

Curse of being people of a lesser god

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UK backs Sri Lanka's war, says LTTE must change

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Kosovo Albanians rally for an immediate declaration of independence in Pristina on 10 December 2007. Several thousand Kosovo Albanian youths demonstrated in Kosovo's capital to press their leaders to follow through with promises for statehood - which the ethnic Albanian majority has been demanding since a brutal Serbian crackdown in 1999. Kosovo's leaders said Monday they would start immediate talks on independence from Serbia and EU nations backed their cause as a UN deadline ended for a negotiated settlement. Kosovars, assured of staunch US support and a promise of recognition from all but one EU country, reveled in hopes that a decades-old dream may finally be within reach despite fierce opposition by Serbia and Russia. See report on page 2. Photo Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP/Getty Images

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NEWS

Euphoria in Kosovo

International Herald Tribune

THOUSANDS of wildly cheering pro-independence demonstrators marched through Kosovo's capital as a sense of euphoria swept the breakaway province preparing to gain statehood early next year.

Kosovars, assured of staunch US support and a promise of recognition from all but one EU country, reveled in hopes that a decades-old dream may finally be within reach despite fierce opposition by Serbia and Russia.

"Independence means so much to us. It means a new identity and a new future for Kosovo," said Agim Kastrati, a 19-year-old law student who marched through Pristina on Monday demanding a declaration of statehood early in 2008.

EU foreign ministers meeting Monday in Brussels, Belgium, said they had "virtual unanimity" on recognizing Kosovo's eventual independence, with Cyprus the sole holdout.

And Kosovo's outgoing prime minister demanded an "immediate and permanent" conclusion to the ethnic Albanian majority's drive for statehood - a quest that led to the 1998-99 war with Serbia and spawned nearly a decade of political and economic limbo under UN and NATO administration.

"No more delays. No more deals," said rally organizer Burim Balaj, as 3,000 demonstrators outside parliament set off firecrackers, waved US and Albanian flags and held posters that read: "Independence is the only option."

"UCK! UCK!" the crowd shouted back, using the Albanian acronym for the now-disbanded Kosovo Liberation Army, or KLA, which fought former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's troops in a conflict that claimed 10,000 lives.

Yet the celebratory mood was tinged with uncertainty. Some wondered whether the seemingly imminent birth of a nation will reignite ancient ethnic hatreds and thrust the Balkans into a new cycle of bloodshed.

NATO, which maintains 16,000 peacekeepers in Kosovo, has boosted street patrols in a show of force aimed at discouraging extremists on both sides of the ethnic divide.

"I don't believe it's possible for Serbs and Albanians to live together peacefully," said Mimoza Sejdiu, 24, an ethnic Albanian at Monday's rally. "I don't see a common future as citizens of one country."

In a sign of underlying tensions, Kosovo police said that over the weekend, unknown assailants tossed a bottle of flaming liquid into a vacant house owned by Serbs in the town of Gnjilane southeast of Pristina and sprayed this menacing message: "Death to Serbs."



Disputed territory: Kosovo is planning to declare independence, disregarding Serbian objections

Former KLA rebels are believed to have stashed away huge caches of rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons in Kosovo's forests and in their own backyards. More than 500,000 handguns alone remain in circulation, according to UN estimates.

Serbia, which has offered Kosovo broad autonomy but insists the province remain part of its territory, has threatened economic blockades, and some officials have even hinted that Belgrade might resort to force to retain what many Serbs see as the cradle of their civilization.

In a provocative move seen as a fresh territorial claim, Serbia's minister for Kosovo, Slobodan Samardzic, opened a branch office in the ethnically divided northern city of Kosovska Mitrovica - long a flashpoint for violence.

Russia, Serbia's No. 1 ally, has threatened to veto any move by the UN Security Council to sign off on statehood. Moscow contends independence for Kosovo would encourage separatists in Chechnya, Georgia and elsewhere to break away.

"This will trigger a chain reaction in the Balkans and in other areas of the world," Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned Monday during a visit to Cyprus, itself a divided nation.

But Washington signaled anew that it was ready to recognize an independent Kosovo, raising the likelihood of a showdown when the Security Council takes up the issue on Dec. 19.

"Over the next few weeks, the United States will work closely with our international partners to resolve this issue. The people of Kosovo and the region urgently need clarity about their future," US State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos in a statement.

In the past four months of talks, negotiators from the US, EU and Russia explored "every

realistic option for an agreement and, in their words, 'left no stone unturned' in the search for a mutually-acceptable outcome," Gallegos said.

Although Kosovo's leaders have vowed not to declare independence without US and European Union approval, government spokesman Skender Hyseni said a declaration was "not an issue of if, but when."

Officials suggested it would come sometime in January or February. That would start a 120-day internationally supervised transition, during which the US and other countries would recognize the new state and the UN would hand off administration to the EU.

In an interview with The Associated Press, outgoing Prime Minister Agim Ceku pledged "our commitment to multi-ethnicity, our commitment to democracy, our commitment to international supervision of independence, our commitment to international partnership and our commitment to a European future."

"Serbia has a choice: Going into the future together with us, or going back to the past alone. We hope that they will make the right choice," said Ceku, who is preparing to hand over power to former rebel leader Hashim Thaci.

