

## The enduring power of Tamil national identity

PAGE 11

# 'We will liberate our motherland'



THE leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Vellupillai Pirapaharan, in his annual Heroes' Day statement this year, placed the heavy responsibility for the breakdown of the peace process on the shoulders of the international community.

He said the involvement of the international community to resolve the Tamil national question had been unhelpful and added that their failure to condemn unambiguously the military path of the current regime has created the present situation in the island.

He asserted that the propping up of the genocidal Sinhala State by the international community through economic aid, military aid and subtle diplomatic efforts will be counterproductive.

About the long and bitter history of deception by the Sinhala State he further said, "None of the Southern parties are ready to accept the core principles for a lasting peace: the Tamil homeland, the Tamil nation and the Tamil Right to self determination."

He pointed out that nations like East Timor and Montenegro broke free of their subjugation and gained their freedom with the

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(above) Record crowd of over 25,000 people at Remembrance Day in London on Nov 27 (top) LTTE Vellupillai Pirapaharan paid his respects to fallen Tamil fighters in Vanni.

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## NEWS

# Dozens killed in Vanni and Colombo

A BOMB blast in Colombo on Wednesday killed eighteen people and wounded dozens, a day after Sri Lankan military airstrikes and mine attacks blamed on Army commandos killed twenty Tamil civilians in Vanni.

The powerful explosion outside a famous textile department store in a suburb of the Sri Lankan wounded 37 people the Ministry of Defense said. The blast hit a crowded area in Nugegoda in the evening rush hour. Vehicles and buildings were set ablaze.

Most of the victims are thought to be Sinhalese.

A man handed over a parcel to the bag counter of the store before entering and a few minutes later walked out without collecting it from the counter, Reuters reported quoting shop assistants. The parcel exploded after some time.

Panic spread across the city and the authorities announced that the schools in Western Province will remain closed for the next two days. The announcement came as last term exams started at the secondary schools on Wednesday.

Bombings causing mass casualties amongst Sinhala civilians in the south have been part of Sri Lanka's conflict in the past, but such attacks have been rare in recent years. Colombo, moreover, has not been targeted for several years.

Earlier Wednesday, a female suicide bomber with explosives hidden in her bra blew herself up in the office of Sri Lankan Social Services Minister Douglas Devananda, killing his public relations officer and injuring two guards.

Devananda, who heads the pro-government paramilitary group-cum-political party EPDP (Eelam People's Democratic party), wasn't harmed. He survived a similar attack in 2004 also.

The polio-afflicted woman was allowed into the building as the minister was due to meet patients today, said Udaya Nanayakkara, a military spokesman. The bomber got past one layer of security in the office of Devananda but detonated the bomb when she was stopped at the second check-post near his room, officials said.

The EPDP operates in a counter-insurgency mode alongside that Sri Lankan security forces and has been blamed by international human rights groups for abductions, killings and torture of Tamil civilians.

On Tuesday, seven Tamil school girls riding in a Hiace van marked as an ambulance were killed on the spot at Iyangkeani in a claymore attack carried out by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Deep Penetration Unit (DPU). The driver of the van and three male volunteers were also killed in the attack, according to Tamillelam Police in Kilinochchi.



Other DPU mine attacks on Sunday targeted Tamil civilians in Oddisuddaan, 22 km southwest of Mullaiththevu town and Mudkompan, 20 km northwest of Ki'linochchi town in Poonakari (Pooneryn) division. Two people were killed and several wounded.

Also on Tuesday, Kfir jet bombers of the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) attacked the Voice of Tigers (VoT) broadcast station 3.5 km south of Kilinochchi. More than 12 bombs were dropped on the station and the nearby houses.

Three editorial staff workers at the station and eight civilians, residents and travelers near the station were killed in the attack.

Fifteen civilians, including four editorial staff, wounded in the attack were admitted to Kilinochchi hospital.

A hostel belonging to World Food Programme (WFP) was fully destroyed.

Three shops, located opposite the radio station, were also fully destroyed. Six shops located in the nearby junction were damaged.

On Monday SLAF bombers attacked two densely populated areas in Puthukkudiyiruppu and Kilinochchi.

Thirteen houses were damaged in five rounds of air attacks.

A year ago, on October 17 2006, the SLAF bombed the main broadcast tower and transmitter of the Thamileelam Radio that broadcasts the VoT and Thamileelam Vanoli, a commercial Tamil service and a Sinhala language broadcast from Vanni.

The international media watchdog, Reporters Without Borders condemned the Sri Lankan airstrike on VoT as a "war crime."

"Voice of Tigers is a propaganda radio operated by the LTTE rebels, but the rules of war are clear - military bombardment and bombing must be limited to strictly military targets," the press freedom organisation said.

"The government in Colombo uses the Geneva Conventions to condemn LTTE crimes but forgets the conventions when it bombs what is a civilian installation and therefore protected by the conventions."



(clockwise from top left) A bomb destroyed a famous textile store in Colombo Wednesday ; some of the wounded from that attack; some of the schoolgirls killed by Sri Lankan commandos on Tuesday; victims of a SLAF airstrike on a radio station in Vanni Tuesday; one of 13 houses bombed by SLAF jets Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), Sri Lanka's largest Tamil political party, condemned the blasts in Colombo, saying it was opposed to any attack on civilians.



## NEWS



## We will liberate...

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help and support of the international community.

He added that the actions of the international community with respect to the Tamil national question are unjust and said that Tamil people hoped that the international community would change their biased approach and recognize the sovereignty of the Tamil nation.

The LTTE leader called on the global Tamil community to support the Tamil Eelam freedom struggle.

"I wish to express my love and gratitude to you for your past participation in the building of our nation, bringing together your abundant intellectual, material, monetary and many other resources in the service of our nation and ask that you stand with us in the coming years of our freedom struggle," he said.

# Propping up genocidal Sinhala State is counterproductive, international community should change its approach - Pirapaharan

*The full text of the official translation of the LTTE leader's speech follows:*

THE 21st century began as the 'Asian century' and the world is looking towards Asia. Many countries in our region have grown in leaps and bounds in social, economical and scientific fields. They are researching space, moon and atom. The whole human race is taking up new challenges and has embarked on a united path, seeking answers to many of nature's mysteries and looking for remedies to incurable diseases. It is seeking to protect the entire globe and its plant and animal lives. Sadly, the Sinhala nation is moving in exactly the opposite direction, on a path of destruction. It is trying to destroy the Tamil nation and, in the process, it is destroying itself. This beautiful island continues to soak in blood.

Buddhism is a profound spiritual duty. Its philosophy emphasizes a life without desires, a life of love and justice. The Sinhala nation, claiming that it has followed this path for more than two thousand years, has in fact remained immersed in the poison of racism. It is unleashing unthinkable violence against another people. During the long history of the Tamil struggle, first through non-violence and later through armed struggle, the Sinhala mindset has remained unchanged. The Sinhala nation

did not change even after so much destruction and lost lives. It continues on the path of violence. It only desires to find a solution to the Tamil question through military might and oppression. It cunningly evaded efforts to seek peace and is boldly taking forward its military plan. The international community's economic and military aid, its moral and political support, its diplomatic efforts, and its one-sided involvement directly aided this turn of events.

We know very well that the military, economic and geo-political interests of the world's powers are embedded in our region. We understand their concern to take forward their interests. We also recognize the concerns of the international community to bring about stability and good governance to this island for these reasons. At the same time the chauvinistic Sinhala State is attempting to exploit this interest in our region of the international powers. It is trapping the international community in its chauvinistic project and turning the international community against the Tamil freedom struggle. Our people are dismayed and disappointed that these countries, trapped in the deceptive net of the Sinhala State, are being unhelpful in their involvement to resolve our problem.

These one-sided involvements of foreign powers are not new in

our prolonged struggle. India intervened in our national question then as part of its regional expansion. India signed an accord with the Sinhala State without the consent of the Tamils. The Indo-Lanka Accord was not signed to meet the aspirations of the people of Tamil Eelam. In fact, India then attempted to force an ineffectual solution on our people - a solution which did not even devolve powers to the extent of the Banda-Chelva pact signed in the 1950's. India tried to enforce that accord with the strength of more than 100,000 Indian forces, with the power of the agreement between two countries and with the assistance of treacherous Tamil paramilitary groups. However, even this ill-considered solution, which did not even address the basic national aspirations of the Tamils, was blocked by the chauvinistic Sinhala State.

We are intimately familiar with the Sinhala State and its deceptive politics. Our people have a long history of bitter experiences. That is why we explained to India on many occasions, at many locations and at many levels about the implacability of Sinhala chauvinism. We explained to India then that the aim of the Sinhala State was not to find a solution to the Tamil question and bring peace; but to occupy the Tamil homeland, destroy its resources, and enslave the Tamil nation. India refused to

accept this reality. As a result our land witnessed great sorrow and destruction.

Today, the international community is making the same mistake that India made many years ago. Even the countries that are the guardians of the peace efforts succumbed to the deception of the Sinhala State and listed our freedom movement as a terrorist organization. What we find most incomprehensible is the fact that these same nations, which labeled us terrorists, not so long ago fought in defence of their own freedom.

The Sinhala nation is unable to stomach the support of our Diaspora for the Tamil freedom struggle; it is unable to accept the humanitarian help and the political lobbying by the Diaspora to end the misery heaped on our people. That is why the Sinhala nation is trying hard to shatter the bond between our people in our homeland and our Diaspora. Some countries are also assisting this amoral effort of Sinhala chauvinism. These countries are denouncing, as illegal activities, the humanitarian actions and political protests of our people abroad - actions that are carried out according to the laws of those countries. These countries have imprisoned and humiliated Tamil campaigners and representatives. These countries have ridiculed their protests and their efforts to seek justice.

This partisan and unjust conduct of the international community has severely undermined the confidence our people had in them. And it has paved the way for the breakdown of the ceasefire and the peace efforts. Furthermore, the generous military and economic aid they have given to the Sinhala State and their diplomatic efforts to prop up the chauvinistic Sinhala State has encouraged the Sinhala nation further and further along its militaristic path. This is the background to the confidence of the Rajapakse regime in continuing with its unjust, inhuman war of occupation of our land.

Overconfident of its military victory over the Tamil freedom movement, the Rajapakse regime has shut fast the door for peace. The desire to oppress the Tamils has intensified as never before. With the entire world giving support, the Sinhala State, using the ceasefire as cover, and exploiting the peace environment, prepared its war of occupation. The SLMM that was monitoring the peace covered its eyes, tied its hands behind back, and went to sleep in Colombo. The exhausted Norwegian facilitators remained silent. The countries that preached peace to us also went silent and refused to speak out. The Sinhala State started its war and justified it with slogans like

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## OPINION

# The long path ahead

They may kill the revolutionary, but the revolution will come.

**Narayana**  
Tamil Guardian

THE path is long, my friends, and we have lost another companion.

A companion who walked besides us as he showed us the way forward. A companion who knew the ugliness of war and sought out an alternative path. A companion who told the world of our struggle even as they turned their backs on us.

Even as he walked with us there was no way of knowing how dear he was to the Tamil people or how crucial he was to our struggle. And there was none of the arrogance which comes with power. None of the distance which comes with authority. None of the coldness which comes with importance. Just a smile. A warm open smile which made you comfortable enough to speak your mind, to question, to criticize. A smile that we all see today when we close our eyes.

Behind that almost child like smile was a razor sharp mind that understood the path to freedom was long and dangerous. Behind that smile was a man strong enough to be humble; wise enough to seek the counsel of others. A man so sure of our cause that he was willing to negotiate with an enemy who ultimately took his life.

The path is long and lonely, my friends.

