

UNP also now opposes federal state for Tamils

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How Sinhala colonisation is cloaked as 'development'

PAGE 10



Sri Lanka's hardline President, Mahinda Rajapakse, participates in an inaugural ceremony on October 4 for a 'national' campaign to promote local food production. President sees himself very much as the champion of Sinhala values and interests. He shares the Sinhala-Buddhist ideology that sees the island as belonging to the Sinhala people and the Tamil-speaking peoples as descendents of invaders who may stay, provided they know their place. *Photo Sudath Silva.*

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NEWS



UN officials barred from seeing Vanni

THE Sri Lankan government continued its efforts to deny the Liberation Tigers access to the international community last week by preventing two UN envoys from visiting LTTE-held areas and criticizing an Icelandic diplomat who entered LTTE-controlled territory without Colombo's permission.

Sri Lanka said last Thursday that it would not allow the United Nations human rights envoy to visit LTTE-held areas, while at the same time criticising ceasefire monitors for arranging a meeting with the Liberation Tigers.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbou, visiting Sri Lanka this week to assess the island's deteriorating rights record, had requested permission to visit the Vanni during her visit.

The Liberation Tiger had also requested that she visit the Vanni to ascertain the living conditions of civilians there.

The Colombo government has imposed a blockade on food and medicine into the Vanni and has been conducting daily air and artillery bombardment of the region.

Ms Arbou made the request citing a desire to get a first hand assessment of the situation in the LTTE controlled areas and also to meet LTTE political head S. P. Tamilselvan, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

Her visit follows close on the heels of the UN's top torture investigator, Manfred Novak, who was in the country last week.

But Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said "neither Novak or Madam Louise Arbou can visit Kilinochchi,"

reported AFP.

The minister said the Tigers could use the visit for propaganda and that security was a concern.

"Visiting foreign dignitaries are free to travel to other parts of the country to get a first-hand idea of what's happening on the ground," Samarasinghe told reporters.

The decision to block access came after Sri Lanka avoided censure at the United Nations Human Rights Council last month.

The European Union, which was expected to move a motion, put off the decision to do so until after Ms Arbou's visit, with the result that Sri Lanka's human rights record was not criticised at the UN.

"The EU has decided to wait till the end of her visit next month and see the outcome before deciding on the next move," an EU diplomat was quoted by the Daily Mirror as saying.

Sri Lanka was quick to publicise, and indeed claim credit for, the lack of criticism.

"Many delegations, including India, Japan, South Africa, Indonesia and Bangladesh, in their interventions to the Council were appreciative of the initiatives of Sri Lanka in the promotion and protection of human rights," a press release from the Sri Lankan mission at the UN Office in Geneva said.

"We shall discuss with High Commissioner Louise Arbou when she visits Sri Lanka about how national institutions can be strengthened with the cooperation of the High Commission," the Sri Lankan Ambassador to the UN, Dayan Jayatilaka, said during the

UN sitting.

"Whether or not to establish a field presence, is a matter for Sri Lanka," he added, deflecting calls for an international rights monitoring mission.

Meanwhile, the government Friday accused Nordic truce monitors of violating the terms of the 2002 ceasefire pact by helping a diplomat from Iceland meet the LTTE without its permission.

Iceland apologised last week for a meeting between Bjarni Vestmann, Minister Counsellor of the Foreign Ministry of Iceland, and Mr. Tamilselvan.

Sri Lanka said members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), which is charged with overseeing the ceasefire agreement, had helped arrange the meeting.

"The (Sri Lankan foreign) minister strongly protested the action of Mr. Vestmann and requested his immediate recall," a ministry statement said.

"SLMM had misused ceasefire agreement and we are going to check SLMM vehicles at checkpoints if necessary," Defence spokesman minister Keheliya Rambukwella said, contradicting the diplomatic immunity of the SLMM.

Rambukwella described the visit of the Iceland diplomat to LTTE areas as a private visit taking refuge under the SLMM, adding it was very alarming as to how the monitors managed to make a passage for the diplomat under the cover of truce monitoring, the Daily Mirror reported.

"It is a violation of the coun-

Continued on page 15



Thousands attended the funeral of Father Packiaranjith, an aid workers priest, in Mannar. Protests were also held. Photos TamilNet

Commandos kill aid worker priest

REV. FR. Nicholaspillai Packiyananjith was killed 26 September, when his van was blown up by Sri Lankan commandos using a claymore mine, as he was delivering aid to displaced people and orphans.

As a local coordinator for the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Mannar District, Fr Packiyananjith lived and worked in a war zone.

The 40-year-old priest was killed by a Sri Lanka Army Deep Penetration Unit on Vellankulam Road near Thunukkai, while he was engaged in providing humanitarian assistance to recently displaced people in the Mannar.

And in so dying, he became the 59th aid worker since September 2005 allegedly killed by the Sri Lanka Security Forces or paramilitaries affiliated with them.

"These killings of humanitarian workers appear to be aimed at limiting or ending the humanitarian work that local and international NGOs are engaged in and creating a climate of fear within the humanitarian community and

the IDPs that they serve," the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation said in a press release to mark the killing.

"If this situation prevails any longer, there is a real danger of the affected populations being deprived of any and all assistance from humanitarian organizations and being subjected to untold sufferings" the release noted.

The Bishop of Mannar, Rayappu Joseph, said in a press statement that Fr Packiyananjith served with 'exemplary dedication' and was 'deeply committed to the poor and the marginalised', which made his murder all the more heinous.

More than 10,000 people attended the funeral on 29 September.

Another 2,500 gathered on 1 October to protest at the killing of yet another aid worker.

Catholic priests participating in the rally carried life sized photographs of Fr. Pakiyananjith as well those of Rev. Fr. Jim Brown, who disappeared allegedly in military custody last year.

NEWS

UNP drops federalism

TamilNet

THE decision by Sri Lanka's main opposition to ditch the federal constitutional model as a solution to the island's protracted ethnic conflict makes it the last of the major southern parties to embrace Sinhala nationalism again.

In doing so, the former 'pro-peace' party, the United National Party (UNP), may finally have resolved its ethnic dilemma.

With its arch-rival, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) having secured the nationalist high-ground with its leader, President Mahinda Rajapakse, prosecuting what southern voters consider a successful war against the Tamil Tigers, the UNP is under mounting pressure from its rank and file to reclaim the Sinhala vote by also swinging to the right.

The UNP is not too concerned about losing the international support it has enjoyed since 2001 under its leader Ranil Wickremesinghe: last week the US urged the SLFP government to come up with a proposal without using problematic words like 'federalism' and 'unitary.'

However the UNP's move to abandon the federalism is certain to alienate the Tamil voters whom the UNP also needs if it is to be sure of toppling the SLFP government at the next election.

The Muslim vote, which the UNP also needs, may be more assured. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), the island's largest Muslim party has come out in support of the UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Not only is federalism the sole principle to emerge of the Norwegian peace process, the dropping of the concept is indicative of the UNP's decisive step towards a Sinhala nationalist stance on the ethnic question.

The UNP would be joining the

SLFP which has already swung to the platform formerly dominated by the ultra-nationalist JVP.

The point was made Suresh Premachandran, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP, who told Hindustan Times that if federalism was abandoned by the Sinhala majority, there could be no talks on a political solution between them and the Tamils.

The issue was precipitated last week when UNP parliamentarian and Colombo District leader Ravi Karunanayake announced that there was a policy shift by the UNP on the ethnic issue.

The Island newspaper Friday quoted him as saying the UNP will be abandoning its federalist stand and abrogating the 'Oslo declaration' - the landmark decision on exploring federalism reached in December 2002 by the LTTE and the then UNP government.

"We had never come to an agreement with the LTTE or any other party to go for a Federal solution and the UNP had never accepted or proposed a Federal solution to the problem of the North and East," Karunanayake said.

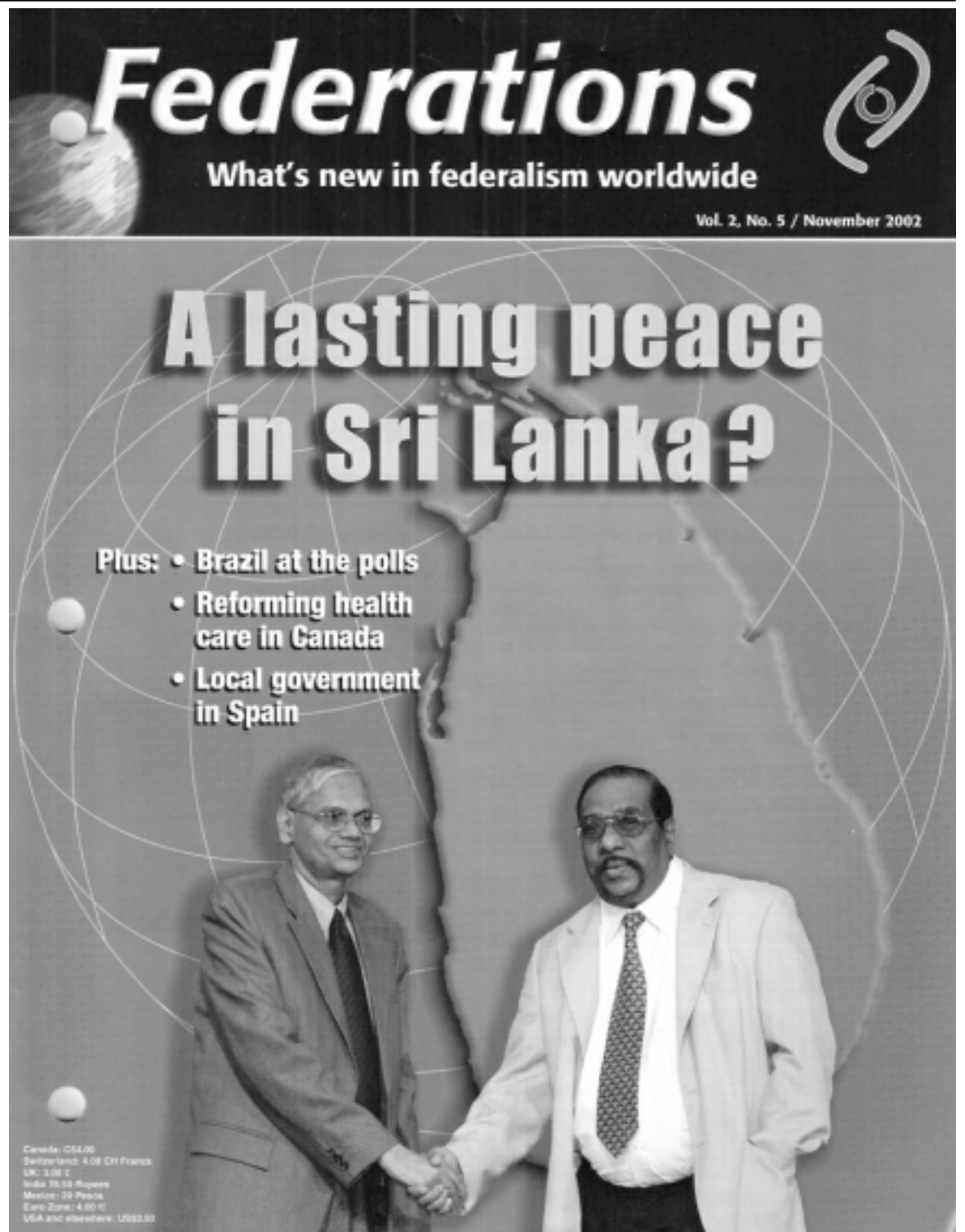
"It was only a creation by the media and not by us," he said.