Diplomats said recognition likely would come in waves, with the U.S. and key European powers such as Britain, France, Germany and Italy among the first. The Baltic countries and Scandinavia would be in a second wave, and most of the rest of the 27-nation bloc would follow in a third wave, officials said.

In Brussels, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the EU must find unity fast.

"Kosovo is in Europe's backyard, and it's absolutely vital that there is a strong European commitment," he said.

NEWS

Why Sri Lanka remains unbothered by international criticism

THE Sri Lankan government remains unperturbed despite severe criticism from U.N. representatives who had visited the island and confirmed the large-scale violation of human rights against Tamils, because it continues to receive military and monetary aid from those who actually condemn the human rights violations.

That was the criticism against international donors leveled by the Liberation Tigers' Political Head, Mr. B. Nadesan, Monday in his speech marking International Human Rights Day.

Declaring that the human rights violations by government forces in Tamil areas was nothing short of a "systematic genocide of the Tamils," Mr. Nadesan called upon the International Community to use "severe pressure" against Colombo to put an end to the flagrant violation of human rights.

Events to mark the International Human Rights Day in Vanni were organized by the NorthEast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR) at the Kilinochchi Cultural Hall on Monday. Rev. M. X. Karunanandam, head of NESoHR presided over the function.

Addressing the well-attended gathering, Mr. Nadesan recalled that the Tamils were a distinct nationality in a separate nation before the colonial powers, at last the British colonialists, with their military might attempted to forcefully integrate Tamils with the Sinhalese. The aggression and genocide Tamils face today was an aftermath of this futile exercise, he said.

"After the British left in 1948, all the basic tenets of the Tamil nation - the right to language, culture, education, livelihood and even the citizenship of Up-Country Tamils - were denied, and the simmering discontent over the denial of human rights has transformed into a major liberation struggle today," Nadesan said.

He pointed out that Tamils were stripped of all their fundamental rights following the anti-Tamil pogroms orchestrated in 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983; and when they demanded their legitimate rights through peaceful means, the GoSL unleashed genocide on the Tamil people.

"In SLA-controlled areas in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Jaffna, and Mannar, Human Rights violations have blown-up to such a massive proportion that it is nothing short of a systematic genocide by the GoSL to completely eliminate all the Tamil people," Nadesan declared.

The everyday occurrences of abduction, killings and disappearances have made these human rights violations appear commonplace, he added.

Pointing out that the human

rights violations against Tamils were not restricted to SLA-controlled areas, he said that even in Vanni, school students, places of worship, religious leaders and innocent civilians were indiscriminately killed through Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombings and landmines.

He labeled the denial of basic survival needs such as food and medicine to the Tamils as an extreme instance of human rights violation and added that the armed struggle spearheaded by the Tigers sought to put an end to this.

The LTTE political head also sought to expose the double standards of the Sri Lankan state: on the one hand, the SLA was responsible for civilian disappearances; on the other hand, the GoSL acted out its "concern" for human rights in the U.N. General Assembly. He noted that this mask had been torn due to the international community's condemnation of the human rights violations unleashed on the Tamils by the GoSL.

He said that the GoSL was unperturbed despite severe criticism from U.N. representatives who had visited the island and confirmed the large-scale violation of human rights against Tamils. Their pleas to put an immediate end to the killing of Tamils had fallen on deaf ears.

The GoSL has "never bothered about verbal concerns expressed by the International Community" and added that the continuing killings and abductions were testimony to this. Because the GoSL continued to receive military and monetary aid from those who actually condemned the human rights violations, it continued to behave in this manner.

He noted that there were countries that continued to support Sri Lanka even though the GoSL had unleashed on the Tamils all the human rights violations that were mentioned in the United Nations Charter on Human Rights (UNCHR).

He also pointed out that it was easy to condemn Human Rights violations, whereas it was difficult to actually put an end to such behavior. The International Community should seriously reconsider its approach towards Colombo.

The International Community should have immediately recognized the legitimate struggle of the Tamils, if it was genuinely interested in human rights.

He called upon the Tamil people to struggle to win their rights and pointed out the example of America, Vietnam and South Africa where the people managed to attain freedom through a long and laborious struggle.

"Today, we the Tamil people have been denied all rights. We have rallied together to fight for our rights. It shall be the duty of the International Community to recognize our struggle," he added.



President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his wife met the Emperor Komatsu Akihitho and Empress (top) and visited the Yomizu Dera Temple at Kyoto (above) during their visit to Japan. Photo Sudath Silva

Japan to keep up Sri Lanka aid despite rights concerns

JAPAN'S Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda said on Monday Tokyo would continue to offer economic assistance to Sri Lanka despite the suspension of some U.S. and British aid this year over human rights abuses in the continuing civil war.

Japan is the single largest donor to Sri Lanka, and provides nearly two thirds of all international aid to the island.

It has contributed 63 percent of total bilateral aid received by the country since 2003.

Fukuda was speaking to reporters alongside visiting Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa after the two leaders held talks.