Thamilchelvan Anna understood better than many that we need many companions to reach our destination. As a young diaspora Tamil who was not fully accepting of the struggle, it was refreshing to meet a man secure enough in his own beliefs to allow them to be questioned. Although he had never been to the West when I met first him in 2002, I was surprised by how well he understood that young Tamils in the diaspora would have many questions about the struggle and the movement, and was willing to answer even the most trivial questions.

For some time now we have had two paths in front of us: the path of peace and the path of war. Our nation sent Thamilchelvan Anna down the path of peace. A path that was opened to us by the sacrifice of many lives. We sent him ahead and waited with bated breath; waiting for him to give us the all clear; waiting for him to tell it was okay to move forward.

When a warrior comes to talk peace surely that must have a special significance? He has seen the ugliness of war first hand; he has seen comrades fall in the red soil of our homeland; he has seen parents grieve for dead children; he has seen our people driven like

animals into the jungles. When a man who knows the loss of war sits across the table from you and offers a way to bring peace to the island - do you talk with him or silence him forever?

We sent Thamilchelvan Anna and we waited.

We waited hoping against hope that this path would lead us to freedom. Lead us to a life of dignity and security. Lead us to lives filled with laughter and joy.

But this path has led us only to misery and tears of loss. This path led us to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Tamils. This path led to daily killings and disappearances of Tamils across the island. This path led us to the assassination of Kausalian, Joseph Pararajasingam, Raviraj and now Thamilchelvan Anna and the five others who died at his side.

The Sinhala people have shown us that they are unwilling to walk down this path.

Despite all this we have been patient; our leaders have shown restraint in the face of provocation. Even as death rained down upon our people our leaders have kept the path to peace open. Now they have taken our messenger of peace. A messenger that went forward with the blessing of our people and our leadership. When our messenger is taken from us, the message is clear: the road to peace is closed.

My friends, we walk alone to our freedom. We are all tired for the journey has been long and we have lost many companions along the way. Many of us have lost flesh and blood; many of us have lost house and home; some of us have lost identity and self.

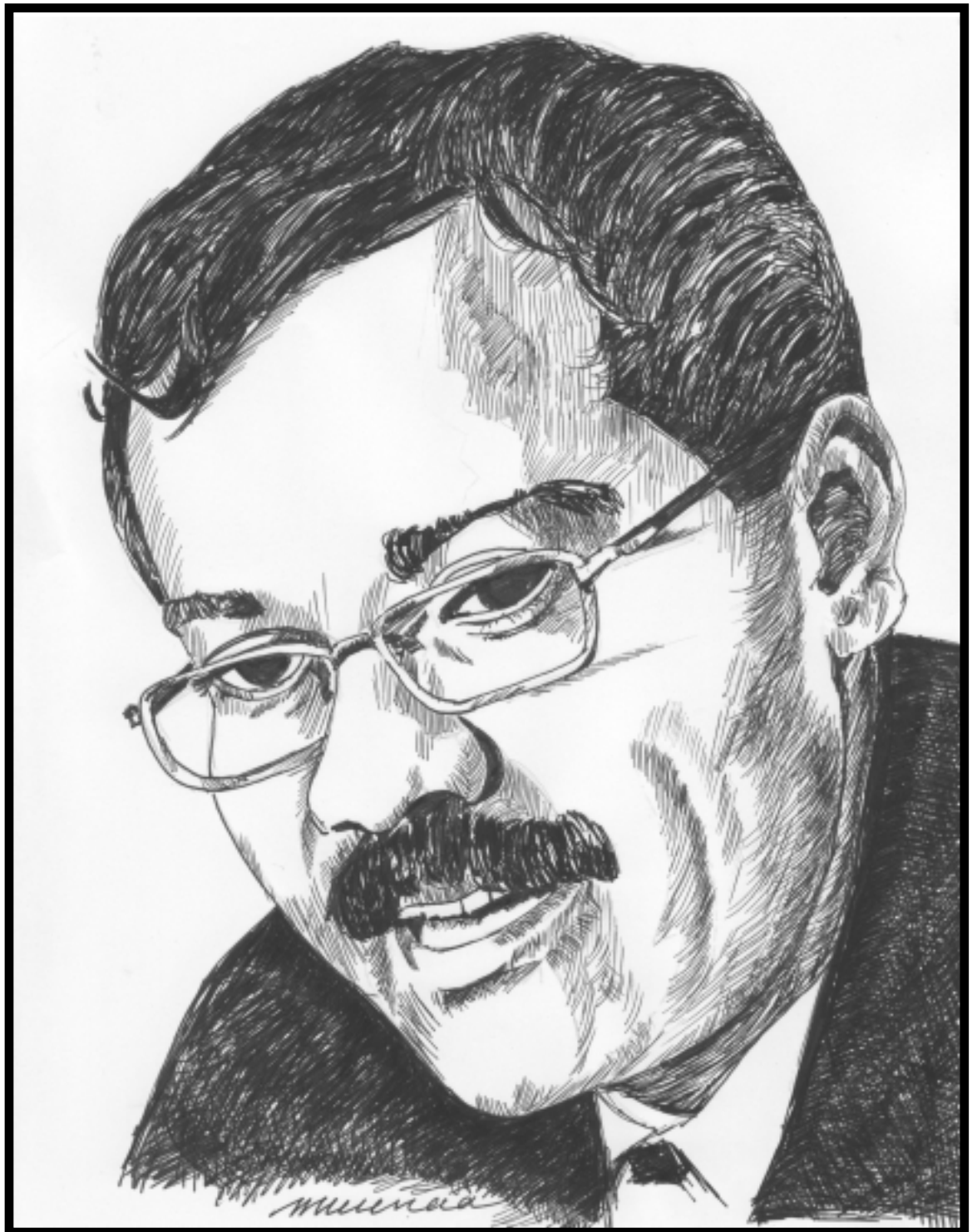
It is tempting to say enough. It is tempting to say I will walk no more. I must rest. It is tempting to lose hope, to fear where this road will lead us. This is what they want from us. They want us to forsake our revolution; to give up our dream.

Now is not the time, my friends. As long as we have the will and means to resist those who seek to oppress us we must stay the path to freedom.

We must show the world they may kill the revolutionary but the revolution will come. They may kill the dreamer but our dream will be realized.

We have lost another companion. But in his name we walk on. In his memory and the memory of so many others we remain strong.

Freedom will come one day. United as a people, we will reach that goal. Thamilchelvan Anna knew this. That is why he was always smiling.



## ‘Our nation struggles alone for our rights’

"WE tried our best to convince the International Community of our grievances. We are a small nation, struggling all alone to uphold our rights. But the International Community in an uneven judgement in applying its norms, scaled us with Sri Lankan government abounding with military and economic resources. The scale was not fair. The price we paid for the International Injustice is the life of Thamilchelvan," said Poddu Ammaan, the intelligence wing chief of the Liberation Tigers, in the obituary address of the funeral of Brigadier S.P. Thamilchelvan held in Ki'linochchi on Nov 5, 2007.

Narrating his close association with Thamilchelvan in his early days in the LTTE, Poddu Ammaan recollected events of exemplary bravery and leadership, shown by Thamilchelvan during IPKF times and the first Elephant Pass (EPS) operation.

However, he continued, "many of us were not aware of the inherent political abilities hidden in him, but our leader Pirapaharan rightly identified them."

"Our leader always use to say that fear comes from attachment to life. One who is fearless to sacrifice his own life to the welfare of people can only become a political leader. Thamilchelvan

was one such."

"What is the payback for the killing of Thamilchelvan, many ask us. A few Sri Lankan soldiers, perhaps thousands, or a few Sinhala leaders cannot match the price for Thamilchelvan."

"The relentless effort to achieve Thamizh Eezham is the price. The Sinhala nation should realise that we will never stop in this effort."

Poddu Ammaan revealed that the LTTE came to know through subtle briefings of Norway, that the Sri Lankan government blocked Thamilchelvan's mother and siblings, living abroad, from attending the funeral.



## NEWS

# US freezes TRO's funds to support war against LTTE

THE United States last week moved to freeze the US-held assets of the largest Tamil charity, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), accusing it of acting as a front to facilitate fundraising and procurement for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The TRO, the largest local Non Governmental Organisation assisting the Tamil population in Sri Lanka's Northeast, vigorously protested the action by the US Treasury, pointing out that no wrong doing, misappropriation or misuse of funds have been pointed out in its widespread engagement with other NGOs, local and international.

The TRO said the US action would increase the misery of the Tamil people living under Sri Lankan government embargo on the island's Northeast.

"One wonders what the goal of the US Government is since no proof of any wrongdoing has been presented that casts doubts on the work of TRO," the charity said.

"TRO is one of only a few organizations functioning in parts of the NorthEast and the actions of the US Government will lead to further suffering for the Tamil people."

"The US Government currently does not provide any humanitarian relief to those in LTTE controlled areas and with the recent actions inevitably supports the GoSL's campaign to limit assistance to the Tamil people," the TRO said.

Defending the action by the US Treasury, the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Robert Blake, said the action was intended to send a message to the LTTE that now is

the time to negotiate.

His government's action was directed at the LTTE and not the Tamil people, Mr. Blake said.

The US designated the LTTE as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation in 1997 making it a crime for US citizens to provide material support or resources to the Tigers' struggle.

Sri Lanka's Sinhala nationalist government, which is blamed for thousands of extrajudicial killings and disappearances since 2005 praised the US for taking action against Tamil charity and urged other countries to follow suit.

The US Embassy in Colombo issued a press release on Thursday, November 18 announcing the decision of the US Department of the Treasury to freeze US-held assets of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), which won a presidential award in 2005 for building 3,240 temporary shelters following the Boxing Day Tsunami in 2004.

"The Tamils Rehabilitation Organization was designated today under Executive Order 13224, which is aimed at financially isolating terrorist groups and their support networks," said the press release.

"E.O. 13224 freezes any assets held by designees under US jurisdiction and prohibits US persons from transacting with designees."

The statement claimed that the TRO had raised funds on behalf of the LTTE through a network of individual representatives and according to sources within the organization, the TRO is the preferred conduit of funds from the United States to the LTTE in Sri Lanka.



It also charged TRO of facilitating LTTE procurement operations in the United States.

Speaking to the media last Friday at the American Centre in Colombo, US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake said "These are serious charges. It is on this basis the Treasury designated the TRO. This not only blocks illicit

assets but its other assets in the US as well. The freeze was following information based on some earlier arrests."

He further added that the growing international efforts to cut off money flowing to the LTTE would make it increasingly difficult for them "to import arms and other things to carry on their armed struggle."

"The larger purpose of all our activities is to send a message to the LTTE that now is the time to negotiate."

"Now is the time for the LTTE to renounce violence and to renounce terrorism," he added.

"The lesson for the LTTE is that they are never going to get a better deal and now is the time to try to negotiate."

However he did not elaborate on what deal was on offer for the Tamils, as Sri Lankan has failed to come up with any power sharing proposal since the signing of a ceasefire in February 2002.

Mr. Blake also repeated his customary request to the Sri Lankan government to share political power with Tamils.

Mr Blake also did not say what actions United States would take to pressure the Sri Lankan government to put forward a power sharing proposal, which earlier this month killed the chief negotiator of the LTTE, Brig. S.P. Thamilselvan and has unveiled a war budget with the stated inten-

tion of escalating the conflict.

Reacting to the announcement of the asset freeze, Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister Rohitha Bogollagama made a special statement to the parliament praising the US for cracking down on funding sources for the LTTE.

"I have emphasised the damage done by this organisation particularly in the US and we have provided evidence that lends credence to our concerns," he said.

"It is in this context, that I wish to place on record the deep appreciation of the government of Sri Lanka and this entire House, to the US Administration especially the Treasury Department, for the speedy investigation carried out and for the action taken against the TRO."

Mr. Bogollagama told parliament that Sri Lanka could now expect a significant decline in the collections of the LTTE which he insisted ranged from \$20-30 million per month world wide.