The UNP, he added, will also be reviewing the 2004 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) in order to suit the present ground situation.

"Our party stands for maximum devolution of power and when the Ceasefire Agreement was signed by the UNP government of 2001 we did not have a Federal solution in mind, but only a mode of maximum devolution of power to solve the problem," he said.

Karunanayake categorized this policy shift as a case of the UNP 'repositioning' itself.

The UNP needed to do this



(Above) The agreement between Pieris and Balasingham, to explore federalism, was hailed by the international community. (Bottom) How the Daily Mirror reacted to the UNP's announcement.

because of the way the public perceived what they said had resulted in repeated defeats.

The Island newspaper said there is widespread support for this policy shift within the UNP.

The Oslo Declaration refers to

the agreement reached at the third round of talks in December 2002 in Oslo between the LTTE and the UNP-led United National Front (UNF) government.

The agreement states: "Responding to a proposal by the leadership of the LTTE, the parties have agreed to explore a political solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka. The parties acknowledged that the solution has to be acceptable to all communities."

Federalism became entrenched in Sri Lanka's political landscape in 2003 when it was endorsed at the Tokyo donor conference. The Tokyo Declaration, signed by 70 state and multilateral donors, commended the LTTE and the Colombo government "commends both parties for their commitment to a lasting and negotiated peace based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka."

The Oslo Agreement to explore federalism was reached by delegations led by the LTTE chief negotiator, the late Anton Balasi-

ingham and the UNP government's chief negotiator, Prof. G. L. Peiris.

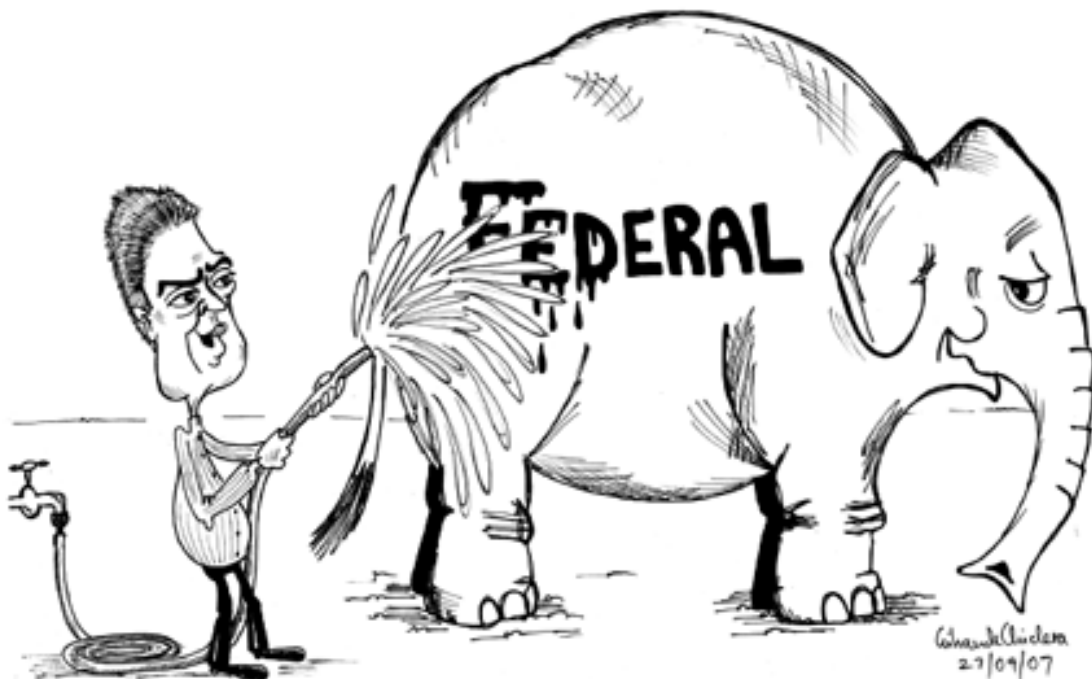
At the time, Prof. Peiris hailed the agreement as a 'paradigm shift' on Sri Lanka's vexed ethnic question.

The two men were hailed for having established the 'breakthrough' which, both privately said, was facilitated by the personal rapport they had established.

The move was fiercely criticized by the Sinhala right at the time, however, Wickremesinghe's arch-rival, President Chandrika Kumaratunga, did not move to dismiss his government - that she did a year later.

However, Prof. Peiris who defected to the SLFP government in January this year has since distanced himself in no uncertain terms from the Oslo Agreement, saying words like federalism and unitary were "meaningless."

"Today the intellectuals and experts worldwide agree that terms such as federalism, unitary and united have no clear definition and are indistinct at best," Prof. Peiris said at the time. The UNP itself has avoided being drawn on the issue, but may have decided to bite the bullet now.



NEWS

ADB unhappy with results of loans to Sri Lanka

Benefits of ADB lending have been categorized a 'partly successful' - one notch above 'unsuccessful'; but future loans are likely.

Shamindra Kulamannage
Lanka Business Online

THE ASIAN Development Bank (ADB), the second largest lender to Sri Lanka, says two decades of aid has mixed results and the relevance of its current 5-year lending program has 'diminished' due to conflict and shifting government policy.

The ADB's policy supporting loans, conflict assistance and agriculture sector lending have been "less than successful" or "borders unsuccessful" according to an evaluation of 90 loans worth 3.3 billion dollars granted over two decades. The bank has been giving low interest loans to Sri Lanka since 1968 but 90 percent of the 3.7 billion total lending came after 1986.

"One of the findings was that with program or reform loans perhaps both sides were too ambitious," says Johanna Boestel a country economist at the ADB Colombo office.

"The ADB missions came and thought that things can be done quickly and the government, in its enthusiasm, also agreed to these reform loans. Perhaps both sides

were too ambitious".

Partly Successful

Program loans support broad economic reforms while ones targeting an identified project like constructing a school building or a road are called project loans.

For analyzing lending to Sri Lanka, which is one of the top ten borrowers from the ADB, the bank has split the 90 loans in to seven broad areas.

None of the seven areas have got the best possible "highly successful" rating on a four point categorization.

Project loans for education, water supply and road development, have been the most successful in the ADB portfolio to Sri Lanka getting "successful" ratings which is a notch below the best possible rating.

Power and governance related loans have got partly successful ratings which is only one notch above being unsuccessful.

ADB categorizes agriculture and assistance to conflict areas



The government of President Rajapaksa is facing increasing charges of mismanaging the economy. He is pictured with his wife and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister being greeted during a visit to New York that saw him take an entourage of 65, most of whom did not make it to the UN. Photo The Island

also as "partly successful" but say they are "bordering unsuccessful" which is the worst possible rating.

Despite the posturing ADB is not pouring cold water on future lending to Sri Lanka.

"Sri Lanka has a complex political economy. And this is something we want to keep in mind when preparing our new strategy", according to Johanna Boestel who is involved in preparing ADB's new Sri Lankan country strategy.

Overall benefits of ADB lending have been categorized "partly successful" which is only a notch above "unsuccessful" in the 4 point rating scale.

Out of Line

Like many lenders ADB aid is based on a medium term (five year) plan formulated on the gov-

ernment's economic strategy.

The current one spanning 2004 to 2008 was negotiated soon after the country had signed a ceasefire agreement with the Liberation Tigers in 2002.

The conflict itself has pushed the Northern and Eastern regions into deep poverty, and donors have found it difficult to run projects in the area.

The 2004-2008 strategy focused on restructuring loss making state institutions and reducing government subsidies and transfers that had pushed budget deficits to around 10 percent of GDP.

But a left-leaning coalition replaced the fiscally prudent United National Party led administration in 2004 to who's policies the ADB strategy was aligned.

"...the changing political economy context since April 2004, conflict resurgence and shifting government policies have diminished the relevance of the current strategy," according to the ADB's lending evaluation.

The bank's operations evaluation department said the current [2004-2008] country strategy was "satisfactory" when first issued but has been downgraded to "partly satisfactory" because of the changed context.

The current lending strategy has scored 1.33 points, the lowest score awarded to a Sri Lankan country strategy since the evaluation started in the early nineties.

Although the bank continued to write generous 200 million dollar annual aid checks it's now worried about the Mahinda Rajapaksa administration's loose fiscal management.

"We do still see a quite a high fiscal deficit and losses at state enterprises that are not shrinking," Boestel said.

"Part of the government's budget plan in 2006 was to reduce this. Increasing losses in state enterprise is something that's difficult to bear."

New Strategy

ADB's 200 to 250 million dollars in annual aid have been funding 10-15% of Sri Lanka's budget deficit during the last five years.

Together with the government of Japan and the World Bank, Sri Lanka's top three lenders usually fund over half the government's annual budget deficit.

Letting poor countries fall behind is dangerous because their politicians are corrupt or policies weak, but the world's largest multilateral lender, the World Bank, has punished weak policies and governance in the last 2 decades.

In 1990, countries with bad policies and institutions got an average of 44 US dollars a person in aid, while those with better policies got 39 dollars according to a World Bank analysis of its lending. But a decade later, countries with better policies were getting 29 US dollars of aid a person, while aid to countries with weak policies had shrunk to 16 dollars a person.

Unlike World Bank aid, which has fallen to an annual 70 million dollars from a 200 million dollar high a two of years ago, ADB disbursements have been consistent.

"Government has published its working paper," says Boestel. "The main emphasis is to reduce the infrastructure bottleneck and regional disparities."