Earlier in the day, Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura told Rajapaksa Japan would approve 1.9 billion yen (\$17 million) in grants-in-aid to Sri Lanka this week, Kyodo news agency said.

"I conveyed to the president Japan's intention to cooperate for

peace in Sri Lanka as well as economic development," Fukuda told reporters.

Last week Amnesty International criticised Sri Lanka's government for violating the human rights of thousands of Tamils who were arrested days after two bombs exploded in the capital Colombo in late November.

Japan has repeatedly said will it continue to give aid to Sri Lanka despite the country's failure to address the spiraling human rights violations.

When asked about spiraling human rights violations, Mr Yasushi Akashi, Japan's special envoy, said on June 9 at the end of a four day visit to Sri Lanka that "these certainly did not accord with the 'values of a civilized society', but it was natural that these values sometimes suffered and were likely to be given 'second place' in a country fighting terrorism".

Last week the Japanese Prime

Minister stated that already large scale development projects were seeing the light of day in Sri Lanka and Japan was happy about the cooperation between the two countries in this context.

The visit of the Sri Lankan President to Japan he felt was a step forward in strengthening the friendly ties between the two countries, he further observed.

Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa thanked Japan for standing steadfastly by Sri Lanka on achieving peace and the development of the country.

Sri Lanka in its turn was rejecting full-scale war but was combating terrorism and was on the look out for a peaceful settlement to the existing conflict, he said.

Sri Lanka is a country that has always safe guarded Human Rights and will remain so in the future protecting democracy and human rights unreservedly, President Rajapaksa said.

NEWS

15,000 stripped of livelihood in Batticaloa hinterland

TamilNet

HALF of the affected agriculture-dependent families in Batticaloa district are from Paduvaankarai region, where the major cultivable land of the district, is situated.

Forced to flee their paddy fields, standing ripe and ready for harvest, the families who returned under the Government of Sri Lanka's (GoSL) resettlement, could only witness the remains of the properties and livestock that had been looted by the Sri Lankan forces.

Although four months have elapsed since their resettlement, the GoSL has not provided any assistance to the farmers to resume paddy cultivation.

The predicament of paddy farmers, Thambimuttu Koneswaran from Kokkaddichchoalai and Karthigesu Nadesan from Eachchantheevu area are typical of the travails faced by the agricultural community in Batticaloa. Both had to flee their villages during the Sri Lanka military offensive and were later resettled.

Speaking to TamilNet, Thambimuttu said, "I have been a farmer all my life and I have no other means of income. All my resources have been destroyed. I am left with no options. Sometimes, I think of committing suicide."

Despite Colombo's rhetoric of "development" and the claims of "liberating" the East from the "clutches of the Tigers", the military offensive has only brought misery to the families of the once self-sustained agricultural society of Paduvaankarai region.

"Incessant shelling by SLA in my native village of Kokkaddichchoalai in the early part of this year made us flee our homes. I fled to Batticaloa with my wife and children. We left behind all our belongings. For a short period, we stayed in an interim camp

for the Internally Displaced People (IDP), where we faced much hardship. Later, we were resettled in Paduvaankarai."

"A tractor, motorcycle, plough and many implements required for paddy cultivation left behind in my home in Kokkaddichcholai had all been looted. Every season I used to cultivate about ten acres but now I am not in a position to cultivate even one acre single-handedly."

"When I returned home, I saw policemen moving about on my motorcycle. I approached them and told them that the vehicle belonged to me, but they refused to return it. Now I am pushed to the plight of being totally at the mercy of others."

This situation is not restricted to Paduvaankarai alone, it is a true reflection of the predicament of all the farmers in the Batticaloa district.

Another farmer from Eachchantheevu area, Karthigesu Nadesan describing his plight said, "everyone in this area depends on agriculture, directly or indirectly. All of us have been severely affected because of the mindless military offensive."

"Since I have been resettled here recently, a number of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have come forward to assist us. But the local officers harass us in various ways: they demand us to bring our refugee cards, they ask us whether we own land [elsewhere] and order us to become stay here permanently."

"When military offensives take place it affects all of us. Why do these officials not understand this? We have lost all our valuable property because of displacement, will they be able to compensate our loss in this regard? Will they give it back?"



"Tractor, motorcycle, plough and implements required for paddy cultivation had all been looted"

"When we were resettled, they supplied us just sugar, rice and flour. How long will these last? Only if we resume cultivation in our paddy fields, we will be able to meet our needs and eliminate our hunger and starvation," the enraged Karthigesu fumed.

The sentiments expressed by Koneswaran and Nadesan are echoed by scores of other farmers in the region.

Paduvaankarai region comprises three DS divisions and parts of Eeraavoorpattu Chenkaladi division, with 20,000 families dependent on agriculture.

More than 15,000 families have been directly affected by the military offensives of SLA. Since the two seasons of paddy cultivation (Maha and Yala) had to be abandoned in the region, there has been an acute shortage of paddy seeds seriously hampering paddy cultivation in the current season.

Even though four months have elapsed since they were resettled, the GoSL has not taken any steps to promote cultivation in the area. The farmers in the district complain that they are going to face huge losses because they could not cultivate either in last

year's Maha season (the principal cultivation season; October to March) or in the Yala season (subsidiary cultivation season; April to September) this year.