The minister warned that eternal vigilance was necessary because the LTTE had become an expert in circumventing curbs and bans.

Mr. Bogollagama further said the action taken by the US should serve as an example to other countries such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, France and Britain who would follow suit as they were conducting investigations into LTTE front organisations.

## TNA condemns US block on TRO

### TamilNet

SRI LANKA'S largest political party has condemned the US action to freeze the US-based accounts of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) saying Washington was deepening the plight of the Tamil people.

"While the Government of Sri Lanka has imposed an effective economic embargo in Vanni, and the sustained bombardments of Sri Lanka Military have made situation difficult for International Non-Governmental Organizations to work amidst the affected local residents in border villages of Tamil areas," said Kajendran, parliamentarian from the Tamil National Alliance

"The United States has made the situation worse for the Tamil

people, internally displaced and reeling under economic hardship, by stopping the humanitarian aid from the branches world-wide of the TRO," he said.

"More than 300,000 Tamils have been internally displaced by the offensives by Sri Lanka armed forces. TRO, the only organization capable of providing the day-to-day support for the most vulnerable IDPs will now be debilitated with scarcity of funds."

"Preschools, children homes, aged-people homes, livelihood beneficiaries, including tsunami beneficiaries will be affected by the ban."

"Further, this action will be considered by the Sri Lanka Government as tacit support to the military approach, and will further encourage Colombo's military pursuits," the MP said.

Meanwhile, Suresh Premach-

andran, a senior parliamentarian of the TNA from Jaffna described as "contradictory" American ambassador Robert Blake's observation that the US treasury freeze of funds of TRO, a pro-LTTE front, was not against the Tamil people in Sri Lanka but against terrorism.

"It should be noted that US ambassador Robert Blake on Friday stated that the LTTE should return to the negotiating table, thereby recognising that it is the representative of the Tamil People in Sri Lanka," Premachandran said.

Mr Kajendran said that without a balanced approach to peace by the International Community, with an understanding of the Tamil peoples right to self-determination, Tamils are unlikely to be convinced by assertions of support to peace by the International Community.

## NEWS

# Sri Lanka's ban on TRO 'final nail' in coffin of peace process

THE Tamils Rehabilitation Organisations (TRO) has condemned the Sri Lankan government's banning of the charity, saying the Rajapakse regime had done so with the "ulterior motive of unleashing untold hardships on the Tamil people as part of [the government's] continuing discrimination and oppression of the Tamil people."

The TRO, which has been the largest - and for long periods the sole - NGO assisting the hundreds of thousands of Tamils displaced by the conflict, said in a statement this week "with the banning of the TRO the final nail in the coffin of the peace process has been hammered home."

"It is a tragedy that the International Community, while ignoring the human rights abuses and violation of international humanitarian law by the GoSL, continues to dangle this 'dead peace', that the GoSL continues to show no interest in pursuing, before the Tamil people," the TRO said.

The charity said the ban was a culmination of a campaign of harassment and violence against the organization and its staff carried out by the Rajapakse regime.

Last year the Sri Lankan government froze the TRO's accounts. However, despite the move blocking the TRO's post-tsunami projects being carried out in parallel with international NGOs, "the GoSL never filed any charges against TRO or submitted any evidence to the public or court for cross-examination."

## UNP welcomes ban

SRI LANKA'S main opposition United National party (UNP) has welcomed the government's decision to ban the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), the Daily Mirror reported Friday. The UNP echoed the stance of the ultra-Sinhala nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (JVP) with senior UNP official, Lakshman Kiriella, also telling a news conference that the government had failed to pursue the matter with commitment. Earlier this week, there was applause in Sri Lanka's parliament as the government promised to consider banning the TRO and also the LTTE.

Mr. Kiriella also claimed the decision by the government of Mahinda Rajapakse to ban the charity followed a TRO member confessing in USA that some funds were given to the Tamil Tigers by the organization.

Earlier this week the JVP had called for the banning of the TRO. JVP parliamentary group leader Wimal Weerawansa called

In January 2006 paramilitary groups, known to be working with and under the direction of the GoSL, abducted, raped, tortured and killed 7 TRO humanitarian workers, the TRO also pointed out.

Earlier this week analysts told international news agencies the GoSL's action was part of its military drive against the Liberation Tigers.

"The government is continuously closing the doors to negotiations and it is continuously closing whatever opening there is for negotiations," Jehan Perera, Executive Director at National Peace Council, commenting on the ban of the TRO, told Reuters.

The full text of the TRO statement, issued November 18, 2007, follows

TRO condemns in the strongest possible terms the Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) banning of TRO. The banning of TRO will result in a further restriction on humanitarian relief to the Tamil people and has the ulterior motive of unleashing untold hardships on the Tamil people as part of the GoSL's continuing discrimination and oppression of the Tamil people.

Unfortunately, this ban, orchestrated by the Mahinda Rajapaksa regime, does not come as a surprise to the organization. The Mahinda regime, has, since coming to power in 2005, been trying to restrict, and eventually completely stop, all TRO humanitarian, reconstruction, and devel-

opment programs in government controlled areas and have continually put obstacles in the way of TRO relief activities in other areas of the NorthEast.

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The TRO is the largest - and at times the only - relief NGO assisting Tamil refugees in Sri Lanka.

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### Attacks on TRO personnel & offices

In January 2006 paramilitary groups, known to be working with and under the direction of the GoSL, abducted, raped, tortured and killed 7 TRO humanitarian workers. The evidence of these paramilitary groups' affiliation with and control by the Sri Lanka armed forces is irrefutable and TRO holds the GoSL responsible for these deaths.

Additionally, TRO offices in GoSL controlled areas have been attacked numerous times by paramilitary groups and persons in "military fatigues". The Jaffna and Batticaloa TRO Offices were ransacked and set afire and the vehicles and office equipment destroyed. A staff member was killed in the final attack on the Batticaloa Office. These events usually occurred during curfew times and within 100 yards of Sri Lanka Police and Army checkpoints. Sri Lanka Armed Forces and Police also intimidated and threatened TRO staff at the office and in their homes

### Freezing of TRO bank accounts

When these actions did not bear results and TRO continued, despite the threats and harassment, to function in GoSL areas and deliver vitally needed humanitarian relief and development, the GoSL froze the TRO bank

accounts. TRO sought to challenge the basis on which these funds were frozen and petitioned the High Court in Colombo to review and "vary or vacate" its order to freeze the accounts. The court refused, finding that it did not have the jurisdiction to do so and that the GoSL had the right to freeze the funds indefinitely "for investigation".

TRO, on the advice of international organizations, our donors and partners, continued to pursue the case, seeking our "day in court" and the opportunity to prove our innocence of all charges. But the GoSL and the Sri Lankan judicial system are fundamentally corrupt without any concept of the notion of "justice". The "law" and "justice" in Sri Lanka are words without meaning, political expediency, corruption and influence peddling carry more weight with this regime and the effect is that political decisions are given the cloak of legitimacy.

The GoSL never filed any charges against TRO or submitted any evidence to the public or court for cross-examination or for TRO to have the opportunity to confront its accuser. Instead the GoSL dragged the case on for over 14 months. During this time the Mahinda regime continued threatening TRO staff in Colombo office, blocked funds from overseas meant to cover the legal costs and also pressured the owners of TRO Colombo office building not to rent to TRO.

### Projects stopped in GoSL areas

As a result of our bank

accounts being frozen, our office documents and assets being confiscated by the GoSL security forces and our offices in GoSL controlled areas attacked and destroyed, TRO was forced in 2006 to close its offices in GoSL controlled areas of the NorthEast leaving projects unfinished and war and tsunami affected persons in dire need. Through all this TRO continued to seek redress in the courts to overturn the account freeze.

### CFA & the peace process

TRO was founded in 1985 and prior to 2002 TRO functioned effectively in the Vanni. It was only after the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) signed between the GoSL and the LTTE in 2002 that TRO, at the urging of the international community and with the assistance and advice of international organizations, registered in Colombo as a charity/NGO (Number L 50706) under the Social Services Act.

During this period, TRO, as the largest NGO in the NorthEast, gave its full and unconditional support to peace efforts by creating confidence in the minds of the people that, after 20 years of war, the dawn of peace was at hand and by implementing development projects in collaboration with international organizations that promoted peace. TRO, due to the non-implementation of many of the promises made by the GoSL and the international community in the post-CFA period, was one of the few organizations actually delivering the "peace

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## NEWS

# Disappearances and killings will continue, is part of war -Army chief

DISAPPEARANCES and killings of will continue as long as 'anti-terrorist' operations are continuing, Sri Lanka's Army commander, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka (pictured right, alighting from car) said last week in a interview to British investigative reporters.

Asked about human rights abuses in the newly captured Eastern province, the commander replied: "This area is not a normal area. So people getting killed and some people going missing will happen as far as the anti-terrorist operations are continuing."

In a program on Sri Lanka by the 'Unreported World' program by Channel4, British reporters tried to travel to the island's North and East to investigate the continuing abductions and killings of civilians.

As part of the program, the reporters interviewed Sri Lanka Army commander, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka.

Asked about the atrocities, he first accused 'vested interests' opposed to the military operations of making unsubstantiated allegations but then admitted these were part of 'anti-terrorist' operations.

Asked how it is that so many people were being murdered or abducted in mysterious circumstances across in Sri Lanka, even in the capitol, Colombo, Gen. Fonseka said: "those are the allegations by interested parties who are trying to sabotage or block the military operations."

## Accusations of abuses by security forces 'are allegations by interested parties who are trying to sabotage or block the military operations' - General Fonseka

"They have vested interests. They say hundreds are missing, hundreds are murdered. But as far as complaints are concerned, there are no formal complaints even entered in the police station or something like that. There are no witnesses who come to police station and given evidence," he said.

"As far as we are concerned, we give protection to the civilians, innocent people."

Asked about the killings and abductions that refugees in the east, the General first said in reply: "If you are saying Karuna's people are doing it or any other paramilitary groups, then it is a problem between the LTTE and the paramilitary groups."

He then added: "this area

[east] is not a normal area. So people getting killed and some people going missing will happen as far as the anti-terrorist operations are continuing."

Western Province People's Front (WPPF) leader, Mano Ganeshan, who is Convenor of the Monitoring Commission (CMC) on extra judicial killings and disappearances was amongst civil society voiced interviewed by Channel4.

Pointing out that checkpoints were visible all over Colombo, but none had ever stopped those responsible for disappearing people, he said: "You don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand there is cooperation between the security forces and the abductors."

Blaming "influential people within the state" for the killings, Mr. Ganeshan said: "they say this is the way to put down the Tamil rebellion."

Lt. Gen. Fonseka meanwhile insisted the LTTE can be defeated militarily.

"The President has stated he likes to convince the terrorists that getting a solution by military means is not going to work for them," the General also said.

"We want to also convince them you can never beat us militarily and you can never get what you want by military means. We are capable of beating them militarily. We have done it one area in the eastern province."

"And if still they don't understand, we have to do it once more, hoping they will understand."

When the reporters went to the east, they were shadowed by Karuna Group paramilitaries as they sought to interview local people. The reporters were warned that they posed a risk to people they tried to interview.

People told the reporters they were terrified of being abducted by the Karuna Group, who "everyone told us" were collaborating with the military.

"Karuna Group cadres are coming and going from refugee camps, day and night" the reporters quoted people as saying.

Tamil politician R. Thurairatnam told the reporters the government needed the Karuna Group paramilitaries more than ever now, to identify suspected sympathizers and supporters of the LTTE amongst the population.

The British reporters had been given permission to visit Jaffna for four days. But after reaching the northern city they were told they could not "out of sight" of the military. They were also told they would be leaving the following day and given 90 minutes for a guided tour.

In the time they were there, four people went missing, the reporters said.