"We are trying to help in infrastructure and in reducing the social or regional disparities".

Infrastructure lending has been successful in the past according to the ADB's own reckoning but eliminating regional disparities without opening up economic factor markets like land, labor and capital is likely to be a challenge. World Bank has repeatedly stressed on the need to let markets freely operate to replicate the success of Sri Lanka's Western Province in reducing poverty in the rest of the country.

IMF urges spending cut

SRI LANKA needs to slash state spending and contain the budget deficit, the International Monetary Fund said last Sunday, warning that the island's debt exceeds gross national production.

It also rapped the Colombo government for not collecting enough revenue to meet day-to-day expenses and noted that investments were too low to sustain growth.

"Sri Lanka's gross capital formation is the lowest in the region and current government spending is high," the global financial lender said in a report.

"...increasing public sector investment spending while reducing the size of fiscal deficits -- thereby reducing fiscal dominance in economic activity -- can positively contribute to economic growth in Sri Lanka."

It said that Sri Lanka had recorded high and sustained deficits of around 8.0 to 9.5 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) for more than 10 years, while government spending accounted for 35% of GDP in the past decade.

"High growth economies tend to have a much higher ratio of gross public sector investment to GDP," IMF's Nombulelo Duma said.

"Sri Lanka's gross capital formation is the lowest in the region and current government spending is high," the report said.

Government debt averaging 101 percent of GDP over the past five years far exceeded that of other economies in the region, it said. In Nepal it was 63 percent, in Bangladesh 49 percent and 85 percent in India.

Sri Lanka, however, has

reported economic growth of 7.4 percent in 2006 boosted by an influx of aid to rebuild areas affected by the 2004 tsunami. Growth has since slowed to 6.2 percent for the first half of 2007.

Central bank governor Nivard Cabraal last week lowered full-year 2007 economic growth figures from 7.5 percent to "slightly lower than seven percent" due to "constraints," but said the economy "remained resilient."

However, the Asian Development Bank forecast that Sri Lanka's 27 billion dollar economy will expand by 6.1 percent this year and 6.0 percent in 2008.

"The ethnic conflict that has dominated economics and politics in Sri Lanka over the last quarter century has constrained the economy's growth potential," the IMF said.

NEWS

Sri Lanka under no international pressure

DESPITE the international community's expressions of concern over human rights abuses by Sri Lankan security forces, the Colombo government is under no serious pressure, as underlined by recent US expression of support and promises of access to US intelligence reports.

Sri Lanka was merely urged to "do more" in a meeting between the US Under Secretary of State, Nicholas Burns, and the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Rohitha Bogollagama.

Burns and Bogollagama reviewed the human rights situation in Sri Lanka during a 45-minute State Department meeting, a US statement said.

But not only did the US fail to take any action, even the wording of the statement was weak, analysts said.

Burns merely urged Sri Lanka "to do more to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations and to put an end to disappearances on the island nation" according to the statement.

"Burns welcomed progress in reducing abductions in Colombo. However, he noted serious concern over credible reports of continued severe human rights abuses in Jaffna and other parts of the country and ongoing threats to freedom of the press," the statement said.

During the meeting Burns also urged Sri Lanka to make progress on a power-sharing proposal that would give a political voice to moderate Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese, the statement said.

"Burns urged the government of Sri Lanka to do more to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations and to put an end to disappearances on the island nation," the statement said repeating similar words from pre-

vious statements that have had no impact on the deteriorating situation on the ground.

Rights groups say hundreds of people have been killed or abducted in Sri Lanka since last year, when the ceasefire agreement broke down and the war resumed after a near four-year lull.

The state security forces and paramilitary forces working with the Sri Lankan military have been implicated in many disappearances and killings.

International rights monitors have called for a UN human rights monitoring mission to work in Sri Lanka, but the government has responded by saying the reports are overblown and designed to tarnish its image. It has slammed foreign governments and rights groups for the criticism.

Sri Lanka also rejected calls for a United Nations human rights monitoring mission, with the foreign minister saying such an outside force would interfere with local investigations.

Bogollagama said his government has stepped up arrests, prosecutions and convictions of those accused of rights abuses.

"There is still room for improvement," he said in an interview with the Associated Press. But, he said, the government can continue to progress without any outside so-called presence.

"When we have this type of presence coming in, that has an unwieldy effect on the local investigations that Sri Lanka has started," Bogollagama said of the proposed UN mission.

The government has come under increasing international criticism for a series of high profile killings under unexplained circumstances amid a new wave of fighting in the past two years, including the execution-style

slaying last year of 17 workers for the aid group Action Against Hunger.

In a separate interview Sri Lanka's foreign secretary, Palitha Kohona, said an outside human rights intervention "could divert attention" from a democracy struggling against a terrorist organization and provide a lifeline to a terrorist organization at a time that it is coming under increasing pressure to rejoin the mainstream.

The meeting between Burns and Bogollagama was released in the same week as a meeting between US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert A. Blake and the Sinhala-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

The USA led international community, instead of preaching to the Sri Lankan Government of the values of engaging in talks with the LTTE, must extend their support to wipe out terrorism, the JVP Propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa had told the US envoy, according to reports in The Island.

Meanwhile, in the same week, the United States reported that it is likely to share its most advanced spy technology with Sri Lanka and several other Asian countries.

The US would share the Global Hawk consortium idea at a conference being planned for next year to boost security in the Asia-Pacific region, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

A highly placed Sri Lankan defence official told the Daily Mirror that unofficial discussions had taken place in this regard between the US and Sri Lanka although an official request or invitation to attend such a conference in the US had not been received.

Continued on p15



Bogollagama and Burns: Sri Lanka merely urged to 'do more'

British oil firms to explore Mannar

TamilNet

BRITISH oil companies are to carry out oil explorations in Sri Lanka, press reports quoted the country's Development and Investment minister, Sarath Amunagama, as saying. The agreement was reached following a series of high-level discussions he held with leading oil companies during a visit to London, the Lanka Tribune reported.

Meanwhile, describing the human rights situation in Sri Lanka as "deeply worrying", British Development Trade and Development minister, Gareth Thomas, said his government was pressing Sri Lanka to respect human rights.

Addressing a Tamil community meeting in Harrow, Mr. Thomas, who is also the local MP, said "the scale of the human rights abuses - abductions, extra-judicial killings, etc - is deeply worrying."

He said he was "particularly concerned" by the actions of "government and paramilitary forces connected with the government." In May, he had decided to withhold some of the UK's aid, he said. However, since then, the situation has not improved, he noted.

In May, the UK cut half its annual aid - about \$1.5million or \$3million. However, Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary Gothabaya Rajapakse derided the move. Sri Lanka's defence budget is over \$1.3 billion.

In the first three months of 2007, Britain sold GBP7 million worth of arms to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Thomas said the UK "believes there has to be a peace process [in Sri Lanka] and that peace process has to be based on respect for human rights."

"A solution has to come from inside Sri Lanka," he said. "People should be able to sit as equals [and talk]."

Earlier in September, Sri Lanka Development and Investment minister, Sarath Amunagama, announced British oil firms would be exploring oil in Mannar.

He made his comments whilst speaking at the 'Mannar Basin Oil Exploration Roadshow' held in London, the Lanka Tribune newspaper said.

Sri Lanka will find "the missing link" in its growth trajectory with the discovery of oil and gas, the minister said.

"We look forward to very close cooperation between our country and the British government as well as British government. We are about to launch a new milestone in the history of Sri Lanka," Amunagama said.

It was appropriate that Sri Lanka begins its promotion for the Mannar Basin exploration in the UK, as both countries had been friends "for many centuries," he said. Sri Lanka has already allocated four blocks in the Mannar Basin, two each to India and China on a preferential basis.



The US is planning to share intelligence gathered by the Global Hawk aircraft with Sri Lanka

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 10, 2007 No. 358

True Colours

Why the UNP was never committed to federalism

The decision by the Sri Lanka's main opposition United National party (UNP) to make public its opposition to a federal solution to end the ethnic conflict was inevitable. The move reveals the political - and moral - bankruptcy of the southern political establishment more generally and, in particular, the UNP. It also resolves one of the enduring debates about the Norwegian initiative: could peace have been possible with Ranil Wickremesinghe's UNP? The answer is no. An agreement might have been reached, but it would never have been implemented. Since independence, Sinhala leaders have abrogated every agreement on power-sharing reached with the Tamils. The UNP is clearly no different.

There are compelling reasons for the UNP's volte-face, not least a need to win back Sinhala voters and confidence the LTTE can be defeated, removing the need for concessions. The most important reason, as the party confessed with palpable relief, is that it was never committed to federalism. The 2002 agreement by the LTTE and the then UNP government to 'explore' federalism - later dubbed the 'Oslo Declaration' - was hailed by the international community. It was clear, however, that the UNP, with its tiny Parliamentary majority (well short of the requisite two thirds) could never push an agreement, even if reached, through. Moreover, with the ultra-nationalist JVP and the now ruling SLFP opposed to any deal the UNP struck, there was no hope of the Sinhala electorate endorsing the deal at a referendum. The UNP was therefore free to make any offer to the LTTE, confident it would not have to deliver, and reap the ensuing international kudos.

The international community was unconcerned by these technicalities: the famous Tokyo Declaration commended both sides "for their commitment to a lasting and negotiated peace based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka." Indeed, when the LTTE then called for an interim administration and submitted its ISGA proposal, it was lambasted for departing from the Oslo Declaration - even though an interim administration could easily have been a precursor to a federal unit. The Tokyo Declaration - with its steps to a solution - was denounced by Tamil nationalists as a 'road map to disarmament for the LTTE'. The events this month justify that criticism. If a federal solution had merit on its own terms as a

solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis, then that still holds - indeed, if anything, after the past couple of years, there is a greater case for strong federalism now. However, if federalism was posited in 2002 as either a device to split the Tamil liberation struggle (i.e. the 'intransigent' LTTE from the 'moderate' Tamils) or part of an elaborate exercise to defang the Tigers, then the events this month make different sense.

Of course advocates of federalism will decry this logic and protest that the Tamils themselves have not done enough to bolster the conditions for a federal solution. Their criticism misses the point. Any solution that satisfies the simplest Tamil aspirations will require a re-write, rather than tweaking, of Sri Lanka's unabashedly Sinhala supremacist constitution. None of the main Sinhala parties is prepared to do this, even if it will take the country into lasting peace, to say nothing of 21st century governance. Instead, fifty years after a Sinhala leader became prime minister on the inherently chauvinistic pledge to make Sinhalese the official language, Sri Lanka's main political parties are still out-bidding each other to be the most tough on the Tamils. Those who have, from the outset, questioned the UNP's bona fides, have been criticized as hardliners, even 'spoilers'. But they have been thoroughly vindicated this month.