When contacted by TamilNet, officials of the Department of Agriculture in Batticaloa said that usually 100,000 acres of land are cultivated during the Maha season alone. They also confirmed the acute shortage of paddy seeds in the area because no cultivation had been carried out in the past two seasons.

One official added that various NGOs such as World Vision, Eastern Human Economic Development (EHED), International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), SLRCS, OXFAM, Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA) and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) have come forward to assist the people resettled in the area.

"These organizations provide Rs.4000 worth of paddy seeds, fertilizer and insurance per acre. They help each farmer cultivate up to three acres and so far 11,000 farmers have benefited," he pointed out.

Asked about the assistance provided by GoSL, the official said that steps have been taken to provide fertilizer through the Agricultural Department for a subsidized rate of Rs. 350 as against the rate of Rs. 2,600 in the open market.

However he pointed that there are certain restrictions for being eligible to receive this subsidized fertilizer. A farmer applying for such assistance should possess his own land, he must have been resettled in this area and should also provide the necessary particulars to prove that he was displaced from another area.

"Nearly 40,000 acres of land has been cultivated during the Maha season," he added.

From data provided by Agriculture Department officials, paddy can be cultivated in a total of 58,374 hectares (144,184 acres) of land in Batticaloa district. Out of these 49,339 hectares (121,867

acres) of land is meant for high land crop cultivation.

During Yala season cultivation, water required to irrigate the paddy land was obtained from lakes in the areas such as Unnichch-ai, Vaakaneari, Urukaamam, Thumpangkeani, Kiththulvela, Kadumurivu and Kadukkaamunai. According to the 2004 annual report, 40,000 families directly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.

Responding to a question regarding livestock, an official said, "Steps to provide livestock through NGOs have been taken." He added that statistics of farm animals that were killed had not been compiled so far.

The district's population relies on agriculture, fishing and related occupations for its survival. The military aggression in the area has totally ruined their livelihood, representatives from various civilian groups said.

Even under normal circumstances, heavy rainfall, blazing heat and cyclonic winds often hamper their means of earning their livelihood. The situation has further deteriorated due to military offensive by SLA and all their resources have been lost, they lamented.

Apart from some support from international NGOs, there has been no Sri Lankan state allocation of compensation or relief except a small subsidy towards the cost of fertilizer. The recent budget passed in the Sri Lankan Parliament has also failed to allocate compensation to the resettled farmers.

Paduvaankarai region, with Poaratheevuppattu, Manmunai West and Manmunai Southwest, remains out of humanitarian focus unlike Vaakarai, a show-off area for Colombo - which has only a fraction of the entire district's affected agricultural families - that the Rajapaksa government exhibits to visiting foreign diplomats to make them believe the eyewash efforts of Colombo investing in "development" after "liberating" the area from the Tigers.



'Liberated' Tamils in the east continue to suffer from lack of access to their lands, villages and schools

NEWS



The Sri Lankan soldiers escort journalists through Jaffna, but talking to the 'happy locals, fed by supplies flown in' is not allowed. Photo Pedro Ugarte / AFP / Getty Images

A flying visit to Jaffna

An inside look at the northern peninsula - from outside

Stefan Smith
AFP

THE air force pilot takes no chances landing on the Jaffna peninsula, the northern tip of Sri Lanka held by the government but cut off from the south by Tamil Tiger territory.

Descending fast from over the Indian Ocean, the Russian-made transport plane banks hard, its wing almost clipping the jungle canopy below. Flares pump out the back to fool any heat-seeking missile.

Upon landing, it is the army's turn to take no chances -- this time with foreign journalists flown in to be shown how the government is winning both the war and the hearts and minds of Jaffna's "liberated" Tamils.

To keep the press on-message, private conversation with the locals was strictly prohibited.

But what the army did deliver was a slick slideshow and sweet tea and biscuits, stomach-turning photos of alleged victims of the Tamil Tigers and heart-warming

video clips of delighted and supposedly local school children.

"As you can see, these children are very happy, because they have been liberated from terrorism," an officer said, reading from a script within a bunker complex.

An easy-listening piano score provided the soundtrack to today's Jaffna peninsula, home to around 600,000 ethnic Tamils and their 38,000 ethnic Sinhalese guardians.

It's a happy place - according to the army - even though the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are only down the road, and even though rights groups speak of a place of fear, murders and disappearances.

The officer confirmed that outside his huge military base there was a 9:30pm to 4:30am curfew, but added that this was of no nuisance whatsoever to the locals "who are normally asleep at that time."

"Anyone who wants to move

around after curfew is a robber or a terrorist," he said.

A request for an unaccompanied trip into town did not go down well, with the army warning the LTTE would kill AFP's journalists and blame the government.

Instead, a trip was permitted in the army's transport of choice: a thick metal box on a truck chassis where the only view of the supposedly delighted locals was through tiny holes shaped for muzzles of assault rifles.

Providing the escort was a 130-kilogram (290-pound) major, who looked like he could snap a man in two with his bare hands. He was backed by a contingent of troops, each with a gun, flak jacket, helmet and nervous grin.