## Terror in militarized east

Gihan de Chickera  
Daily Mirror

KILLINGS, disappearances and abductions of persons persist in the highly militarized environment of Trincomalee and Mutur, while thousands languish in welfare camps seeking adequate food, shelter and protection, the Law and Society Trust (LST) said in a report.

"Despite claims of liberation and reawakening of the East, civilians in Trincomalee live in a highly militarized environment. Despite the heavy presence of security forces, disappearances and killings continue regularly," the LST said.

The report noted that abductions and disappearances were reported almost daily with 24 cases in August and 39 in September.

"Many incidents go unreported as no formal complaint is made to the HRC or Police due to fear of reprisals" the report notes while adding that Trincomalee remains heavily militarized and tense with the town deserted after 7 pm.

The LST said the TMVP or Karuna group, continued to abuse people, although its strength was dwindling with the number of TMVP offices in Trincomalee down from 10 to two.

It said though the HRC intervened on some violations, it failed to make any notable impact, while HRC investigations into the

killing of five students in January 2006, 17 ACF aid workers in August 2006 and Ven. Nandarathna Thera in Trincomalee, had reached a standstill.

The LST said thousands of displaced people were languishing in camps, with friends or relatives. "There are several camps around Trincomalee town, while there are three transit camps on the outskirts of Mutur, in Killiveddy, Paddiththal and Manalchenai. The people are also unaware of government plans to reduce the size of the proposed Sampur high security zone (HSZ), created by gazette on May 30 as no official announcement has been made."

According to HRC statistics 15,425 IDPs will be affected by the HSZ, while most of the 11,672 displaced persons still in Batticaloa will also lose their lands. NGOs working with IDPs put

the figure higher, the report adds.

The LST noted that in the Killiveddy and Paddiththal transit camps the toilets were full and could not be used anymore, while people in Cultural Hall transit camp in Trincomalee were ignored by the government, with the only assistance being half a loaf of bread per person per day for dinner, provided by an NGO.

IDPs also complain of threats, harassment and intimidation by the armed forces, with young men in particular being targeted.

Another cause for concern, the report observed, was the issuing of special ID cards by the police for IDPs, even to those who had National Identity Cards.

"Of particular concern was the fact that the ID particularly mentions 'race', and in most 'Tamil' was displayed prominently. This is something that is not disclosed in the NIC," the LST said.

## UNCHR concerned

UNHCR expressed its 'grave concerns' on the deteriorating security situation and various incidents reported from areas in the eastern Sri Lanka, including incidents of involuntary return of displaced people.

"UNHCR has received reports of a number of killings, abductions, incidents of harassment and general insecurity in these areas," said UNHCR spokesperson,

Jennifer Pagonis, at today's Palais des Nations press briefing in Geneva.

"We reiterate our call to the government to ensure that the returns are voluntary, safe and in line with international standards," Pagonis said.

Around 250 displaced people, who returned to their villages of

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## EDITORIAL &amp; OPINION

## TAMIL GUARDIAN

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WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 28, 2007 No. 361

## Tamil Aid

**Humanitarianism is politics. So are the bans on the TRO.**

That the Sinhala government of President Mahinda Rajapakse would sooner or later proscribe the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), the largest Tamil relief organization, was not entirely unexpected. The TRO has been the target of both harassment and murderous violence by the Sinhala state for some time. But the circumstances of the ban which was imposed last week speak volumes. To begin with, Colombo's ban was internationally sanctioned; the United States paved the way with a ban of its own a week earlier. Both Colombo and Washington argue the same thing: the TRO is a 'front' for the Liberation Tigers. The charge is both unsubstantiated and, for the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on the TRO, irrelevant; indeed, the TRO has actually been proscribed precisely because it is an effective relief organization. More precisely, the TRO has been banned because it is again standing in the way of the Sri Lankan state's efforts to demoralize and dispirit the Tamil people as part of its wider, internationally-backed effort to shatter their resistance to Sinhala domination.

The TRO was born of resistance to oppression. It was to ameliorate the suffering of the Tamil people inflicted by the Sinhala governments of the time that this organization was formed in the mid-eighties. In the two decades since, the TRO has served the Tamil people with unparalleled dedication and professionalism. It remains a quintessential Tamil organization, rooted in the homeland and embedded in the consciousness of the Diaspora. Headquartered amongst those it seeks to help, the TRO's volunteers, both 'on the ground' and amongst the expatriates, have striven through the worst ravages of conflict and tsunami, consistently putting the Tamil people before their own safety and wellbeing. No other relief organization had done more for our people. The TRO remains, for the Tamils, both a source of urgently needed humanitarian relief and a source of deep national pride. That is why it has also been targeted by the state - to the despicable silence, and now the complicity, of the international community.

Inflicting suffering on the Tamil people is an integral part of Sri Lanka's internationally backed war strategy. The central intent now, as during the nineties and in the eighties, is to induce war weariness amongst the Tamil population. This is why economic embargoes are either fully

imposed or gradually being tightened on the northeast.

This is why terror, both arbitrary and targeted, is being unleashed amongst our people. A 'snatch and snuff' campaign of abductions and gruesome public killings in government-controlled areas is paralleled by airstrikes and shelling of civilian areas in LTTE-controlled areas. All Sinhala governments - led by the presently ruling SLFP or the UNP (which has joined the ultra-nationalist JVP in hailing the ban) - have used the logic of collective punishment to break the Tamil will to freedom. They have all failed. And as they have increased Tamil suffering, they have fuelled resistance.

History is repeating itself anew in Sri Lanka. In the past two years almost three hundred thousand more Tamils have been driven from their homes by the Sinhala state's military offensives. Almost the entire Tamil population of the eastern province is displaced. Yet the international NGOs are largely unable to help, mired in procedural red tape or simple apathy. The minutia of rules and bureaucracy appears to be more important for many than the principle of alleviating suffering - especially when the victims are Tamils. Apart from the contempt the TRO's international counterparts often show for our people - the 'beneficiaries' of their much photographed assistance - their hectoring on humanitarian norms is all too easily silenced by the Sinhala lion's snarl.

We have argued before that the central lesson Tamils must draw from international indifference to their plight is that the only way to be physically secure is to effectively assert their own sovereignty. In other words, if the suffering of our people is to be eased, we must ensure this ourselves. The Tamil people across the Northeast will acutely need the support of the Diaspora now and for a long time. In the interest of 'devolution' massive violence and pain will be unleashed on our people. We must stand with them, as we have done before. As such, the TRO is a central and invaluable conduit of Diaspora support. It has the volunteers, the infrastructure, the expertise, and, above all, the commitment to help our people. It was there before any of the international NGOs came. It will be there long after the last of them leave. Humanitarianism, as we all know, is ultimately a form of politics. So are the bans on the TRO.

# The ultimate 'Right to Protect' is self rule

Sri Lanka is not a failed state. It is actually a powerful and stable, if racist, state.

Gajan Raj  
Tamil Guardian

FOR a long time now, many Tamils have been puzzled as to why the international community, specifically powerful Western liberal states, continue to support the Sri Lankan government despite its racist and oppressive policies and its genocidal actions against the Tamil people.

Reasons put forward on behalf of various members of the international community have ranged from needing stability in Sri Lanka given its strategic location, to requiring access to the island's natural deep water harbor in Trincomalee, to supporting stability in the global economy.

However, none of these are actually significant enough to justify the disproportionate international focus and support Sri Lanka has received in recent years.

In today's geopolitical context Sri Lanka's location or Trincomalee harbor does not provide a strategic advantage for any of the great powers. Similarly, Sri Lanka's role in the global economy is too small for it to be a key influencing factor.

So, what is it that Sri Lanka has that is attracting international attention? Nothing. Rather, it is what the international community thinks it has to protect us, the Tamils, that is making, ironically, back the Sri Lankan state.

During the peace process there was talk about Sri Lanka being a test bed for the international community. As many incorrectly believed at the time, the international community was not testing a new model for peace building in Sri Lanka but a new framework for security - for states.

## Right to protect

That new framework is called Responsibility to Protect or Right to Protect (R2P).

R2P is described as an evolving concept about the duties of governments generally to prevent and end unconscionable acts of violence against the peoples of the world, wherever they occur.

The R2P principles were first proposed in December 2001 by the International Commission on

Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) and the Government of Canada in a report titled "The Responsibility to Protect".

Four years later, at the September 2005 UN World Summit, R2P was adopted by United Nations.

According to R2P, states have a primary responsibility to protect their own populations and the international community has a responsibility to act whenever governments fail to discharge this responsibility.

In other words, when a state manifestly fails to protect its population, the international community is said to share a collective responsibility to respond.

## Need for a new concept

The 1990s saw a series of catastrophes instigated by states against their own populations in places like Rwanda and the Balkans.

However, it was evident that the international community, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, was unprepared to deal with situations like this. States, including great powers, reacted erratically, incompletely, counterproductively or not at all.

However, these states also faced a dilemma as they could no longer watch another Rwanda-style outrage and continue their claim to be the protectors of human rights.

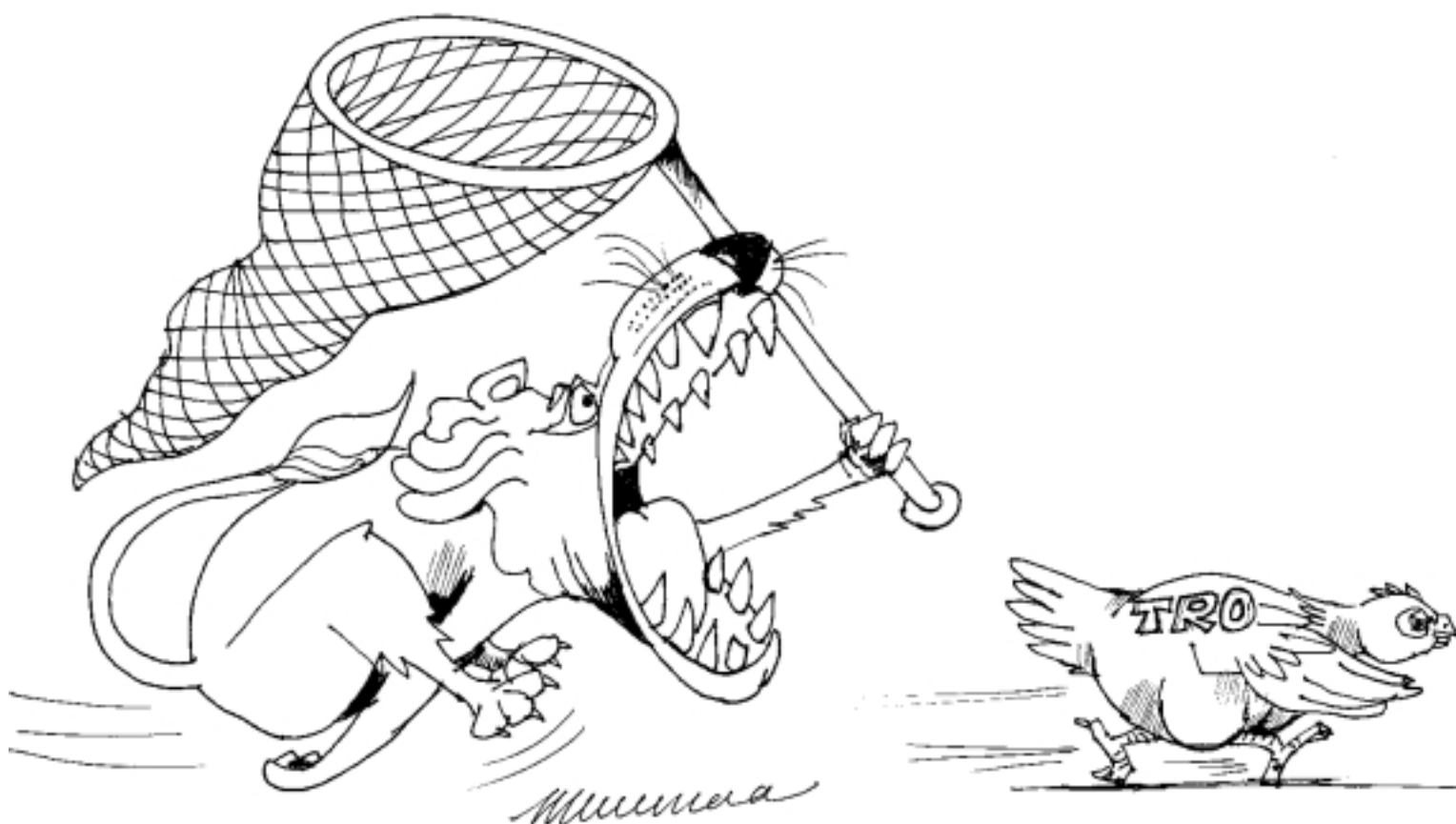
When the genocide in Rwanda occurred the international community did nothing. However, when mass killings seemed likely in Kosovo in 1999, the international community decided to attempt a new tool in its policy box - they called it Humanitarian Intervention.