Interestingly, it is the international community, as evidenced by US Ambassador Robert O' Blake's recent comments, which is encouraging the UNP to go public with its rejection of federalism. This because the international community wants a 'regime change' in Sri Lanka, with the UNP back in power. But this has less to do with solving the ethnic question or ending Tamil suffering than a need to re-establish competent control over Sri Lanka's economy and state machinery. Whilst President Mahinda Rajapakse might be the right leader to prosecute a war against the Tigers, he and his clique are, to their utter frustration, screwing up the country in the process. To this end, the hope is fresh parliamentary elections - off the back of a failed budget next month, perhaps - will put the UNP back in office. But it is actually irrelevant to the Tamil question - and to a peace process - which Sinhala leadership is in office unless it is one prepared to defy the Sinhala nationalists and take a principled stand on a just solution.

And the UNP is certainly not that.

International contradictions: lessons for the Tamils

Nothing is absolute - not even international commitment to another state's territorial integrity

Kanthavanam
Tamil Guardian

"And the message should go out to anyone facing persecution anywhere from Burma to Zimbabwe: human rights are universal and no injustice can last forever."

WHEN the new British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, made this declaration to the assembled ranks of the ruling Labour party last month, it sounded almost like a return to the 'ethical foreign policy' that his predecessor, Tony Blair called for in his first term.

But listening to Mr. Brown, the country's Tamil citizens would have thought of the daily human rights abuses being committed against their brethren in Sri Lanka. Some would have wondered if this meant Britain would act to end the state terror and despotism that has become the hallmark of the corrupt, clientelist Rajapakse regime.

Even if there isn't the 'humanitarian intervention' conducted on behalf of - presumably more deserving - peoples elsewhere, will we see sanctions imposed on the Colombo government? Perhaps an arms embargo, or travel restrictions on regime leaders?

At the very least, would we see a stop to the deportations of terrified Tamils seeking sanctuary in Britain from the state and paramilitary death squads that roam their homeland?

However, a moment's reflection tells us none of this is likely, much as we may hope - or, as citizens with belief in our adopted country, expect.

Having said that a change in British policy towards Sri Lanka is unlikely, it can be seen that London remains committed to what is called the 'Liberal Peace' agenda.

This places institutional reform of the problem state as the key priority for resolving conflicts within it while maintaining the international status quo. This is the international community's approach to Sri Lanka.

It is sustained by a belief that the wrongs being committed against our people are temporary and that in time Sri Lanka will come to accord the Tamils a place within its society and politics.

This is where Sri Lanka differs from Burma. Since independence Sri Lanka has been able to pass itself off as a democracy, despite its marginalisation of the Tamils (through electoral power distribution over the regions - out of the 225 seat Parliament, just over two dozen seats are for the Northeast).

This veneer of democracy, whilst demonstrably a 'tyranny of the majority', allows the pro-democracy West to harbour hopes for state reforms that will turn what is essentially a majoritarian chauvinist state into a Western-style liberal democracy.

This belief is being cynically exploited by the Sinhala elite to maintain their positions in power and, especially, to prosecute a punitive war against the rebellious Tamils.

Initially the recent Burmese protests were led by a Buddhist Sangha of equal reverence amongst the various ethnic groupings making up the country. The protests were thus seen as a pro-democracy protest; a repeat of the 1988 Burmese student uprisings. In fact, they were triggered by the ruling Junta raising fuel prices, raising cost of living to intolerable levels.

But what is interesting is that, apart from howls of outrage, the response of the international community was sluggish at best.

Indeed, the world powers have for decades stood by whilst the Burmese military unleashed genocidal waves of violence and ethnic cleansing against non-Burmese peoples, including the Karen.

In many respects the Tamils and the Karen are in a similar position, suffering ethnic persecution by a majoritarian

OPINION



state and fighting for independence from it.

The tardy response of the international community to the recent Burmese crisis mirrors its actions in the face of Sri Lanka's past eighteen months of brutality.

The lack of concern towards the plights of our people and theirs underlines how 'R2P' is merely a buzzword bandied about to elevate its proponents' moral standing and, by placing the onus on the Sinhala state, to justify international inaction.

Most importantly, world reaction to Burma's crisis also shows that freedom has to be something we earn ourselves. There is no international 'salvation' coming.

The British Prime Minister's revulsion at the attacks by Burmese soldiers on unarmed civilians, especially Buddhist monks, was notable, as was his subsequent approval and attendance of pro-democracy campaigns.

However, there was no acknowledgement of the racism against minorities endemic to Burmese rule.

The international community would like to take control of the opposition campaign in Burma so as to increase their influence with a future regime there. That inevitably means maintaining the integrity of Burma's borders, and thus denying peoples like the Karen the right to self-determination.

Western criticism of the Burmese Junta's national consensus for failing to involve all parties and ethnic groups and is similar to the 'rewriting' of the Tamil problem as a 'democracy deficit' rather than 'racist oppression.'

Having said that, we have yet to see this type of condemnation being levelled against Sri Lanka, which as carried out similar attacks for the same period of time.

In comparison, attempts to resolve the conflict in Sri Lanka are usually precipitated by calls for the LTTE to lay down its arms and renounce violence as if it, and not the Sinhala state, is the cause for the Tamils' misery.

It does not matter that the state was discriminating against and killing Tamils with impunity long before it occurred to the latter that taking up arms might be their only way out.

But let's for a moment think through what might happen even if the LTTE was to lay down arms. Who would protect the Tamil people from the Sinhala state?

It is worth bearing in mind international responses to recent events in Burma, but also more appalling events in the Balkans and Rwanda, not so long ago.

Given the international community's tendency to respond only when their interests are at stake, we can be certain that the Tamil people simply cannot

count on external intervention to protect them from the state's violence.

Even now, how many Tamils will Rajapakse's regime be able to murder before the international community might do something?

Unlike the Sinhala leadership, the world does not believe wiping us out is worth any price.

Interestingly, this 'Liberal Peace' policy of the Western powers and others towards the protagonists in Sri Lanka's conflict is markedly different to that in Iraq.

Ever since the 'War on Terror' began, the US has identified threats to the international system as coming from either rogue states, such as Iraq, Iran and Syria; states deemed to harbour 'terrorist groups', such as Afghanistan; or failed states i.e. states without an effective government were 'terrorists' can take control of the territory and make it their 'safe-haven'.

The fear generated by these new categories of states and the potential threats after 9/11 was one of the key planks of US reasoning for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In response to these attacks it will be expected given the fear of rogue or failed states, the West would seek to staunchly support the government of Iraq, as in Sri Lanka.

However, whilst becoming increasingly impatient at the snail's pace of Iraqi government reform, the US has readily taken steps that reinforce the divisions within the country, both ethnic and sectarian.

Not for Iraq, that 'multicultural state building' that everyone is waiting for Sri Lanka to undertake.

In a bid to defeat al-Qaeda in Iraq, the US has begun arming and funding the very Sunni insurgents that it was battling furiously - in the name of protecting democracy, naturally - till recently.

The policy is being widened as it has produced quick results: the number of attacks on US troops is falling in these areas and the Shia majority government is, for the first time, faced with a serious compulsion to speed up reforms: the possibility now of a well armed Sunni opposition.

The point is the Sunnis are not being integrated into the 'national' army and police, but

are being armed and supported outside these state institutions.

But even before this departure from the 'Liberal Peace', there was another, much more profound one: soon after US forces toppled Saddam Hussein, the Kurdish guerrillas battling his racist regime were quickly institutionalised as a standing army and issued with Iraqi uniforms - along with vast quantities of weapons and systemic training.

This happened soon after Iraq was occupied in 2003. Unlike in Sri Lanka, there was no talk of 'civil, rather than ethnic politics', no effort to have solutions 'that have the support of all Iraqis', no commitment to 'one nation'

There was, after all, a war to be fought, goddamit!

Iraqi Kurdistan is thus now already governing itself as a semi-autonomous region, previously having had de-facto independence from 1991 -2003, courtesy of Western air power.

Having said that, in a token commitment to 'Liberal Peace', however, soon after Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed, federalism was emphatically ruled out as not necessary- the Iraqis were all going to love each other in democratic euphoria.

But still troops were needed, and the Kurds were trustworthy and tough. Ready made soldiers for the new 'Iraqi' army.

Most importantly, there was no fear of 'Balkanisation', of Iraq 'falling apart' if this was done.

Indeed, the recent arming of the Sunnis and the long-running bolstering of Kurdish military capability are both underwritten by tacit international acceptance that the partition of Iraq along its ethnic and religious lines is not necessarily a crisis for the rest of the world.

The argument that Shias and Sunnis 'will always fight' has emerged recently not because it is necessarily true, but because the US can't be asked to linger any longer trying to build a nation-state. It has other issues to attend to.

Curiously, this contrasts with US actions in Sri Lanka, where they train the military and emphatically insist on the need to maintain the country's territorial integrity.

The point here is that nothing is absolute - not even international commitment to another state's territorial integrity. We know that international commitment to Sri Lanka is self-interested and calculated, not heart-felt.

The Tamil struggle, as we have been patiently explaining to the world for decades now, is resistance to the Sinhala state's genocidal violence.

But the more we resist and the more the Sinhala state strives to destroy us, the greater the political and economic cost of international commitment to that hegemonic project.

Unlike the Sinhala leadership, the world does not believe wiping us out is worth any price. Thus, despite international refusals to heed our arguments and pleas, we must continue to resist the Sinhala state's efforts and assert our right to life.

FEATURES

Terror in the east

Ravi Nessman
Associated Press

A PETRIFIED woman scrambles to hide at the sight of a van, fearing the return of her husband's killers. A 20-year-old man won't leave his home, in case the militants who tried to abduct him are lying in wait. Gangs of gunmen demand exorbitant "taxes" from businessmen.

Months after driving the Liberation Tigers from eastern Sri Lanka, President Mahinda Rajapakse told the United Nations last week: "We have freed the eastern province from terrorism and restored law and order there."

But people in Valaichchenai, Batticaloa, tell a different story. Killings, kidnappings and extortion continue to plague daily life as armed groups compete to control the territory.

In extensive interviews with The Associated Press, Sri Lankans describe a region paralyzed by fear, where gunmen shoot opponents in broad daylight, snatch new conscripts - some of them minors - from their homes and run a web of mob-like rackets to fund their militias.

