Mohamed San, 28, and a Sinhalese man, V. S. A. Kavaris, were also arrested. They were returning from Galle where they had been affixing name boards for shops.

- Parents of Ratnasamy Thiagarajah, 24 of Thalawakelle estate and Periyasamy Thurairajah, 22, from Marathanai Second division, Balangoda have complained that Karruvakadu police arrested Thiagarajah while Thurairajah was arrested by Koswathie police.

- The LTTE launched a small arms attack on Thangavelauthapuram STF camp on the top of Sangermalai, Thirukovil, Amparai.



A lecturer lights the flame in front of a photo of Sivarajan. Photo TamilNet

Paramilitaries murder Jaffna University student

A YOUNG student working as a nightwatchman at Chavakachcheri Hospital was shot dead by two gunmen on March 1, but the family is struggling to get to body back to his village for the funeral.

Armed men allegedly scaled the hospital walls to get near Selvaratnam Sivarajan, 23, a Jaffna University student, who was taken to Jaffna Teaching Hospital with serious gunshot injuries but died on the way.

Relatives said Sivarajan, a student from man extremely underprivileged background, helps his uncle who has a permanent watcher position at the hospital, during his vacation days.

Administrators at the Jaffna Campus confirmed that Sivarajan was a final year student specializing in Hindu Civilization.

Meanwhile, eight Jaffna Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians wrote to Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary, Gothabaya Rajapakse, on behalf Mr Sivarajan's family who are pleading for permission to have his body taken to their home in Viswamadu in LTTE controlled Vanni.

The family has also requested the University authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross office in Kilinochchi to also help.

Mr Sivarajan's mother and sisters are mortally terrified of travelling to Jaffna for the funeral. Relatives in Jaffna, who were given the body by Jaffna police, are frightened of trying to take the body to Vanni themselves.

The family has pleaded with the Vice Chancellor of Jaffna University to arrange the transfer

of the remains to Vismamadu. The University authorities told TamilNet they are prepared to make the necessary arrangements, but are waiting for clearance from the Ministry of Defence.

The Government Agent of Jaffna is also prepared to assist with the transfer, but Defence Ministry officials are not returning his calls in this regard.

"The immediate family of the deceased is residing in Viswamadu, consisting of his mother, Mrs. Selvaratnam Theyvanapillai and his three sisters. The family contacted the TNA asking that the University intervene in order to get the body of the deceased transported to Viswamadu so that the last rights could be performed," said the letter signed by Jaffna TNA MP G. G. Ponnambalam on behalf of the eight MPs.

"The family made this request as they are mortally terrified of personally traveling to Jaffna. The relatives in whose custody the body of the deceased is in currently are also frightened to provide any further assistance regarding the transportation of the deceased's body," the TNA MPs said.

Separately, Professor R. Kumaravadivel, Acting Vice Chancellor of Jaffna University, warned students to take the necessary steps to protect themselves.

"The university administration is unable to ensure the safety of the undergraduates. As such I would like to advise the students to take preventive measures to guard themselves," he said, speaking at a memorial service organized by the Students Union at the campus to mark the death of

Sivarajan.

Hundreds of undergraduates gathered outside Kailaspathy Hall in the University campus on March 2 to mourn. The function was attended by Acting VC, a number of lecturers and many members of non academic staff.

At the commencement of the function the student union president lit the common flame of sacrifice.

The Vice Chancellor and other members of the university community then garlanded the photograph of Sivarajan.

The representatives of the student union paid floral tribute to their colleague.

The undergraduates continued their peaceful protest by fasting throughout the day.

"They should avoid congregating and moving about in unsafe areas. They should bear in mind to the situation faced by two teenage students in Thenmaradchy. The students have staged a number of peaceful protests but the Government of Sri Lanka has not taken any steps to address their concerns," Professor Kumaravadivel told students.

Professor R. Sivachandran, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, said that repeated killing of students have created fear factor among the students. However, they should endeavour to complete their education even under such difficult circumstances, he said.

The following week was marked as a week of mourning by the university students.

Black flags were flown at the university entrance, all students and staff wore black armbands, and a token hunger strike was held.



An international truce monitor watches as students and staff of schools in Kilinochchi protest March 5 against the deteriorating educational conditions. Photo TamilNet



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