In Jaffna city, the town commandant provided another exhaustive list of LTTE crimes and violations of a now-dead 2002 ceasefire -- ranging from blowing civilians to bits to preventing children from going to the library.

"But we have ourselves a victory in winning hearts and minds," said Jaffna's boss, Brigadier Ruwan Kulathunga.

The only slight impediment to this, he said, was the fact that almost none of the troops on the peninsula could speak the local Tamil language.

A trip into town was next on

the tour, with the burly major offering to find "happy local people" who are fed by supplies brought in by plane and ship.

However, a brief moment of relative privacy was to be found with a Tamil shopkeeper who spoke some German: "It's terrible here. Everyone is scared. I can't talk to you," he said hurriedly, before ducking back into his store.

Two men also whispered "Prabhakaran!" - the name of the leader of the LTTE who was born in Jaffna - as they passed by and were out of earshot of the troops.

Informed of this later, one of the army escorts explained that "hardcore terrorists" were still around.

"What did they look like?" he asked.

According to Sri Lanka's hardline defence secretary, Gotabaya Rajapakse, there is little point talking to the locals anyway.

The press is also banned from travelling to the LTTE-held north.

"You will hear complaints about disappearances," he said in Colombo, the capital.

"What they won't say is that these so-called missing people are terrorists who may have died on the frontline or are in LTTE territory."

So with local people off-limits, a trip to the frontline was pro-

mised -- only to be refused after another bruising ride in the metal box on wheels across the 50 by 30 kilometre (30 by 19 mile) part peninsula held by the government.

But Brigadier Kamal Gunaratne, in charge of the front, said his men had "extremely high morale" and the LTTE fighters "know they are losing" after 35-years of a separatist war that has left 60,000 dead.

With at least one soldier for every 50 metres (yards) of main road, the LTTE would certainly have a tough time recapturing the Tamil heartland they lost in 1995.

"At the rate we are going, I think that in about two to three more years we'll be able to bring them to the negotiating table. First we have to eliminate their leadership," Gunaratne said.

A trip to the rich fishing grounds south of Jaffna town, just three kilometres from LTTE territory to the south, was allowed after negotiation.

There, the lagoon is lined with barbed wire and more soldiers camped out in the ruins of beach-front villas.

No fishermen were to be seen, and the only sound was the lapping of waves, the thump of outgoing artillery, and the distant rumble of explosions in the Tamil Tiger-held jungle across the bay.

EDITORIAL

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Sign of the Times

The international community mistakenly hopes war will bring peace to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's war might be an 'internal' conflict, but it has long had plenty of international participants, with the state enjoying the active support of both regional and international allies in its efforts to destroy the Tamil rebellion against Sinhala hegemony. In the past thirty years, the Sri Lankan armed forces have been able to inflict unspeakable atrocities on the Tamil people with little more, in effect, than occasional murmurs of discomfort from the international community. The anti-Tamil pogroms of the first three decades since independence gave way, once the Tamil militants emerged in the early eighties, to massacres, extrajudicial killings, torture and rape of Tamils by the Sinhala military. Once the militants established liberated zones where the Sinhala government's bloody writ no longer ran, blockades and indiscriminate bombardment became a norm. The relationship between Tamils and the state, long defined by inexorably deepening Sinhala racism and exclusion, thus became one of violence: oppression by the state and resistance by the Tamils.

Whilst this is the lived experience of the island's Tamils - a third of whom have been driven from their homes, either internally displaced or refugees abroad, by the state military - the international community insists on a different interpretation of the dynamics. It is not oppression, but merely poor governance, they say. Ethnic tensions stem not from state-institutionalized racism, but underdevelopment and competition for resources. So whilst the international community accepts the Tamils have 'grievances', there is a different view of what these are. In other words, there is, crucially, a different take on what the root causes of this conflict are. This difference will have profound implications for Sri Lanka. As it has done for the past so many years, it will continue to perpetuate and intensify the conflict. This is because international policy prescriptions and actions will, instead of attenuating tensions and creating the conditions for ethnic equality and thus peace, instead continue to support Sinhala dominance and oppression which will, in turn, fuel Tamil resistance. Sri Lanka is far from the cataclysmic violence of Iraq. But there is no reason to assume the present cyclical dynamics, boosted by international action, will not eventually take the island there.

Amid a view that sees underdevelopment, rather than state racism as fuelling ethnic tensions, the international solution is inevitably more development and, therefore support for the Sri Lankan state. This approach automat-

ically defines the Liberation Tigers simply as a security problem, an obstacle to development and thus to peace. This thinking - the security-development nexus - has emerged in the past few years as an operating principle of Western intervention in third world conflict zones. The Sinhala state has exploited this theory to enlist the international community's support in crushing the Tamil rebellion and consolidating its hegemonic project - for example in colonizing the Tamil homeland (in the guise of 'development') and greater repression of the Tamil community (in the cause of establishing 'security').