"As far as the public are con-

cerned, they are not liberated," said S. Sugumadas, a 66-year-old peace activist in the eastern city of Batticaloa. The gunmen "still are taking ransoms, they are harassing people, they are abducting children."

The worst of the new tormentors are said to be the Karuna Group, a faction of former Tamil Tigers who joined the government's fight against their old comrades.

The soldiers and police posted throughout the territory have done little to stop the violence, residents said. Their impression is that the government is unwilling or unable to confront the armed groups. The government denies it.

"Things cannot turn complete-

ly within 24 hours or 48 hours," says government security spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella. "But certainly the law and order situation is improving. It is very much better. I am not saying that everything is perfect."

Yet people are so afraid of retaliation from the militias for speaking out that many of those interviewed begged that their names be kept secret.

"If I talk, there can be danger to my children," said one woman, who saw her husband killed by two masked gunmen in their courtyard in the coastal town of Valaichchenai on a May evening, well after the Tamil Tigers were pushed out of town.

The shooting underscored how freely the gunmen operate, while the aftermath showed how deeply terrorized the community is.

When the woman began screaming, her brother inside the house watching TV with her 8-year-old son begged her to stop so the gunmen wouldn't come back. They waited half an hour before calling relatives to make sure the attackers were gone for good, she said.

They called the police to collect the body, by then sitting in a pool of blood on the light blue tile of the living room floor. The police refused to come, saying the house was not safe, the wife said. None of her relatives would drive the body to the morgue for fear the attackers might shoot them.

So she spent the night sitting over her slain husband's body, mopping up his blood until police arrived more than 12 hours later.

The capture of the east this summer was a big military victory for the government after 24 years of fighting against the Tamil Tigers, who demand a homeland for the Tamil community in the north and east of the Indian Ocean island. The Tigers still control a mini-state in parts of the north.

From the mid 1990s, the LTTE also had directly controlled pockets of territory throughout the east - and held deep influence over other areas - running the economy, forcing each Tamil family to send one child to join their army and showing no tolerance for opposition.

But the Tigers, renowned for their discipline and fierce loyalty, suffered a setback in the east in 2004 when one of their top commanders, known as Col. Karuna, defected and formed his own militia.

When a cease-fire between the government and the LTTE broke down the next year, his fighters - officially called the Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal but widely known as the Karuna Group - decided to join the government in the fight against their old comrades.

A military offensive that began last year drove the Tigers out of much of the area by early February. In July, the government declared the east fully liberated.

The Karuna Group, and to a lesser extent smaller paramilitary organizations, have taken effective control of wide swaths of the east, employing many of the same rackets they ran earlier, but now with the tacit support of a government focused only on eliminating the Tigers, residents said.

"Earlier they operated from jungles with fear. Now they are in the open with government license," said Achchi Mohamed Amer, 35, leader of a Muslim community group.

The government denies allowing Karuna's gunmen free rein, and in recent months soldiers and police have demanded they stop driving through the streets waving their rifles. However, no action has yet been taken to disarm them.

Rambukwella said Karuna's men are keeping their weapons out of a "reasonable fear" of attacks by their enemies. The government would disarm the group, he said, but gradually.

Wellington Kalingan, the Karuna Group's political leader in Batticaloa, says the group is a convenient target because its members used to be rebels, but it is now a peaceful political organization waiting to contest promised local elections.

"Our main aim is development, to maximize the resources of this province and for the people to live in peace," he said, sitting inside the group's regional headquarters, a compound protected by a concrete bunker out front, an army post blocking the road off to one side and a militant resting a heavy machine gun on a pile of tires off to the other.

The group will give up its weapons when it no longer fears attack from the Tigers, he said.

In an August report, Human Rights Watch accused the Sri Lankan security forces of "a clear pattern of complicity" in Karuna's abuses.

And the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission, an international group that monitors the tattered cease-fire, reported an increase in abductions and assassinations in the east in September, including the daylight killing of a member of the Eelam People's Democratic Party, a rival Tamil group accused of similar abuses of its own.

Standing outside the Valaichchenai morgue where the body was stored, local EPDP leader Vijayaraja Siva demanded the government disarm the Karuna Group - even as his own gunmen milled about undisturbed by nearby police.

"The government had one thing in mind, to defeat the (Tigers), and for that they needed the support of the Karuna Group," he said. "Now things must change."

On a recent sunny day, young men played volleyball and cricket at a Karuna-sponsored sports day in honor of the militia leader's slain brother.

Karuna militants with rifles

Continued on p14

Karuna ousted in militia coup?



The former commander has allegedly been sacked for misappropriation of funds raised by the TMVP

KARUNA, a former Tamil Tiger commander who broke away and formed the pro-government Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) in 2004, has now been sacked from the TMVP's Working Committee by a rival faction led by Chandrakanthan alias Pillaiyaan.

A statement issued by the Pillaiyaan group said Monday, that Karuna had been sacked for financial irregularities.

However, efforts were still on to effect a patch up between Pillaiyaan and Karuna. "Some members of the Working Committee support Karuna, while some others support Pillaiyaan. Discussions on a compromise are going on," TMVP spokesman Asad Mowlana told Hindustan Times.

On Sunday Pillaiyaan met representatives of some Tamil political organisations operating in the east and briefed them on the latest developments, assuring them complete freedom to carry out their political activities in the east, which had earlier been under threat by Karuna.

The appointment of Pillaiyaan as the new TMVP head are seen by many as an attempt to divert

the negative attention caused by allegations of abduction, killing and extortions leveled against the TMVP during Karuna's leadership.

But Pillaiyaan himself is not without blemish with allegations of being involved in the abduction and subsequent killing of seven TRO employees last year.

Reports said that Pillaiyaan's group had been complaining that Karuna was keeping 70% of the money collected from the people for his private use, and giving only 30% to the TMVP.

Similar charges of misappropriating funds were laid against Karuna by the Liberation Tigers during 2004 when the former commander for the Batticaloa and Amparai districts was discharged by the organization.

Karuna is currently abroad, presumably in the UK, at the request of the Sri Lankan government. His presence in Sri Lanka had become an embarrassment for the government which was accused by the international community of being "complicit" in the crimes committed by him, crimes like abduction of children and extortion of money from civil-

ians.

Utilising Karuna's absence from the East and now from the country itself, Pillaiyaan became the de facto head of the TMVP. By an earlier arrangement, he was to keep his activities confined to Trincomalee district, but recently, he had broken out of the confines of Trincomalee and started setting up offices in Batticaloa district, the TMVP's heartland.

Journalists who had visited Batticaloa recently, said that Karuna's lieutenants had disappeared and only Pillaiyaan's men were around.

It is said that the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, with whom the TMVP has been working, prefer Pillaiyaan to Karuna because it is Pillaiyaan who is in the field and actually working with the government forces.

According to the Daily Mirror, Pillaiyaan was a greater military leader than Karuna even when they were with the LTTE, winning kudos from LTTE leaders for the way he led suicide squads which played a critical role in various successful military campaigns in the late 1990s.

TALE OF TWO CITIES



(Top) A Sinhala woman shops at a market in Colombo where rising cost of living is offset by generous government subsidies and remittances from Sri Lankan expatriates. Photo Sanka Vidanagama/AFP/Getty Images (Above) In Jaffna, food supplies are limited due to the government's closure, in defiance of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement, of the A9 highway. Tamil residents are pictured queuing to buy food and other essentials from a government store. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi/AFP/Getty Images

FEATURES

How Sinhala colonisation is

The current international focus on human rights is insufficient to capture the cold calculations and reasoning in the intentions of the Sri Lankan state's colonisation of Tamil and Muslim areas.

David Rampton
Tamil Guardian

IN the context of President Mahinda Rajapakse's claimed victory over the LTTE in the Eastern Province and his pledge to resolve conflicts and tensions therein through development under the auspices of the '180 Day Eastern Development Plan', a focus on the current situation there is in order.

The current landscape in the East is one of humanitarian crisis and endemic human rights abuses.

However, the current international focus on human rights issues, whilst performing the essential task of exposing the authoritarianism and violence of the current regime, is insufficient to capture the cold calculations and reasoning in the intentions of the Sri Lankan State which has once again returned to the logic of Sinhala colonisation.

What we must also scrutinise and track is the logic inherent in the state's current development strategy and how this demonstrates continuities with but also departures from the historical record of colonisation.

We must also consider the current regime's navigation of the current global aid frameworks through a mixture of resistance to, competition with and ultimately control and cooption of donors and development and humanitarian aid agencies in order to achieve its aims.

In the course of this focus we

must also understand the dangers implicit in the pursuit of 'securitised development' and the way in which this process acts to depoliticise both the dynamics of conflict as well as their resolution.

Whilst, securitised development suggests the militarisation of the development process, it also has wider implications that merit further exploration.

On the one hand, the securitisation of development refers to the manner in which development has increasingly become a form of control over the conduct of populations marginal to or threatening to the socio-economic and political fabric of an increasingly globalised world.

Thus we have seen a shift occurring from the 1970s onwards, from a situation in which development operated through the nation-state system allowing a certain autonomy to developing world states (albeit in the context of Cold War allegiances) towards, firstly, increasing imperatives laid down for economic development (in for instance the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s) and, finally, for imposing demands in relation to political governance and human rights issues which became hegemonic from the 1990s.

As this reach into the developing world has expanded, those areas subject to conflict have

increasingly been perceived within development discourse as problematic 'borderlands' where socio-economic and political factors have become intertwined in the reproduction of conflict and many developing world states have been adjudged weak, incapacitated, corrupt, subject to patronage, lacking in protection of citizenship and rights and riven by conflict and insecurity.

In this context of perceived lack in state capacity, civil society actors IGOs, INGOs, and NGOs have come to act as the foot-soldiers of humanitarianism and development, forging a nexus between these actors and donor states residing in the shared assumption, implicit in the securitised development discourse that uneven development and underdevelopment in 'borderlands' results in conflicts which increasingly have global repercussions in the spread of conflict and its consequences such as the global flow of refugees and internal displacement at the local level etc.

According to this logic, development becomes a means of attaining long-term global security to the extent that development simultaneously operates as a security measure.

Although this scheme of things suggests that "aid and politics have been reunited" in the current era due to these shifts, it should also be noted that the securitisation of development also has

the potential to depoliticise local landscapes and communities which become the objects and targets of development strategies stifling the channels for antagonism that are necessary for the long-term resolution of conflict.