However humanitarian intervention undermines the concept of sovereignty of the state and thus a foundational principle - at least on paper - of the international system.

A condition of any one state's sovereignty is its corresponding obligation to respect every other state's sovereignty: the norm of



## OPINION



non-intervention is enshrined in Article 2.7 of the UN Charter.

A sovereign state is empowered in international law to exercise exclusive and total jurisdiction within its territorial borders.

Other states have the corresponding duty not to intervene in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.

The international community used to see intervention in the domestic affairs of states as harmful and leading to the destabilization of the order of states.

But the new cause of 'human rights' actually required intervention i.e. the deliberate, collective breaching of state sovereignty.

The R2P concept was aimed at bridging that contradictory gap.

### Support for Sri Lanka

According to International Crisis Group, an influential think tank, the responsibility to protect embraces three specific responsibilities:

- A. The responsibility to prevent: to address both the root causes and direct causes of internal conflict and other man-made crises putting populations at risk.

- B. The responsibility to react: to respond to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures, which may include coercive measures like sanctions and international prosecution, and in extreme cases military intervention.

- C. The responsibility to rebuild: to provide, particularly after a military intervention, full assistance with recovery, reconstruction and reconciliation, addressing the causes of the harm the intervention was designed to halt or avert.

Thus, with R2P, the key emphasis is on prevention.

R2P does not see conflict prevention as a national or local issue

and suggests failure to prevent can have wide international consequences and costs.

However, also according to R2P, preventive measures which do not intrude on sovereignty should be exhausted before intervention is even contemplated.

And the preventive measures prescribed by R2P, unlike humanitarian intervention, actually strengthens the state system by

**Under the guise of capacity building, the Sinhala military was rapidly rearmed, quickly destroying the parity that led to the peace process in the first place.**

assisting in building the state's capacity (including military capability), remedying grievances, advancing good governance, promoting human rights, ensuring rule of law, providing development assistance - and even offering inducements for such good behaviour.

After the ceasefire in 2002, Sri Lanka entered into a new phase in its protracted civil war at a time the international community had come up with this new framework and was looking for likely test beds.

If we review the actions of the international community in Sri

Lanka since February 2002, we can identify the evidence of R2P thinking very much at work.

For example, the international community led by US, EU, Japan and Norway - the Co-Chairs - took a twin-track approach to address the root causes and direct cause of the internal conflict.

'Legitimate Tamil grievances' were identified as the root cause of the conflict and this was why Sri Lanka was pressured to devolve power to Tamils. (We still hear these being urged, somewhat weakly).

However, the LTTE was identified by the international community as a direct cause of internal conflict and from the word go the Western states sought to 'remove this direct cause' by isolating and undermining the organisation.

In contrast to how the LTTE was treated, and as per R2P principles, the Sri Lankan state was radically strengthened.

Under the guise of capacity building the Sinhala-dominated military was rapidly rearmed, thereby quickly destroying the military parity that led to the peace process in the first place.

International funds flowed to the corrupt and racist state in the name of development assistance. (It still, incidentally, continues to do so, albeit in slightly different forms.)

To ensure Sri Lankan state does not go down the route of Serbia, for example, inducements were offered for it to adopt international suggestions for governance reform etc. The Tokyo donor conference pledge of US\$ 4.5 billions should be seen in this context.

Essentially, the international community bribed the Sri Lankan state into not behaving in an uncivilized manner. (The Tamils, however, were not given interna-

tional aid unless they first agreed to behave - by giving up their demand for self-rule!).

### Wrong choice

Unfortunately for the international community, they chose a poor test subject in Sri Lanka.

Abby Stoddard in her book 'Ethnonationalism and the Failed State' says that a failed state

**In other words, for us, the 'Right to Protect' must be something we take up for ourselves, in our own interests - it used to be called the Right to Self-determination.**

results when the leadership and institutions of the state are weakened and discredited to the point where the state can no longer fulfill its responsibilities or exercise sovereign power over the territory within its borders.

This radically weakening of capacity of the state leads to its classification as a failed state.

It should be remembered that the measures prescribed by R2P to strengthen the state considers only weak or failed states that do not have control over their territories and functions.

Measures to advancement of good governance, encouragement

of rule of law and state capacity building will only work if the state infrastructure is weak and the political leaders are unable to execute reforms or prevent mass scale human rights violations.

But Sri Lanka is not a failed state. It is actually a powerful and stable, if racist, state.

The President and the Parliamentary government has the authority and the capacity to impose their will over territory the state controls and the state has firm control over its military.

Thus, and especially when the Sri Lankan state has no manifest interest in liberal values, including the principles of good governance, strengthening it is actually counterproductive.

Indeed, rather than actively working to address the racism that is the root cause of the conflict, the Sri Lanka state is clearly exploiting the military and monetary assistance it is receiving from international backers to advance its genocidal policy.

### No Saviour

However, if the Tamils hope that Sri Lanka's continued intransigence would prompt the international community to switch from 'right to prevent' to 'right to react' and militarily intervene in Sri Lanka to save us, we would be dead wrong.

Unlike Humanitarian Intervention, R2P recognizes that action by external forces in a country facing internal rebellion or secessionist violence could add momentum or 'legitimacy' to those fighting the state - as it has done so in Kosovo.

As a deliberate measure to protect the state system (i.e. prevent new states emerging), R2P proposes that those wanting to help from outside must recognize and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned and confine their efforts to finding solutions within those parameters.

It further adds, even where preventive measures have failed and right to react must be exercised by the international community, the objective should be to not change constitutional arrangements or undermine sovereignty, but to 'protect' them.

It is now impossible to pretend that the 'legitimate grievances' of the Tamils are not rooted in the Sri Lankan constitution, a self-reinforcing ('entrenching') constitution that enshrines Sinhala domination over the Tamils.

However, with the international community set on promoting a framework that protects and reinforces this constitution, Tamils simply cannot hope for a just solution or help from the international community.

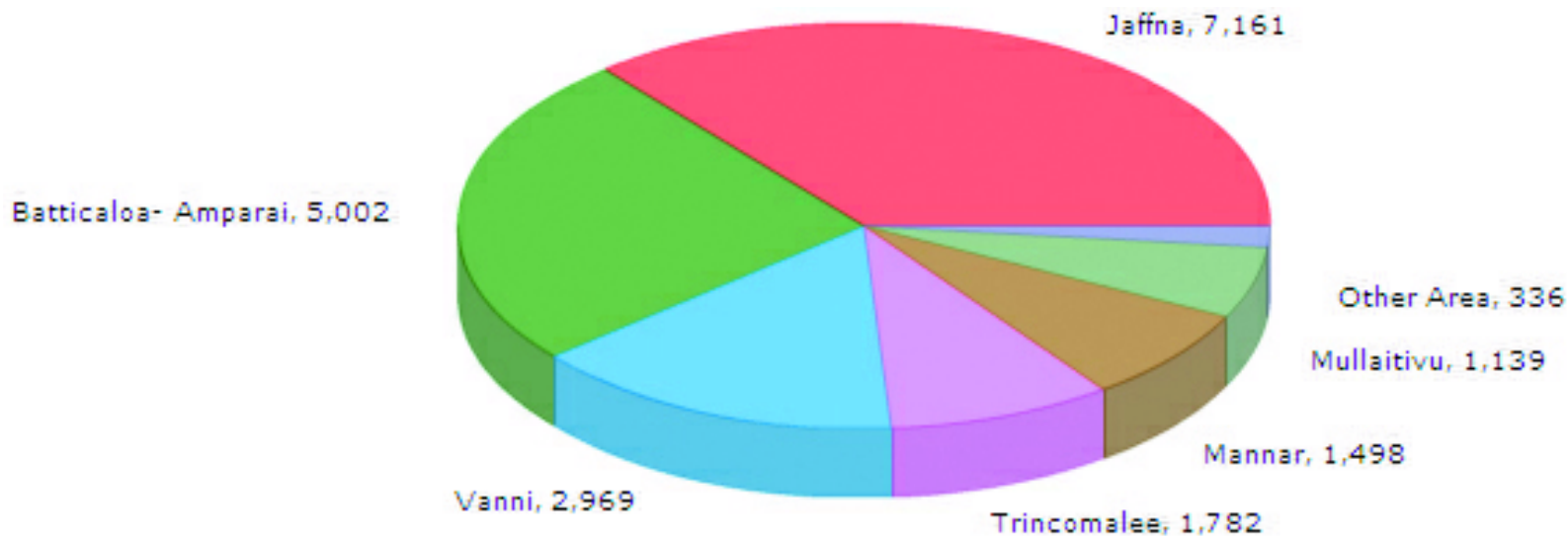
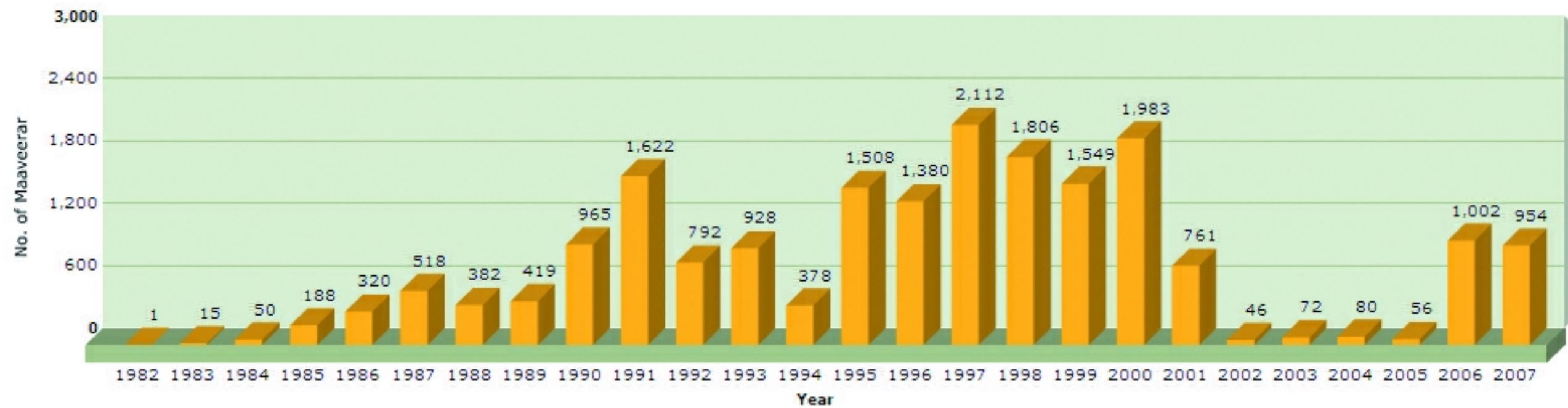
Thus if the Tamils hope for saviours to emerge from over Sri Lanka's borders, they will be bitterly disappointed. This leaves us no choice but to look for our saviours within and not outside.