Moreover, today, the conflict in Sri Lanka has been misrepresented as simply one of extreme and unbridgeable demands - the Sinhala ultra-nationalists insisting on a unitary state on the one hand and the LTTE demanding an independent state on the other. But the cry for Eelam came well before the LTTE's armed struggle. It emerged in the mid-seventies under the electoral banner of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), which swept the Northeast in the 1977 elections on a vow to pursue Tamil independence. Crucially, the demand for Eelam emerged (by way of an initial demand for federal self-rule) in response to the very reasons it, and support for the armed struggle, have intensified since: deepening Sinhala oppression and escalating state violence.

International policy

Earlier this week the outgoing British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Dominick Chilcott, explicitly set out the international community's present stance on Sri Lanka. The Sinhala state is not racist, but simply needs to do more to protect human rights, he said. Britain will "help the Sri Lankan government find the way forward to peace and development." Crucially, he stated, there is no need for the Sri Lankan state to negotiate with the LTTE. Instead, it must work with Tamil 'moderates'. By moderates he means the paramilitaries who have been collaborating with the Sinhala state's oppression and the politicians who, after the LTTE is destroyed, will be compelled to accept whatever the Sinhala state tosses their way.

Mr. Chilcott suggested Britain's experience in Northern Ireland had bearing on Sri Lanka's conflict. But it should be recalled that the IRA's struggle was against British rule, (not the Loyalist community). In other words, what is today called the Northern Ireland 'peace process' is actually negotiations within the region which began after the

core issue - the end of British rule - had been agreed in principle. Those familiar with Northern Ireland also know full well the role of the British state in pressuring the recalcitrant Loyalists into going along with this decision. Lessons for the Tamils, certainly, but not those Mr. Chilcott intends.

Last month twenty five thousand British Tamils joined the rest of their community around the world in remembering those who have fallen in the Tamil liberation struggle. They did so despite widespread fear and terror (characteristics, incidentally, which Mr. Chilcott attributed to the LTTE's rule) stemming from the British state's banning of expressions of support for the LTTE. Their protest underlines the groundswell of Tamil support for self-rule, for independence. This insistence for Eelam is not some romantic whim, but a longstanding expression of rejection of Sinhala rule. Moreover, the LTTE is not the architect of this demand, but has, perhaps inevitably, become the vehicle for its delivery.

The Sri Lankan state will draw encouragement from the reiterated British support and intensify its war against the LTTE. Like Mr. Chilcott, we will not speculate on military matters, but note that there will either be a just peace or none at all. We can safely predict the intensification of Sinhala domineering and racism in the coming years. Confident the Tamil rebellion can be crushed, the Sri Lankan state will destroy the vestiges of communal amity and polarize the island's communities, ironically laying the ground for furtherance of the LTTE's project. Indeed, the greater the state's efforts to secure a military project, the further away from communal harmony the island will slide. As for the violence, it will not simply end. As Mr. Chilcott himself pointed out, "even if the LTTE are badly beaten, the conflict will continue in a different guise." A glance around the world's present hotspots indicates Sri Lanka's future.

In the meantime, it is a pity that Mr. Chilcott had nothing charitable to say last week about the hundreds of thousands of Tamils who have settled in UK and count themselves British citizens. Their High Commissioner spoke only of law and order problems, of asylum problems, of overstayed visas. He could have talked about the massive contribution British Tamils make to the UK's National Health Service, about the community's economic successes and its unique contribution to multicultural Britain. It is possibly a reflection of the amity between the Sinhala state and Britain that such matters were not worthy of his mention.

OPINION

UK: 'No intervention in Sri Lanka'

Suren Manoharan

Tamil Guardian

THE British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Dominick Chilcott, said Monday that President Mahinda Rajapakse must make an offer acceptable to moderate Tamils because the LTTE would not accept a negotiated solution within a united Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chilcott accepted, however, that the President had to be able to "sell the solution" to the majority Sinhalese. The international community has no plans to intervene in Sri Lanka to exercise the responsibility to protect, he further said.

Mr. Chilcott was speaking at the Dudley Senanayake Memorial Lecture, his final public appearance before his posting as number two in the British mission in Washington early next year.

He said Sri Lanka's conflict had "made waves in UK" such as the arrival of more asylum seekers and law and order problems, including Tamil gangs and extortion by the LTTE.

"I don't believe the aim of the government's devolution offer should be to put something on the table that will engage the attention of the LTTE," he said.

"We shall continue to take steps against the LTTE in the UK, to prevent public demonstrations of support for the LTTE and to disrupt fund-raising."

"We shall continue to fund our modest peace-building strategy projects in cooperation with the Sri Lankan authorities to help address the underlying causes of the conflict," he said.

"We shall work with our partners in the international community to maintain our constructive engagement with Sri Lanka, despite all the frustrations."

Below are extracts from Mr. Chilcott's speech in Colombo:

Internal events in Sri Lanka affect Britain. The conflict here makes waves in the UK. For example, as the conflict worsens, we get more asylum seekers from Sri Lanka. It becomes more difficult to manage the movement of people between our countries. More Sri Lankans try to get into the UK illegally. The numbers of those overstaying their visa also increases.

We suffer other law and order problems associated with the conflict in Sri Lanka. LTTE fundraisers extort money from Tamil business people. There are Tamil gangs fighting one another on the streets of London. British politicians, particularly those in constituencies with large South Asian populations, become concerned about human rights violations, the creation of new refugees and the overall suffering of the people caught up in the conflict. They debate the issues in Parliament and demand action from the

British government. South Asian affairs have become very much part of British political life.