Indeed, development in this context, all too often becomes a solution imposed from outside in which local political articulation is papered over, an issue to which we will return after a brief focus on the background of development and colonisation in Sri Lanka.

The security/development nexus in Sri Lanka is not entirely new as the close connection between control of what the State considered as unstable borderlands through militarised colonisation and irrigation projects demonstrates.

It is also clear that development, as it has evolved historically in the postcolonial period, has itself acted as a dynamic in the reproduction of ethnic conflict.

What occurred in the immediate aftermath of independence, as new ruling elites confronted the legacy of the colonial plantation economy and went in search of development strategies that would also secure their legitimacy and re-election was the eulogising and reproduction of the Sinhala small-holder cultivator through colonisation schemes for the resettlement of predominantly Wet Zone landless farmers in Dry Zone areas of northern and eastern Sri Lanka.

In the Eastern Province, these resettlements were accompanied by new and/or renovated irrigation schemes, and a development discourse emerged in which the motifs of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism of the paddy field, temple and tank, key material elements of development, were interwoven and invoked a return to the glorious ancient past of Sinhala Buddhist hydraulic society in the Dry Zone.

This infusion of development with religious overtones is still significant in current conflicts over land and space in the East.

The economic liberalization which occurred under the UNP regime of President JR Jayawardene rather than challenging and reducing the overt nationalism of these development practices, tended rather to augment it to the extent that it deeply infused the foreign aid-funded Accelerated Mahaweli Programme.

This Programme continued to pursue colonisation in an ever more aggressive manner in the context of the rising tensions and conflict between Tamil militants and the Colombo government.

For their part, bilateral and multilateral donors had little conflict sensitivity, and were still willing to grant the Sri Lankan State considerable autonomy - partly as a reward for the island's early venture into structural adjustment and liberalisation.

In this context, as we know, state-sponsored development became aggressively militarised, using colonists as 'frontiersmen' in the state's nation and state building projects, a development that fomented ethnic conflict over land and space as well as blurring the divide between combatant and civilians.

The defence that such a form of development was about "practical necessity" as opposed to a rampant form of demographic engineering, through colonisation and administrative and electoral changes, remains difficult to sustain but this claim is again an indicator of the depoliticisation inherent in the development field.

And it is this history that has also separated communities in the East as elsewhere that had once demonstrated considerable cultural, religious, linguistic, political and economic interdependence and sedimented layers and memories of distrust between communities and between communities and the intentions of state-sponsored development.

In the 1990s the overt and authoritarian logic of this nationalist development discourse subsided as successive regimes from that of President Kumaratunga's PA alliance onwards pursued a developmental strategy in which military defeat of the LTTE was accompanied by a professed intent to provide a devolution package and to 'win hearts and minds' among the population of the northeast.

Whilst it can be argued that this shift was a result of good intentions, one should also recognise that this shift is also symptomatic of the need of successive regimes and indeed, more broadly, of developing world states to adapt and realign themselves to the new aid paradigm which encompassed both economic and governance issues.

In this sense whether we are looking at Kumaratunga's 'dual track' strategy or Ranil Wickremasinghe's peace bid with the LTTE, both these strategies still operated within the new logic of securitised development.

Indeed it has been a central criticism of the Wickremasinghe's 2002-4 peace bid that his strategy was far too heavily reliant on economic development and the securing of aid at the expense of engagement in furthering political negotiations, and furthermore a form of economic development which eventually undermined his peace bid.

The rise of the current Rajapakse regime has seen a return of the Sinhala nationalist rhetoric and the pursuit of a military strategy to subdue the northeast. Evidently the Rajapakse regime also has to respond in some way to the changed context for humanitarian and development aid and governance but it is doing so through a mixture of resistance, competition and cooption.

Resistance obviously because

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FEATURES

cloaked as 'development'



Having displaced large numbers of Tamils and Muslims during its offensives in the east in the past year, the Sri Lankan government is mobilizing international development assistance to colonise their places with Sinhalese. Colonisation has been relentlessly undertaken since the 1970s. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi/AFP/Getty Images

the current regime is implementing the nationalist project of consolidating a Sinhala majoritarian unitary state and this consolidation works not just through military conquest but through terror and fear and the instigation of the current humanitarian crisis.

These are perpetrated by the Defence and Environment Ministries, the security forces and their allies, the TMVP (Karuna Group).

The humanitarian crisis operates through the abductions of Muslims and Tamils, extrajudicial killings, forced returns of the displaced, evictions through the HSZ designation of East Mutur and Sampur in Trincomalee, obstacles to humanitarian access particularly in Batticaloa, attacks on and killings of humanitarian workers, violence over the acquisition or appropriation of land and religious and archaeological sites.

Yet the Rajapakse regime has also attempted forms of cooption of both donors and aid and development agencies. It has done this through the auspices of the ill-fated UNP-SLP MOU, through the APRC, the Presidential Commission and IIGEP.

More recently it has done so

through its pronouncement and plans that the conquest of the Eastern Province sets the stage for a development thrust that will benefit all communities, rid the East of conflict dynamics and act as a template for successful development that will win hearts and minds as to the viability and desirability of the unitary state.

Such high-profile statements of intent and premature celebrations are obviously intended as much for international consumption as for domestic legitimisation amongst the majority community and to mask the increasing micro-level instances of violence, harassment and intimidation pursued by the security forces and their proxies, instances which still bear the undeniable logic and expressions of Sinhala nationalism.

Professions of secular and equitable development are also intended to veil the return of colonisation implicit in the forced evictions from or removal of access to residential or agricultural lands through, for example, HSZ designation in East Mutur/Sampur or by designating 'National Park' boundaries in Lahugala DS division of

Amparai, actions deliberately targeted at the Tamil and Muslim communities of the East.

One should also note the profound militarisation of development committees and the whole structure of the administrative machinery of the Province. In this sense, despite the gloss and spin of the current professed development strategy, in actuality, we see a return to the militarised and highly nationalistic and exclusifying colonisation of old.

The danger here is that the donors and development agencies will be won over by the development discourse and will give up on a political solution in the shared belief that accelerated development is the key to securing the resolution of conflict.

If we focus on some of the planned development projects we can see the manner in which this pattern is being borne out.

At the macro-level the State is pursuing development shorn of the overt articulations of Sinhala nationalism that once characterised the AMP, whilst at the micro-level, on the ground and locally through threats and violence this logic is fully present.

For example, if one scrutinises

the creation of the SEZ which was gazetted in October 2006 well before the Mutur/Sampur HSZ and the design of the Metro-Urban Development Plan for Trincomalee, one can see that these plans might appear, especially to donors, as the innocuous pursuit of a much-needed strategy for intensive and accelerated industrial, port, tourist and rural capitalist development in the district.

They are couched in secular, technocratic language and the reaction of some political actors and local communities to the issue might appear to donors as merely a result of confusion between the designation of the HSZ and the SEZ.

The same might be said province-wide, for that matter, of the proposed '180 Day Development Plan'. As long as development is even handed and not outwardly tainted by ethnonationalist logic it is not only considered safe but also the route out of the conflict.

And, once you have accepted that development is the key, it is only a short step away from accepting that, in the midst of conflict and tension, it is perfect-

ly 'normal' to pursue intense securitisation of the process.

The danger here, as Danny Srisankarajah once warned, is that we are once again putting "the development cart before the conflict resolution horse" without the donors willing to face up to the fact that, as local Tamil and Muslim communities and their representatives in the environs of Trincomalee will tell you, 'development' has in the past resulted in demographic alterations and little immediate benefits to those from the minority communities.

Furthermore, there are no safeguards to prevent this happening again through the logic of Sinhala majoritarianism and patronage.

The only safeguard that can be pursued is a politically formulated one which must lie in radical devolution and decentralisation in order to curb the centre's hold over local and regional space.

Whilst, humanitarian agencies and human rights advocates have all drawn attention to the aforementioned serious abuses on the part of the State and its apparatuses, unless we draw attention to the way in which the government is

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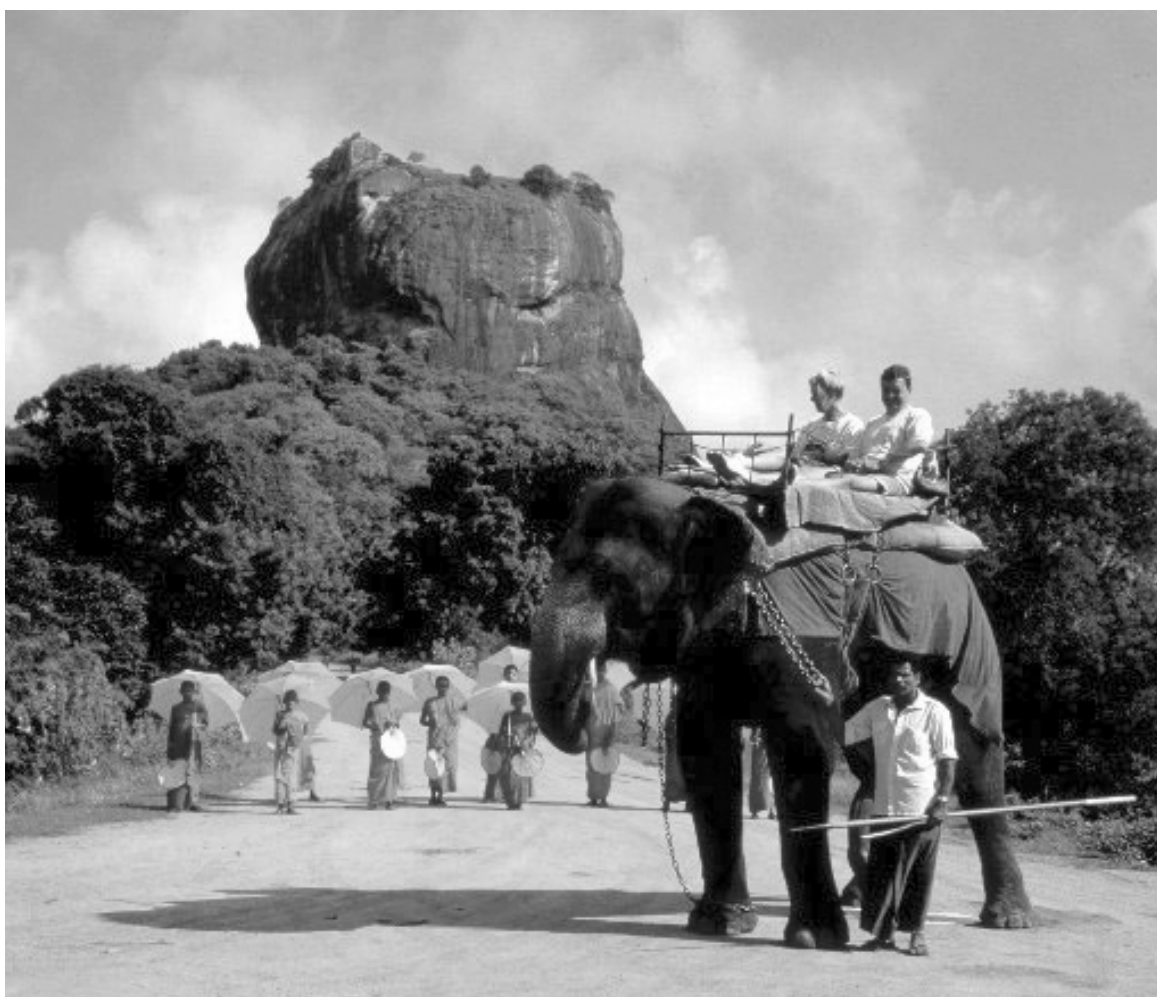
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NEWS



The 'Pearl of the Orient' continues to attract growing tourist numbers as Europeans flock in droves

Sri Lanka says tourism 'picking up' as European restrictions eased

TamilNet

SRI LANKA is confident of achieving its target of attracting 600,000 tourists this year following the relaxation of travel advisories in key markets, Sri Lanka Tourist Board (SLTB) officials were quoted as saying last week.