In other words, for us, the 'Right to Protect' must be something we take up for ourselves, in our own interests.

It used to be called the Right to Self-determination.



LTTE fighters killed in action since 1982



Record crowd at London Tamil Remembrance Day

OVER twenty five thousand expatriate Tamils in Britain gathered Tuesday to mark 'Tamil Remembrance Day' to pay their respects to those who had died in the Tamil liberation struggle.

The event, organized by Tamil National Remembrance Foundation, an association of families of Tamils who had fallen in the Tamil struggle, was held at London's ExCel arena. It was the largest attendance at the annual event, despite Tuesday being a working day, organizers said.

ExCel officials said attendees had filled the 21,000 seats and that several thousand more people arrived at the venue, filing in as others left.

At the start of the event, the mother of a fallen LTTE fighter lit the welcome flame as people took their seats in the hall decorated in the traditional Tamil colours of red and yellow.

The Heroes Day address by LTTE leader V. Pirapaharan was broadcast on large screens.

Attendees observed a minute's silence and thereafter, Mrs. Adele Balasingham, wife of the late Anton Balasingham, the LTTE's political strategist and chief negotiator who passed away last year, lit the flame of sacrifice.

The people then filed past two 'pandals' set up as monuments to place handfuls of flower petals as a mark of respect for those who had fallen in the Tamil struggle.

Large quantities of the Tamil national flower, the karthigaipoo (gloriosa lily) were among the petals, attendees said.

Thereafter they watched a series of Tamil dramas, traditional dances and other cultural events staged by performers in the Tamil Diaspora as well as a number of speeches.

The keynote address was delivered Mr. Suba Veerapandian, a veteran Tamil nationalist politician from Tamil Nadu.

The event was also addressed by three British parliamentarians - Keith Vaz, Virendra Sharma and

Joan Marie Ryan - from the ruling Labour Party. A message of support from another British MP, Simon Hughes of the Liberal Democrats, who was attending his mother's funeral Tuesday, was read out. Mr. Vaz and Mr Hughes head the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils.

A message of support to the Tamil community from the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was also read out.

Mr. Vaz called for a negotiated solution and warned said if the Sri Lankan government continued the war, separation would become inevitable.

"I can totally understand the demand of some Tamils for an independent state. These calls will only get louder and louder unless there is just peace," he said.

Ms. Ryan pointed out that over 70,000 Tamils had died in the struggle. Mr. Sharma said he had long supported the Tamils' demand for their rights.





## FEATURES

# War budget amid economic crisis

**Saman Gunadasa**  
WSWS

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse, who also holds the finance portfolio, presented what can only be described as a war budget to parliament on November 7. (It was passed on Nov 19 with a comfortable majority). Announcing a record allocation on defence spending, he insisted that "protecting the motherland" took priority over other areas of government spending.

Rajapakse is directly responsible for plunging the island back to civil war. Tensions immediately began to rise after his narrow victory in the November 2005 presidential election, followed by open military offensives after July 2006.

In his budget speech, the president openly boasted of "rescuing the entire eastern province, including areas that were in the control of terrorists consequent to the so-called ceasefire agreement through a successful humanitarian operation".

The use of the term "so-called" underscores Rajapakse's contempt for the 2002 ceasefire agreement signed by the United National Party-led government with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). As for "humanitarian"; the military's offensives in the East have killed hundreds of civilians and driven tens of thousands more from their homes.

Rajapakse has made absolutely clear that his government intends to wage an all-out war to destroy the LTTE. Seizing on one of the LTTE's few counterattacks, a raid last month on the Anuradhapura air force camp, he declared: "They [LTTE] will never be ready to surrender arms and agree to a democratic political solution ... we have no alternative but to completely eradicate terrorism."

To wage this war, Rajapakse has increased the military budget for 2008 by another 20 percent to 166 billion rupees (\$US1.5 billion). Since Rajapakse won office, the defence allocation has risen by a massive 265 percent and now constitutes 16 percent of total government expenditure.

Daily spending on the military is \$US4 million, in a country where much of the population is surviving on less than \$1 a day.

In his budget speech, the president said: "The priority that has been accorded to protect our motherland should not be compromised to any challenge." Defence spending is now one and a half times the total spending on public health and education.

On the same day as the budget speech, the armed forces launched a new offensive in a bid to capture LTTE territory in the northern Wanni region. Despite being supported by tanks and helicopter gunships, the government troops were driven back in heavy fighting. Official figures



**Amid soaring inflation Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has been advocating food self sufficiency.** *Photo Sudath Silva.*

put the army's losses at 11 dead and 41 injured, but the actual figures may have been far higher.

In all likelihood, the operation was cynically pre-planned to underscore the budget message. The "Political Column" in last weekend's Sunday Times noted: "Even before the offensive was launched, posters urging the public to forget their mouths and stomachs when troops were on the doorsteps of Wanni appeared in part of the City [Colombo]."

The Rajapakse government is well aware of the mounting public hostility to the war and the resulting economic burdens. While rising world commodity prices, particularly for oil, are certainly a factor, huge increases in defence spending have contributed to soaring inflation that has hit working people hard.

Rajapakse offered a number of cosmetic measures aimed at the deflecting popular anger, but the overall thrust of the budget will deepen the country's economic and social crisis.

An economic columnist for the Sunday Times commented: "The huge war expenditure has been one of the serious financial and balance of payments problems for the country. This is quite apart from the consequences of the war on the economy and the undeniable fact that it is a serious check and constraint on the growth of the economy. The expenditure on hardware and the armed services has had a serious direct damaging impact on the economy in many ways."

The article pointed out that expenditure on the war had contributed to a public debt of 2,607

billion rupees, greater than the country's GDP. The largest allocation in the budget-373 billion rupees-is for debt servicing.

The government has borrowed another \$US500 million on international financial markets at high interest rates that will further increase the debt burden.

Sections of the corporate elite are deeply concerned about the economic impact of the war. The Business for Peace Alliance, a grouping of business chambers, commented: "[The] increase in defence expenditure implies that there will be cutbacks in large-scale investment projects. With the rate of inflation at an unbearable level, such increased expenditure on non-constructive sectors will have a negative impact on the economy."

Inflation has reached to its highest level in 17 years. For the month of October, annualised inflation was 17.7 percent by the Colombo Consumer Price Index and 22 percent by the Sri Lanka Price Index.

Cutbacks in government subsidies have resulted in huge price increases for essential items: a kilogram of flour rose from 39 rupees in January to 65 rupees in September and a popular brand of milk powder increased from 140 rupees in January to 250 rupees in October.

Further fuelling inflation, the government has resorted to running the printing presses to cope with the lack of money in the treasury. In 2006, the Central Bank printed 24.8 billion rupees worth of paper money. In the first quarter of 2007, it printed another 15.9 billion rupees.

The Rajapakse government has repeatedly rejected the demands of striking workers for pay rises to cope with inflation. Government ministers declared there was no money and accused workers of sabotaging the war effort.

In a bid to quell growing anger, Rajapakse announced a limited 375-rupee cost of living increase to monthly wages in January and another six months later. These will quickly be wiped out by skyrocketing prices, as will various small subsidies for the poor.

The president also promised to provide jobs for 15,000 graduates, but offered no details. Last year he announced that the government would provide 10,000 jobs for graduates but only 2,088 were employed.

In the past two months, police have broken up protest marches by unemployed graduates demanding jobs. While Rajapakse boasted that unemployment was now just 6.5 percent, the jobless rate for young people 15-29 years old is 19 percent, forcing many to join the army.

Taxes have been increased substantially.

Economic analyst Harsha de Silva commented in the Daily Mirror: "The only certainty in the budget for 2008 is that it will add further burdens on the people of this country who are already reeling under 22 percent island-wide inflation. The revenue estimates indicate that the total tax on goods and services will increase by a massive 25 percent in 2008. It is no secret that such consumption tax increases will hurt the poor

more than the rich."

Hoping to capitalise on widespread discontent, the opposition United National Party (UNP) declared that it will oppose the budget. For the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), however, the budget created an awkward political dilemma. While demanding an intensification of the war against the LTTE, JVP also postures as a defender of workers and the poor. (On Nov 19 the UNP and JVP both opposed the budget).

JVP leaders responded to the budget with bluster and noisy criticisms. JVP MP Wasantha Samarasinghe declared the party would "bring private sector workers to the streets" because the government had not directed employers to increase wages. Another JVP MP, Lal Kantha, leader of the party's National Trade Union Centre (NTUC), has warned of strikes and protests.

Parliamentary leader Wimal Weerawansa told Rivira that the JVP was not satisfied with the budget because of rising inflation and tax burdens. In the same breath, however, he declared that the "party's decision on the budget will depend on the political issues that have emerged in the country, the war that security forces are waging against separatist terrorists".

He added: "There is no question over the increase of defence expenditure."

Whatever the immediate outcome of the budget debate, the escalation of the island's war and its economic burdens are setting the stage for explosive social struggles.

## FEATURES



Iran is funding Sri Lanka to replace the aircrafts lost during the LTTE attack on Anuradhapura Air Force Base., including the Beechcraft above and UAV below.

# Iran to supply cheap oil and fund Sri Lankan arms purchases

SRI LANKA'S hardline government has approached Iran for a loan to replace aircraft destroyed by the Tamil Tigers in a daring raid last month. Colombo is also asking Tehran for the supply of oil and gas at concessional rates on credit, the reports said.

These requests are expected to be followed up personally by President Rajapakse during a planned visit to Iran shortly.

Iran supplied \$150m worth of arms to Sri Lanka in 2005, barely weeks after the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated the island.

Indian security analyst B Raman, a former additional secretary to the Government of India, writing for the South Asia Analysis Group (SAAG) said last week Sri Lanka has requested Iran, through a Malaysian Muslim of Indian or Sri Lankan origin for an urgent loan at low interest.

The loan is to enable Colombo to purchase trainer and electronic surveillance aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles in replacement of those lost during the recent ground-cum-air attack launched by the LTTE on the Anuradhapura air force base, he said.

The report also said the Sri Lankan government has also requested Iran for the supply of oil and gas at concessional rates on credit.

According to the report, the Malaysian Muslim, who is acting as the intermediary, is a close personal friend of A. Q. Khan, the Pakistani nuclear scientist, and had come into contact with key Iranian officials in the past through A. Q. Khan.

In October this year, the Sri Lankan government extended its support for Iran's ambitions to acquire nuclear technology.

The Islamic republic of Iran, labeled by US president George Bush as part of 'an axis of evil' is under intense pressure from US and European Union over its controversial nuclear programme.

The US and the EU believe that the Iran, a signatory to the

Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is working towards developing nuclear weapons.

The US has seemed to threatened military action against Iran.

However, interestingly, Muhammad Zuhair, Sri Lanka's ambassador to Iran speaking to media in October this year dismissed rumors of a possible US attack against Iran and declared that the United Nations conventions allow Iran to conduct nuclear researches.

Ambassador Zuhair added that at the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse's meeting with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on the sideline of the UN General Assembly in New York that month would pave the way for the further expansion of Iran-Sri Lanka ties.

At the time Zuhair also said that Sri Lanka opposed imposing any new sanctions against Iran. However, the US introduced further sanctions against Iran in November.

This is the second time Sri Lanka has turned to Iran for beef up its military capability. In January 2005, the Sunday Times newspaper reported the purchase of USD 150 million of arms from Iran.

"Sri Lanka will procure military hardware and oil on concessional terms. The deal is said to be worth over US \$ 150 million," the Sunday Times reported at the time.

"The delegation is to take a look at the wide variety of military hardware available. The Army has identified its requirements after a delegation visited Iran earlier. The Navy and the Air Force will check on requirements. Thereafter the tri services procurements are to be incorporated in an agreement," the paper reported.