So for those reasons, as well as others, Britain has a direct interest in the end of the conflict here and the establishment of a fair and lasting peace.

But how Sri Lanka's conflict affects Britain is only one example of how humanity is becoming more inter-related and more inter-dependent.

Last month, Britain's new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, identified six new global forces, unique to our generation, which showed humankind's growing interdependence. These six forces were: violence and instability in fragile states; the spread of terrorism and the risk that terrorists could acquire destructive weapons; global flows of capital and global sourcing of goods and services; climate change; global pandemics such as Avian flu; and world-wide migration.

In case any reassurance is needed, let me say immediately that the international community has no plans to intervene in Sri Lanka to exercise the responsibility to protect. The government here is quite capable of carrying out that responsibility for itself.

We should see fewer attempts to demonise UN agencies, NGOs and their staff on the basis of wholly unsubstantiated allegations. For example, the government should make clear it does not support the JVP's campaign against UNICEF.

Similarly there should be no further equating support for human rights and the rule of law with support for the LTTE.

This is a particularly ironic position, in any case, as the LTTE show no understanding of human rights norms and they rule by fear and terror. Being critical of the government's record on human rights does not mean you support the LTTE. For the record, let me say again, the British government, which outlawed the LTTE in 2001, unreservedly condemns the LTTE's terrorist activities.

If this calmer and more rational atmosphere is achieved, it should be possible for the parliamentary committee, the APRC, to produce its final report on devolution.

In the end, of course, what matters is what the President is prepared to endorse. After all, he has got to sell any new arrangements to the South. And, just as importantly, for the proposal to be credible, he has to ensure that it appeals to moderate Tamil opinion.

I say moderate Tamil opinion because I don't believe the aim of the government's devolution offer should be to put something on the

table that will engage the attention of the LTTE.

Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader, dismissed the idea of negotiations with the government in his 2006 Heroes' Day speech when he said the LTTE was "not prepared to place (its) trust in the impossible and walk along the same old futile path".

In the present circumstances, I see little prospect of the LTTE responding to anything from the government that did not offer them separation. It would be nice to be proved wrong on that but I don't expect to be.

I have serious doubts as to whether the LTTE leadership would be sincere about reaching a negotiated settlement that reinforces democratic values within a united Sri Lanka. They have never accepted that anyone else should be able to speak for the Tamil people, a fundamentally anti-democratic position.

But unless and until they embrace democratic, non-violent methods, they will exclude themselves from any future peace process.

This year, Prabhakaran's Heroes' Day speech was critical of the international community for not putting more pressure on the government over its share of responsibility for the suffering of the Tamil people in the conflict.

It is not a baseless charge.

But Prabhakaran conveniently ignored the international community's wish to see movement from the LTTE on the key issues of democratisation and the pursuit of political goals through non-violent means.

Let me be clear. I am not saying that the political aspiration for

Eelam is illegitimate, any more than I would argue that the Scottish National Party's goal of an independent Scotland is illegitimate. Similarly, I see nothing illegitimate in some crackpot demanding that Yorkshire or some other English county should become an independent state.

What is crucial, however, is what methods are used by the SNP or the LTTE to achieve their goals. And the LTTE's methods are simply unacceptable.

It follows from the fact that I believe the government offer on devolution should be addressed to moderate Tamils that I don't believe that a future peace process should be based on talks exclusively between the government and the LTTE.

Obviously, such bilateral talks are probably necessary to arrange a cease-fire. But the political process needs to be more inclusive and also more demanding of the participants.

The government has the right to take steps to defend itself against the threat posed by the LTTE. It is not realistic to expect that an organisation like the LTTE could co-exist peacefully alongside or within a democratic society. That situation is inherently unstable. The LTTE has to change its ways.

If there has to be a fight, and given the LTTE's attitude to democracy and peace negotiations it is hard to see how one is avoidable, then it should be fought in a manner that minimises the suffering of civilians.

I cannot tell whether the government armed forces are capable of defeating the LTTE on the battlefield. But Iraq, Afghanistan,

Northern Ireland and plenty of other conflicts tell us that winning the peace is more difficult than winning the war.

Without resolving the underlying issues, even if the LTTE are badly beaten in the Wanni, the conflict will continue in a different guise. The social and political issues, which caused the alienation of so many Tamils in the first place, cannot be left unresolved if there is to be a lasting peace.

The British government would like to continue to help the Sri Lankan government find the way forward to peace and development.

We shall continue to take steps against the LTTE in the UK, to prevent public demonstrations of support for the LTTE and to disrupt fund-raising.

We shall encourage the government to come forward with a suitable proposal on devolution and to that end share our experience of devolution in Britain with people here.

We shall promote the safeguarding of human rights and the rule of law as key elements to finding a solution, not as problems to be by-passed.

We shall continue to fund our modest peace-building strategy projects in cooperation with the Sri Lankan authorities to help address the underlying causes of the conflict.

We shall work with our partners in the international community to maintain our constructive engagement with Sri Lanka, despite all the frustrations. It is important that the EU and the Commonwealth should have sensible policies towards Sri Lanka.