Germany, Britain, France and Netherlands have softened travel restrictions on their citizens, press reports say. However, citing falling tourist arrivals, an international hotels group slashed prices at its hotels in Sri Lanka by 50% until 2008, press reports also said.

Sri Lanka's minister of tourism is Milinda Moragoda, who crossed over, with 17 others from the main opposition United National Party (UNP) to the ruling party, in January this year.

The SLTB is confident the winter season will be better than last year's as European countries have lifted and relaxed some of the travel warnings that were in force, lankaBusinessOnline reported.

"The French travel advisory has been liberalized now and is more conducive for the French tourists to visit us. The Netherlands have also lifted their travel advisory," Kalaiselvan, director general of SLTB said.

"These are good signs to say that the situation in Sri Lanka is

conducive for tourists to visit."

However, the Aman group, which runs five-star properties across Asia, has cut room rates at its two hotels in the island, the UK's Sunday Times reported.

Announcing the halving of its room rates, Aman said its discount remains valid until September 2008 and was introduced "following a decline in international tourist arrivals to Sri Lanka associated with the impact of civil conflict".

The SLTB suggest that Aman is exaggerating the effects of the unrest to conceal the fact that its rooms are overpriced, and British tour operators are reporting increasing demand for the island's tropical beaches.

"Sri Lanka is well on the road to recovery," says Frances Tuke, of ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)). "[Tour operator] First Choice has launched weekly charter flights and arrivals last year were back to 90% of pre-tsunami levels."

Sri Lanka remains on a British Foreign Office advisory list that also includes Afghanistan, Colombia, Israel and Iraq.

British High Commissioner Dominick Chilcott was quoted in Sri Lanka's Sunday Times as also saying the island's tourism indus-

try suffered a terrible blow after the spate of violence but there are signs that tourist arrivals may be picking up again.

He was quoted as saying the 2007 figures in Sri Lanka are dismal with tourist arrivals down by 24% for the first six months.

"There are signs that things are picking up again. Let's hope so," Mr. Chilcott said.

Sri Lanka's government last week quoted a French security analysis firm, Securite Sans Frontieres, as saying the island was safe for tourists.

"SSF arrived at this conclusion after an evaluation conducted over a period of 12 days covering various tourism sites, hotel infrastructures, airport and other forms of transport as well as general conditions of security - political, social, health and weather- in Sri Lanka," the government statement said.

"The in-depth study of the security conditions has permitted us to make specific and detailed technical recommendations," the statement quoted Frederic Bauer, President of SSF as saying.

"The terrorist risk is not that greater in Sri Lanka than other countries visited by the French."

"In conclusion, the security situation for us is acceptable for tourism visits to Sri Lanka and I take responsibility for recommending the destination for French Tourists."

NEWS

Colombo moves to muzzle press amid corruption

IN the wake of persistent allegations of high-level corruptions in military procurements, media watchdogs rang alarm bells last week over moves by the Sri Lankan government to ban reporting on defence purchases.

Meanwhile, the government forced three journalists, including two Britons, to leave the north of the country, denying them access to areas affected by the war.

The Free Media Movement (FMM), local media watchdog said last week it "reliably learns that the government is preparing to promulgate new Emergency Regulations to impose a general prohibition on investigative reporting and media coverage in respect of issues relating to defence procurement."

The FMM demanded the government to either confirm or deny the existence of such draft regulations.

The organisation also requested the government to desist from such regressive actions and to immediately reconsider its policy.

It also called on the government to reconsider if at any stage it intends to go ahead with the draft document.

The organization maintains that the legislation, following harassment against senior journalist Iqbal Athas for reporting on allegations of malpractice and possible corruption in the procurement of military aircraft, casts serious doubts on the motivation behind the move, the Daily Mirror newspaper reported.

"FMM is gravely concerned that the motivation for enacting the new regulations is not the legitimate protection of national security interests, but a clear attempt at silencing the media and to forestall investigations into future allegations of bribery, corruption and malpractice," the media body says.

"FMM records its alarm that the government is planning measures which are not only inconsistent with constitutionally protected fundamental rights in Sri Lanka, but also represent clear violations of international standards and best practice relating to permissible limitations on freedom of speech during a time of conflict," it further states.

Meanwhile, three female journalists, including two journalists from UK based Quicksilver Media and a Sri Lankan journalist accompanying them, were forced to return to Colombo after the Sri Lanka Army cancelled their documentary mission.

An hour after arriving at a hotel in Jaffna city, with military escort, they were taken back to Palaali air base where they had to stay overnight before returning to Colombo next day.

The SLA officers in Palaali, upon the arrival of the documen-

tary team, had offered accommodation in a military camp, but the journalists had declined to accept the offer, TamilNet reported.

Reporter Sandra Jordan, Director Siobhan Sinnerton of Quicksilver Media and a Sri Lankan journalist, upon their arrival to Jaffna at Palaali airport, were briefed by a SLA Brigade Commander on the security situation in Jaffna before they were allowed to proceed to Jaffna city.

However, an hour after they arrived at Thinakkural Rest, the hotel where they were preparing for a documentary work, they were instructed by the SLA soldiers to return to Palaali military base with immediate effect, citing security reasons.

The journalists, despite their explanation that they had obtained clearance from the Sri

"Concerned that the motivation for the new regulations is not the legitimate protection of national security interests, but a clear attempt at silencing the media and to forestall investigations into future allegations of bribery, corruption and malpractice"

Lankan Ministry of Defence, were taken back to the military complex.

The documentary team was scheduled to stay in Jaffna till October 7 and to visit various places including the islets.

The following morning the SLA took the journalists on a guided two-hour trip to Jaffna city, where they were taken to Jaffna hospital and to the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission, before they were returned to Palaali airport.

Although they were allowed to video their guided tour, they were unable to freely interview people without the presence of military personnel.

Quicksilver Media has produced powerful documentaries for Britain's Channel 4's award-winning foreign affairs strand "Unreported World" featuring conflicts of Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, South Africa, Nigeria, Guatemala, West Papua and Mexico.

It has won the prestigious Royal Television Society Award for International Current Affairs for the documentary "The Death Squads," a hard hitting investigation into Iraq's death squads.



Sri Lanka's response to growing corruption allegations, not only in military procurement, but also in military and police personnel, has been to draft legislation to prohibit criticism in the media.

Policing and pimping

Basil Fernando
UPI Asia Online

A DUTCH journalist, Jon Bottis, learned a lesson about Sri Lankan policing when he made a complaint about the theft of his personal belongings from his apartment in the holiday town of Hikkaduwa recently. One policeman called him outside the station and asked him whether he needed a woman to have sex with.

Having arrived in the country with a view to do a travel story to promote Sri Lanka, he would have learned the lesson that what is important for the promotion of a country is the degree of its respect for human rights and the rule of law more than anything else.

There may be tourists who wish to obtain the type of information that the Dutchman received from the police officer, and it may not be the first time that the policeman has provided such information. However, the very depravity of the image of a law enforcement officer turning into a pimp is what Sri Lanka has to change if tourists are to be attracted to this beautiful island, which was once known for the hospitality and decency of its smiling people.

Today, bedecked with corruption and failed state institutions, that smile has disappeared from the faces of the people, and the sinister smiles, like that of this policemen who tried to exploit the baser elements of some tourists, have emerged instead.

The Dutchman has written to the president of Sri Lanka to complain about this incident. However, whether his letter will result in any genuine investigation is quite doubtful.

Human rights organizations have been writing for a long time to the president and other Sri Lankan authorities, like the inspector general of police, the attorney general, the National Police Commission and even to the now virtually defunct Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.

There are no known examples

of any serious investigations in recent times. The presidential commission inquiring into some of the gravest crimes has not been able to make even an inch of progress. As the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons has pointed out, this commission's time is running out.

The state of Sri Lanka has virtually abandoned its duty to investigate and prosecute serious crimes and human rights abuses. As a result, the type of law enforcement officer like the one who made the offer to the Dutch journalist has been created.

For the purpose of future records and a demonstration of the extent to which law enforcement in Sri Lanka has degenerated, it is worth reproducing this short news report in full, as it ran in the "London Daily Mirror" (see box).

When the United Nations Human Rights Council did not produce any resolution to provide assistance to Sri Lanka for human rights monitors, the Sri Lankan government and some diplomats

who are part of its propaganda machine were triumphant. Their strenuous actions, they claim, had paid off.

What have all these propaganda gimmicks achieved for the people of Sri Lanka?

The best people to answer this question are those facing similar types of crimes, or worse, as the one experienced by the Dutch journalist and who invariably must cope with the same neglect.

Take the case of the family massacre in Delgoda on May 26, which shook the whole nation. What tragically occurred was the killing of two people, allegedly arrested for a crime, who were later shot in police custody for supposedly trying to attack the police. About six neighboring houses next to the one in which the crime took place were burned by a gang that was sent by a leading politician. There is one surviving member of the family. She is the 12-year-old girl Denusha Maduranga, who is still in the hospital due

Continued on p15

Dutch journalist alleges harassment

DUTCH journalist Jon Bottis, who had been allegedly subjected to harassment, is to make a written complaint on his plight to President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremesekere shortly.