"This is the first time the Government is turning to Iran for procuring a broader variety of military hardware on a government-to-government basis. A similar deal was finalised last month with China," the paper pointed out at the time.

The first arms deal with Iran

was agreed when then president Kumaratunga visited Iran in November 2004.

The first arms deal between Iran and Sri Lanka was finalized when the then Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga visited Iran in November 2004.

According Sri Lankan government sources President Mahinda Rajapakse is most likely visit Iran after the Commonwealth Heads of State and Government summit in Kampala, Uganda from November 23 to 25.

There were earlier reports in Sri Lanka that the US had requested President Rajapaksa not to travel to Iran.

However, Sri Lankan officials making clear their displeasure at the West for turning the heat on Colombo over rampant Human Rights abuses were quoted as saying: "We know our bread is from the East and that is the new reality."

China, Pakistan and now Iran are amongst the biggest arms suppliers to Sri Lanka. The United States, Britain, Israel and India are amongst the others.

According to the Sunday Times the government sources they spoke to said that though

there was a lot of thunder from the West there was very little rain.

In aid terms US gives about \$5 million per year to Sri Lanka, while the EU extended about Euro 129 million for four years and Britain had given less than two million pounds per year. In comparison Japan gave about \$900 million, China \$600 million and India \$250 million per year.

The US embassy told the newspaper that it "does not discuss private exchanges with other governments, including with our friends. However, our concerns about Iran are well known and with any sovereign government Sri Lanka will make its own decisions about how to conduct its foreign affairs."

Meanwhile, SAAG also reported that Sri Lanka has also requested Pakistan for the replacement of the unmanned aerial vehicles destroyed by the LTTE. Some of the craft lost last month had been given in the past by Pakistan and some others by Israel.

Colombo has also requested China urgently for the latest radar and other air defence equipment, SAAG said.

Pakistani Commandoes from its Special Services Group (SSG)

have been training Sri Lankan Commandoes and some anti-LTTE Tamils in secret training camps in Southern Sri Lanka as a prelude to the expected military offensive in the Vanni region in the north, SAAG also reported.

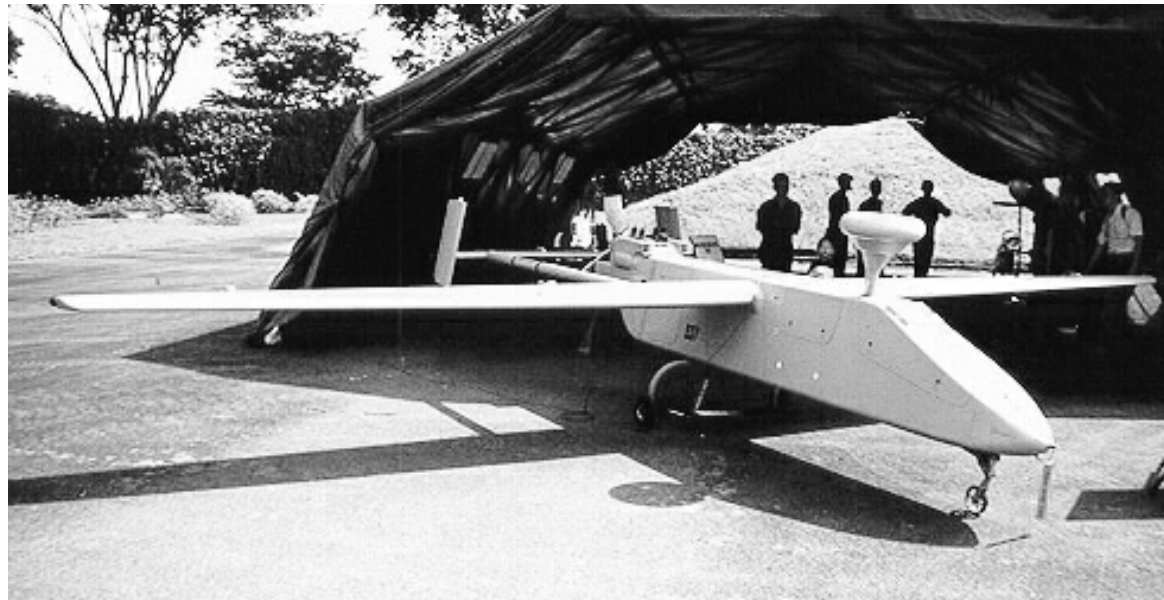
Some of the Sri Lankan commandoes had also been to Pakistan for training in the SSG training institutions.

The Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF), with the help of Pakistani and Ukrainian pilots, has stepped up its efforts for a decapitation strike to kill LTTE leader Vellupillai Pirapaharan, SAAG also said.

"A monitoring station to locate the hide-out of Prabakaran has been set up at an unidentified location in the Eastern Province with the help of Pakistan's Directorate of Military Intelligence (DGMI) to identify [his] location," the report said.

In an interview to the "Sunday Observer" of November 11, 2007, the SLAF Commander Air Marshal Roshan Goonatilleke said that "it was not a difficult task for the SLAF to get at [the LTTE leader] as he was confined to a very limited area."

**Indian concern, page 9**





## FEATURES

# Pirapaharan ...

*Continued from p3*

'War for Peace', 'War against terrorism' and 'War for the liberation of the Tamils'.

The Rajapakse regime assembled its military might and let loose a massive war on the eastern region of our homeland. This part of our homeland became a wasteland after incessant bombing and shelling. Trincomalee, the famous Tamil capital, was destroyed. Batticaloa, an ancient cultural city of the Tamils, became a land of refugees. Jaffna, the cultural centre of the Tamils, was cut off from the rest of the world and turned into an open prison.

The Sinhala State's war of genocide destroyed the peaceful life of the Tamils. It turned the Tamils into refugees in their own homeland, ruined their nation's social and economical infrastructure and plunged them into unprecedented hardships. While our motherland, caught within gruesome Sinhala military rule, is destroyed, Sinhalisation of our historic territory is going on under the pretexts of High Security Zones and Free Trade Zones. This naked Sinhalisation proceeds by the hoisting of Lion flags, the erection of Sidharthan statues, the renaming of Tamil streets with Sinhala names, the building of Buddhist temples. Sinhala settlements are mushrooming in the Tamil homeland.

The unjust war, the economic blockade, the restrictions on our people's freedom of movement, the killing of thousands, the displacement of hundreds of thousands, have all deeply wounded the Tamil psyche. The Sinhala nation is celebrating this tragedy as a victory. It is lighting fire-crackers believing it has defeated the Tamils. The Sinhala military leadership believes that its occupation of the east has been completed and the barbed wire noose around the neck of Jaffna has been tightened. The Sinhala nation arrogantly believes it has manacled the eastern coast from Pothuvil to Pulmoddai. The Sinhala leadership thus believes it has won great victories against our struggle.

The Sinhala nation has always misunderstood our freedom struggle. It consistently underestimates us. Only after carefully scrutinising the global situation and external conditions; only after accurately estimating the strengths and weaknesses of the adversary; only after gauging the enemy's goals and strategies; only after ensuring that we remain focused on our own strategy; only then did we implement our plans to take our liberation struggle forward. We have strategically withdrawn from the east while launching defensive attacks. The Sinhala nation could have learnt the dangers of putting its feet too wide apart in our land as it did during past battles. But the Sinhala military has fallen yet again into the

net we spread and it is now forced to commit large numbers of troops to rule land without people. Caught in a territorial trap, it will soon be forced to face the serious consequences of its misguided ambitions.

Operation 'Ellalan', the very first combined Black Tiger and Tamil Eelam Air Force attack was a massive blow to the Sinhala military. It has disrupted the day-dreams of the Sinhala nation. The Sinhala nation has not emerged from this massive shock delivered by our beloved fighters. The immeasurable dedication and sacrifice of our Heroes is delivering a message to the Sinhala nation. Those who plan to destroy the Tamil nation will in the end be forced to face their own destruction.

The Rajapakse regime is never going to realize that the Tamil national question cannot be resolved by military oppression. The Sinhala leadership is not going to shed its desire for military supremacy or the Sinhalisation of the Tamil homeland. The Rajapakse regime is working hard to import more and more destructive weapons from all over the world without care for the cost. Therefore, it is not going to give up its war of genocide.

The All Party Representative Committee was appointed by the Rajapakse regime to spread a smokescreen over the misery that its military adventures are creating in the Tamil homeland and to deceive other governments to get their aid and support. We clearly predicted this would happen one year ago. We have been proved right. After dragging on without putting forward any solution, the committee has gone on holiday.

The past sixty years have proven beyond any doubt that no political party in the South has the political honesty or firmness in policy to find a just solution to the Tamil national question. It has been also proved beyond any doubt that none of the Southern parties are ready to accept the core principles for a lasting peace: the Tamil homeland, the Tamil nation and the Tamil Right to self determination. The ruling party is adamant on unitary rule; the red and yellow parties are calling for no solution at all; and the main opposition party, somersaulting from its earlier position, is, on the one hand, saying nothing concrete and using evasive language to support the military actions of the government and, on the other hand, saying it supports peace efforts. All this clearly clarifies our point and proves beyond doubt that all the Sinhala political parties are essentially chauvinistic and anti-Tamil. To expect a political solution from any of these southern parties is political naivety.

The Sinhala nation showed eagerness in the peace talks only when we shattered their 'Operation Fireball' military action and made them realize that



the Tigers cannot be defeated. It was only when we proved our military prowess and only when we were militarily in a position of strength that the Sinhala nation signed the ceasefire agreement. Now, with abundant monetary and military aid from several countries, it has rehabilitated its destroyed military and has prepared itself for war again. It is yet again walking the military path having abandoned the peace path.

The Rajapakse regime, after unilaterally abrogating the ceasefire agreement, is ruthlessly implementing its military plan to remove the contiguity of the Tamil homeland. It has killed and disappeared thousands of our people. It reprimands and controls the Norwegian facilitators. It vehemently criticizes the SLMM. It even dares to brand senior UN officials as terrorists in order to hide its own terrorism. It is obscuring the ground reality in the Tamil homeland by striking fear among journalists and NGO workers.

The world's powers, even while taking forward their own geo-political interests, respect human rights and democratic institutions. Be it this universe, human affairs or international relationships, they all revolve on the wheel of justice. That is why nations like East Timor and Montenegro broke free of their subjugation and gained their freedom with the help and support of the international community. Even now, the international community continues to work for the freedom of nations like Kosovo.

Yet the actions of the international community with respect to our own national question are unjust. The confidence our people placed in the international community has been eroded. By only paying lip-service to peace the international community has con-

tributed to the killing of an extraordinary son of our nation, Tamilselvan. It has stopped the heartbeat of a light that walked the path of peace. I will be lighting the lamp for my dear brother, Tamilselvan, who until last year was with me every time we, with a burning desire to reach our goal, lit the lamps for our fallen Heroes. The international community has made the entire Tamil world drown in its tears. Had the international community firmly and unambiguously condemned the anti-peace activities and the war mongering of the Sinhala regime, Tamilselvan would be alive today. A huge blow would not have fallen on peace efforts.

The Co-chairs, acting as the guardians of the peace process, have failed in their responsibility. If the Co-chairs do not have a moral obligation to protect peace efforts, what exactly is the purpose of their meeting from time to time in different places? Is it their intent to assist the Sinhala regime to wipe out the Tamils? Questions like these have arisen in the minds of our people. Our people firmly expect that at least from now on the international community will take a new approach in relation to our freedom struggle. On this sacred day it is the hope of our people that the international community will cease giving military and economic aid to the Sinhala regime and accept the right to self determination and the sovereignty of the Tamil nation.

My beloved people,

We are an ancient people with special qualities. We have a unique national identity and national foundation. We have been struggling non-violently and by armed struggle for a very long time against national oppression. We are not terrorists, committing blind acts of violence impelled by racist or religious fanaticism. Our

struggle has a concrete, legitimate, political objective. We are struggling only to regain our sovereignty in our own historical land where we have lived for centuries, the sovereignty which we lost to colonial occupiers. We are struggling only to reestablish that sovereignty and rebuild our nation. The Sinhala nation is continuing to reject our just and civilized demands for freedom. Instead, it has declared a genocidal war on our land and our people. Behind the smokescreen of fighting terrorism, it is creating immense human misery.

Despite our people enduring injustice and oppression, facing death, destruction and massive displacement, no country, no nation, no international organization has raised its voice on our behalf. We face this situation alone because, although 80 million Tamils live all around the globe, the Tamils do not have a country of their own.

On this day, when we remember our Heroes, I ask the entire Tamil speaking world to rise up for the liberation of Tamil Eelam. I wish to express my love and gratitude to you for your past participation in the building of our nation, bringing together your abundant intellectual, material, monetary and many other resources in the service of our nation and ask that you stand with us in the coming years of our freedom struggle.

Thousands of our fighters are standing ready to fight with determination for our just goal of freedom and we will overcome the hurdles before us and liberate our motherland. On this day when we remember our Heroes who sacrificed themselves for this sacred goal, let each one of us carry their dream in our hearts and struggle until it is achieved.

**London Remembrance, p10-11.**

## FEATURES

# A requiem by Karuna: the death of sub-regionalism?

Shanthi Sachithanandam

Groundviews.org

VAKARAI division, largely jungle tracts crisscrossed with 14 or so villages and little hamlets, situated along the northern border of Batticaloa District. The people of Vakarai are engaged in subsistence farming and fishing, with a small element of those who are traditionally hunter-gatherers.

It was somewhere in December 1995; I was in the middle of conducting a meeting at a village called Paalchenai, in Vakarai, when suddenly a visibly distraught man from the same area burst into our meeting with a tiny transistor in his hand. "Amma, the army has entered Jaffna town," he blurted out.

All of us, the Paalchenai villagers and I, exclaimed in horror. We quickly gathered round him to listen to the news of the conclusion of the first leg of the Riviresa operations that captured Jaffna town.

## Nationalism

Whenever I recollect this incident, I cannot help but marvel at the power of the idea of nationalism that is able to mobilise such a diverse group of communities. There are no perceptible common links between the people of Jaffna and Vakarai in terms of class, caste, kinship, education, traditions or any of the generally referred to classifications based on primarily economic and cultural interests.

Both people would most probably have never visited each others' localities. Yet, there in Vakarai, we saw them join on the basis of a nationality that was under threat of extinction.

But then, mobilising as a nation does not preclude the function of other smaller contradictions within. Take village-based loyalties for instance. This is extremely strong in Batticaloa District, so much so that they invariably change in to hostilities between contending villages.

## Village-based loyalties

The continuing animosities between the adjacent villages of Vantharumoolai and Sittandy, Santhiveli and Kiran, and, Karuwakkerni and Sungankerni, Kinnaiyadi are cases in point.

Conflicts often erupt during temple festivals between inhabitants of the two villages in question over issues of protocols provided for the various clans and other matters. This polarisation is apparent even within organisations and armed groups such as the LTTE. These parochial differences are emphasised and dug up when needed to mobilise support for one-self, win positions of

power or compete for resources.

Similarly, regional sentiments against Jaffna were triggered amongst the Batticaloa middle class, which was reacting to the preponderance of Jaffna Tamils in government positions and also within the bigger trading establishments in the district.

It was ironic that almost everyone who led the anti-Jaffna agitation at that time was from the second generation of Jaffna Tamils settled in Batticaloa. Whatever the social forces at play at its origins, today this situation has been equalised to a great extent.

## Jaffna bogey

Almost all the government officers in the district are locals, and the Jaffna trading establishments have dwindled to only a handful. However, the Jaffna bogey is resuscitated every time the need arises for restricting competition, such as filling vacancies within the Eastern University or gaining recognition as community leaders.

In these situations the antecedents of possible competitors are aired, debated and used effectively to cancel them out in the first round itself.

That is what Karuna did when he felt the need to consolidate unbridled power for himself within the LTTE. He wanted all supervision and control from the north off his back, for which purpose he conveniently used the Jaffna bogey. His claim was that Batticaloa cadres were sacrificing their lives to protect Jaffna.

It is not my intention here to undermine in any way the contribution of Batticaloa cadres within the LTTE. But if at all a study could be conducted to ascertain the percentage of cadres within the LTTE in proportion to the populations of Jaffna, Batticaloa and the Wanni, other interesting facts may emerge.

One guess is that the plantation community that settled in the Wanni during the late 1970s and early 1980s in the aftermath of the communal violence in the South might easily score highest.

## End of Karuna

Be that as it may, Karuna's emotive claim prompted the hierarchy to dispatch him as supreme commander of the Batticaloa-Ampara region with autonomous political, military and financial powers, back in 1999.

The principle underlying this strategy was that Jaffna and Batticaloa each would manage and advance its own army in its own area. Perhaps this move may



Pillayaan (l), has replaced Karuna (c), as the leader of Army-backed TMVP. Photo TamilNet

be termed as the beginning of the end of Karuna, for it was to lead to his ruin.

He amassed huge personal fortune through indiscriminate taxation on farmers, fishermen, traders and liquor dealers; and ensured a percentage cut off every village infrastructure development project in the district.

While the northern command was still engaged in merely exhorting potential recruits and trying to impose regulations for their compulsory services to the LTTE, he introduced the method of blatantly forced abductions.

Mysterious deaths occurred of a few of his insiders who had been identified by the people as being fair minded. Tactics of public relations changed whereby the people were intimidated and suffered extreme humiliation at the hands of his boys. They were so cocky in their boast that there was no appeal beyond Karuna Amman.

## Benefiting Kiran

Although he styled himself as the undisputed leader of the Batticaloa Tamils, it looked like he was concerned only about his own village, Kiran. As they say in Tamil, "A full sized donkey wasting down to become a tiny red ant."

Any government or NGO programme had to benefit Kiran first, no questions asked. A 100 housing project approved for a village called Settiyaar Kudiyruppu was ordered by Karuna to be transferred to beneficiaries in Kiran.

The education community from Santhiveli had lobbied hard to obtain a much-needed additional building for their school.

Karuna arbitrarily decided that this had to be built for Kiran School instead, despite the lack of a real need.

In addition to all this, a 'modernising' Kiran project was also underway. He wanted to bring down houses and temples in an attempt to re-route the Batticaloa Colombo main road through Kiran.

## Drunk with power

It is said that when a president of the board of trustees of one of the temples objected to this plan citing that he as the head of the temple had a responsibility to protect it, Karuna had curtly replied through the mobile phone of one of his assistants, "He may be head of the temple but I am the head of Tamil Eelam." He was so drunk with power.

Due to lack of contacts with rural Batticaloa, the professionals and intellectuals living within Batticaloa town were to a large extent ignorant of the highhanded approaches employed by Karuna, and the gradual 'Kiranification' of his original Batticaloa vision.

Therefore, when he declared his independence from the mainstream LTTE in March 2004, there was an initial jubilation amongst them, which began to taper only when the reality of his necessary collaboration with the army sank in.

Naturally, Batticaloa is not a terrain which can be held on its own. The battle for real estate was in the north, and it transpired that even to secure Batticaloa District, the cadres of Batticaloa had to fight in the north after all.

## Desecration

If we say that the Military

Intelligence tripped a falling Karuna into a coffin, the Sri Lanka Army drove the final nail. As soon as areas of east were captured, they mowed down hundreds of tombs of LTTE cadres both in Vakarai and in Tharavai. These graves were of the sons and daughters of Batticaloa who had fought along with Karuna, for the liberation of their people.

Even as he was instrumental in helping the army to capture the district, Karuna appeared powerless to prevent this desecration. All his tough talk (remember his Derana interview?) and his boast of being able to bring development to Batticaloa ended right there. He was finished. Karuna sang his own requiem.

Therefore, the purported expelling of Karuna from his party, Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) in early October is a mere ritual of a fact that had concluded some time ago.

## The only Leader

Pillaiyan, his deputy who has replaced him, is now busy calling traders, NGOs and others in the districts of Batticaloa and Trincomalee for meetings to explain the present status quo.

"Karuna embezzled money within TMVP. That is the reason for which Thalaivar (Leader) also had to sack him before," he is reported to have said.

Thalaivar? But is that not the term LTTE cadres and other supporters use for Prabhakaran? On being asked for clarifications, he is supposed to have stated, "Then and now and always he is the only Leader (Ore Thalaivar)."

I have always marvelled at the power of the idea of nationalism.



## NEWS

# India hopes for Rajapakse peace offer

IANS

AS Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse begins his third year in office, India is desperately hoping that he will unveil a credible power sharing package to end one of the world's most protracted conflicts.

After two years of escalating violence and many political twists and turns, the optimism in New Delhi seems to be slowly ebbing away vis-a-vis an early negotiated solution.

Although Rajapakse chose India as his first destination after narrowly winning the Nov 17, 2005, presidential election and has visited New Delhi four times, the Sri Lankan leader is not

revealing his cards to the Indian leadership.

The belief is that Colombo understands the seriousness of New Delhi's repeated urgings not to harp on a military solution even as it wins some battles against the Tamil Tigers and not to lose sight of the larger Tamil issues.

As a consequence, India remains firmly supportive of Norway's role as a facilitator in the war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government.

IANS learns that Norway's special envoy to Sri Lanka, Jon Hannsen-Bauer, may visit Colombo in early 2008 to try to take forward a peace process hit hard after the violence of the past two years that has killed thousands.

The intended visit has taken

added importance after a dramatic spurt in tit-for-tat attacks.

On Oct 21, the LTTE dealt a stinging blow when a suicide squad attacked a Sri Lankan Air Force base in the northcentral district of Anuradhapura destroying 10 jets and damaging 14, some beyond repair.

On Nov 2, the air force hit back, bombing an LTTE base and killing among others the group's political chief S.P. Tamilchelvan, the most high profile LTTE leader to die at the hands of the military.

Amid the bloodshed, India and other countries are banking on a positive outcome from the prolonged deliberations of the All Party Representative Committee (APRC), which has been tasked to come up with a power sharing formula that will be nationally acceptable.

But much of the initial optimism has given way to pessimism. Critics say the APRC has become a smokescreen for the government not to do anything beyond paying lip service to a negotiated solution to keep donor

countries in good humour.

And even as the military prepares for a major push against the LTTE in the north, the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the main opposition United National Party (UNP) are draggers drawn, spiking a possible chance of their coming together to evolve a consensus on devolution of power.

## Much of the initial optimism has given way to pessimism

Some feel that if the APRC fails to come up with a just resolution of the grievances of the minorities, it will only prove that the ethnic conflict cannot be settled from within the island nation.

Sri Lanka has also come under intense attack from domestic and international rights groups and Western countries over the large-

scale unaccounted killings as well as disappearances in the country.

N. Manoharan, an Indian scholar on Sri Lanka, says that while Rajapakse has taken some positive measures since coming to power, much of it has been negated by his own actions.

'Convening the APRC was a good move. But then came his own party's (widely criticised) devolution proposals and attempts to sideline the APRC,' Manoharan, from New Delhi's Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, told IANS.

'Another good move by the president was the idea of reviving a bipartisan consensus between the SLFP and the UNP on the ethnic conflict,' he said. 'Again that got negated when the president poached MPs from the UNP.'

Colombo is optimistic that it can bring the LTTE to its knees by attacking the Tiger-held north. But the LTTE is confident of resisting any military challenge. 'So there is no possibility of a negotiated settlement, at least for one or two years,' Manoharan said.



India has supplied Sri Lanka's military with arms including this ship, the flagship of Colombo's navy

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