Mr. Bottis told the Daily Mirror that some of his belongings worth more than 250,000 rupees (US\$2,205) were stolen from his apartment room in Hikkaduwa recently; and when he went to lodge a complaint with the police, he was subjected to harassment.

He said the police did not record a statement but wanted him to sign a document written in Sinhalese. 'I did not want to sign the document because I did not know what it was,' Mr. Bottis said.

He further explained that one policeman had called him outside the station and asked whether he needed a woman to have sex with.

'I was astonished to hear such a thing from a policeman,' he said.

He said he came to Sri Lanka to do a travel write-up with the objective of promoting the country and was sorry that he was treated this way.

Mr. Bottis alleged that someone must have used a duplicate key to steal his belongings.

He had lost his Olympus digital camera, mobile phone worth around 60,000 rupees (US\$529) and 12,000 rupees (US\$106) in cash.

(Daily Mirror)

NEWS



Displaced Tamils continue to suffer as the government tries to force some to return to unsafe areas

Sri Lanka forces refugees to return to unsafe areas

ALMOST half a million civilians are still displaced by Sri Lanka's war between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), according to a report released in late September by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

The report "Civilians in the way of conflict: Displaced people in Sri Lanka" describes how many internally displaced people (IDPs) have been forced to return to areas still widely considered unsafe, without having any means of making the decision for themselves.

"The government must do more to involve displaced people in the planning and management of their return, ensuring that returns take place voluntarily, in safety and with dignity", said the Norwegian Refugee Council's Secretary General Tomas C. Archer.

Since April 2006, more than 300,000 people have been forced from their homes by the hostilities. Despite the government's return programme, Sri Lanka still has one of the largest displaced populations in all of Asia - with some 460,000 people displaced by the conflict adding to those still without a home following the 2004 tsunami.

The country's Tamil and Muslim communities are disproportionately affected.

The government's return programme may stem from a disinclination to allow another large displacement situation to become permanent, and as such it should be welcomed, but the pace of its implementation may actually be endangering the life of the returnees.

Many returning IDPs still risk being caught in hostilities or conscripted into armed groups, and

so they cannot be considered to have found a durable solution to end their displacement, the report found.

Even if they are not forced to flee renewed conflict, returning IDPs will face huge problems recovering their livelihoods in the face of the large-scale militarisation of farmland and fishing grounds.

In the course of the conflict, abuses of international humanitarian law have been frequently perpetrated by government forces, the LTTE, and in the east, the Karuna militia group which is reported to be aiding the army, the report said. These have included the use of civilians as human shields, retaliatory killings, indiscriminate bombings, abductions and disappearances, all of which have encouraged people to flee.

With aid workers increasingly targeted in the conflict, all parties must also take steps to let humanitarian agencies play an active role in IDPs' return and reintegration. The report underlines that while all parties share the duty of ensuring that civilians in areas they control can live in safety and dignity, the government must develop and implement a national response to IDPs' needs in line with the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Meanwhile, on the same day as the report was released, the UN food agency launched an urgent appeal for more money to feed thousands of people displaced by the continuing fighting.

The World Food Programme (WFP) said it was short of eight million dollars to provide relief to thousands displaced by the conflict.

"I am concerned about our

resourcing situations as we will be running out of food in November," said Jean-Yves Lequime, acting country director of the World Food Programme in Colombo. "This is the moment to mobilise food for the vulnerable people," he said in a statement.

The WFP feeds around 1.15 million Sri Lankans, of whom 400,000, mainly Tamils, have been internally displaced.

Lequime said the agency was also short of 1.7 million dollars to maintain its UN-flagged trucks and to continue the UN Humanitarian Air Service unit between Colombo and Jaffna.

Terror in east ...

Continued from p8

and machine guns stood guard, oblivious to the police jeeps patrolling a few hundred yards away on the dusty main road of Kathiraveli, a fishing village flattened by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and battered again in fighting between the government and the Tigers.

Those gunmen, who live in a nearby beach compound of small huts surrounded by a wall of corrugated tin, are the hidden rulers of the village, residents said.

They said fishermen can no longer sell their fish at the market for roughly \$0.60 a pound, and instead have to sell to Karuna militants for less than \$0.40 a pound.

The militants then retail the fish, making up to \$5,000 a day by one fisherman's estimate, while many villagers still live in ramshackle temporary housing nearly three years after the tsunami.

When one woman tried to smuggle shrimp past the gunmen, they beat her, residents said.

"Police come, but they don't interfere with what Karuna does in the village," said a fisherman too frightened to let his name be published.

Businessmen say they have to pay massive 'taxes' to the Karuna Group for everything from building a house to selling liquor. One large-scale importer in Batticaloa took several minutes on a calculator to figure out that he paid more than \$10,000 a month to the group.

Ameer, the Muslim leader who agreed to speak because the gunmen have less sway over his community, said the Karuna Group charged Muslim truck drivers about \$1.30 a day to operate in Tamil areas. They also block Muslim fishing boats from returning to shore and hijack their catch and fuel, he said.

Its gunmen routinely abduct

new recruits for their militia, many of them underage children, according to human rights groups and residents.

Some parents have stopped sending their sons to traditional all-night festivals at Hindu temples because the militants swoop down on the boys gathered there to replenish their ranks.

When men in a white van snatched Thayanathan Kailayapillai, 19, and his cousin, police told their parents to find their sons by themselves, said Kailayapillai's mother, Thamayanthi.

The men were held captive for 11 days before being released in early September amid growing public protests. Kailayapillai refused to identify his assailants.

"I don't know who they are. I don't want to say who they are," he said.

Another family in a small village south of Valaichchenai said two dozen armed men from Karuna's group arrived at their home at about 8:30 a.m. on Aug. 8 and tried to snatch a 20-year-old inside to join their group. His wailing mother and sisters encircled him in a protective hug and refused to let go, even when the militants fired in the air and into the ground at their feet, the family said.

As the frustrated invaders finally turned to leave, their target's 23-year-old brother walked in, so they took him instead, the family said.

Several days later, he managed to flee and is hiding in a relative's house, while the brother initially targeted has not left his house in a month and plans to take a job in Qatar, 2,300 miles away, to escape the threat.

The family members said they feared that if they went to the police, the Karuna gunmen would shoot them and justify the killings by saying they were Tamil Tigers.

Edited

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NEWS



JVP Propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa was critical of the US with Ambassador Robert Blake.

Under no pressure ...

Continued from p5

The Reuters news agency, quoting the U.S. Pacific Command, said the conference tentatively planned for April in Hawaii would discuss an informal regional grouping to support the high-flying, remotely piloted Global

Hawk.

"Our intent is to involve as many nations as possible in whatever capacity they want to be involved," the command's air component said in e-mailed replies to questions from Reuters.

Global Hawk entered service after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks

on the United States. It is designed to survey vast areas with near pinpoint accuracy from as high as 65,000 feet for up to 35 hours. The data can be fed from the \$27.6 million aircraft built by Northrop Grumman nearly instantly to commanders on the ground.

Colonisation cloaked ...

Continued from p11

currently pursuing development, that bears all the hallmarks of the long-term strategy of colonisation, then we cannot fully confront the intentionality, and the cold calculations and reasoning of state that are at work.

Human rights frameworks do not necessarily adequately capture this intentionality, they remain demands that the State respect the rule of law, that they follow universal norms, principles and conventions, that the displaced are treated according to the guiding principles on internal displacement, that HSZs are used for their declared purpose, that the freedom of movement for 'minority' groups is respected etc.

But they do not always provide for a fuller political confrontation or contestation of what is currently at work in the Eastern Province or the frameworks for a political solution to the current crisis. This is not to say that the human right perspective be abandoned, as it is crucial, but that the framework is insufficient as the State which, can readily absorb the pressure of the critique about human rights, may in the end control and co-opt humanitarian and development agencies in the process of achieving its goals, leaving humanitarian and development agencies as arms of state counter-insurgency.

It remains essential therefore that donors, agencies and observ-

ers tie together the development and human rights perspectives so that the political intentionality of the present regime is rendered completely transparent and set themselves boundaries to combat co-option.

However, it remains to be seen whether many IGOs INGOs and NGOs are willing to cross this bridge given the threat that pursuing a politically conscious programme may present to firstly, their often self-professed neutral, 'non-partisan' or non-political mandate - however empty such professions are - and, secondly, to the overriding imperatives of fulfilling humanitarian and development mandates regardless of the deteriorating context.

UN officials ...

Continued from p2

try's laws for a diplomat on a diplomatic passport to make such a visit without prior permission from the government or informing relevant authorities," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Days after Vestmann's visit, other SLMM officials were blocked by the Sri Lanka Army from crossing the Oamanthai entry point.

The monitors turned back after being informed of new routines involving going through body checks, inspection of vehi-

cles and early enlistment of travellers.

Sri Lanka discourages visits by foreign officials into LTTE-controlled areas, saying it gives legitimacy to the Tigers whom it describes as "terrorists."

"What happens when we allow those visits, the LTTE begins to think that they are also a (separate) country... Our problem is when they (UN officials) go there, they (LTTE) take advantage," said Director General of the government's secretariat for coordinating the peace process, Rajiva Wijesinghe.

Continued from p13

to the injuries she suffered. Neighbors reported that the actual culprits have never been apprehended and the true story of the massacre has been swept under the carpet.

It is fervently hoped that the Dutch journalist will now understand that the best way to promote the interests of the people is not to write about the country's unsafe tourist resorts but to ardently expose the gross human rights abuses in the country with a view to improving its law enforcement and the rule of law.

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NEWS



President Mahinda Rajapakse being welcomed by Sinhala musicians to a ceremony on Oct 4 for a 'national' campaign to promote food production. *Photo Sudath Silva*

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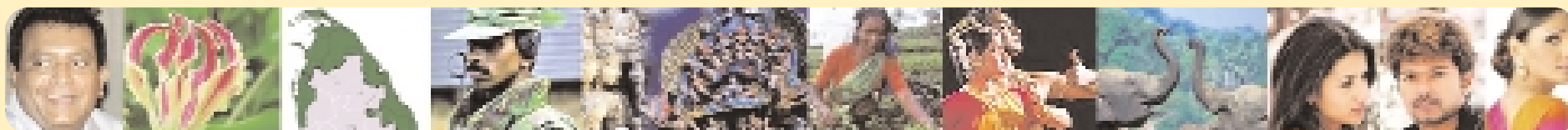
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