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FEATURES

Canada getting tough on Sri Lankan human rights abusers?

Sri Lankan military personnel under focus for abuses.

Stewart Bell
National Post

HE lives on a suburban street in Ajax in a two-storey brick house with a double garage and fruit trees in the garden.

The quiet neighbourhood east of Toronto is worlds away from the civil war Raja Kasturiarachchi left behind when he moved to Canada after retiring from the Sri Lankan National Police.

But if he came to Canada to escape the past, he hasn't.

The Canada Border Services Agency says it intends to deport Mr. Kasturiarachchi because he was complicit in war crimes.

As a former Sri Lankan police chief, the CBSA says, Mr. Kasturiarachchi is to blame for "systematic" and "widespread" abuses committed by the force "on a regular ongoing basis."

The case is one of several that suggest Canada has adopted a new hardline approach against those involved in Sri Lanka's bloody civil war - regardless of which side they were on.

While the government has long fought to prevent the Tamil Tigers from using Canada as a safe haven, it is now extending the same treatment to members of the state security forces.

"The CBSA strives for a fair and consistent application of the law," said Anna Pape, a CBSA spokeswoman.

"Cases where there is evidence of crimes against humanity must be pursued, no matter the perpetrator." Those war crimes continue.

Last week, a bus travelling in territory held by the Tamil Tigers was ripped apart by a mine, killing 11 school children. The Tigers blamed the Sri Lankan Army.

On Wednesday, a female suicide bomber detonated her explosive-filled bra near a government minister. He survived.

A second rebel bomb exploded outside a department store in the capital, Colombo, killing 16 civilians.

The violence prompted Maxime Bernier, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to call on both sides in the conflict "to respect international human rights and humanitarian law" and protect civilians.

The civil war reverberates in Canada because of the estimated 200,000 Sri Lankans who have resettled here since the fighting broke out, most of them in Toronto.



Sri Lankan armed forces personnel have been accused of "systematic" and "widespread" rights abuses. Photo STRDEL/AFP/Getty Images

Most are ethnic Tamils and many are at least sympathetic to the Tamil Tigers guerrillas fighting to create an independent state in Sri Lanka's north and east.

When the deputy leader of the Tigers was killed last month, Canadian Tamils (and Liberal members of Parliament) attended a large outdoor rally in Markham.

Last week, events were held around Toronto to mark Tamil Heroes' Day, which commemorates the anniversary of the first Tamil Tigers suicide bombing.

The Canadian government has been cracking down on the Tigers.

The Conservatives placed them on Canada's list of designated terrorist groups last year, and the RCMP raided their suspected fundraising fronts and arrested several Tamils accused of trying to buy weapons for the guerrillas.

But a review of cases that have come before the courts since last year shows the government has also been quietly going after members of the security forces, barring them from entering Canada, refusing to give them visitor's visas and even deporting them.

Even Sri Lankan police officers are now considered war criminals.

"Earlier they were taking a hard line on the army or navy," said immigration lawyer Kumar Sriskanda, who is representing Mr. Kasturiarachchi.

"But in this case, the new development is they are taking a hard line on the Sri Lankan police force."

In a similar case, the CBSA is trying to revoke refugee status from former Sri Lankan police officer Indrabalan Ratnasingam, who entered Canada in 1996, on the grounds he was complicit in war crimes.

The Federal Court ruled against the man last month.

Another recent case involves a Sri Lankan Army officer who was denied entry to Canada because he was found complicit in "grave" human rights abuses and the use of torture as an investigative technique.

Sujeewa Jayasinghe had applied for a visitor's visa at the Canadian High Commission in Sri Lanka.

His wife had immigrated to

Canada and she was expecting. He wanted to be present for the birth.

But when the Canadian immigration officer found out that Mr. Jayasinghe had served in the army, and that he had interrogated and killed people suspected of being Tamil Tigers rebels, she refused to give him a visa.

The shift in Canada's approach comes as human rights groups are reporting mounting abuses by the Sri Lankan security forces, such as disappearances, torture and the killing of journalists and foreign aid workers.

Fred Abrahams, senior emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch, said while his group condemns the Tamil Tigers, also known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, it is also troubled by the deteriorating conduct of the government security forces.

"Our concern over past two years is that the government has stooped to the level of this very abusive group, meaning the Tigers," he said.

Mr. Abrahams co-authored a report on human rights in Sri

Lanka issued in August and is preparing to release another this month on the more than 1,000 disappearances that have occurred in the country in the past 18 months, mostly in areas under government control.

Toronto resident Naithan Vaitilingam says he experienced the brutal conduct of the security forces first-hand.

He was returning to his home in the government-controlled city of Trincomalee in 2005 when he was stopped at a checkpoint.

A group of men he believes were Sri Lankan Army personnel (because they were standing near an army checkpoint next to an army truck) asked him his ethnicity. "I told them I am Tamil," he said.

They then attacked him with a knife and left him to die on the road with stab wounds in his head, leg and hands.

His sister arranged to get him to a hospital in Colombo, where he spent the next nine months and had three operations before coming to Canada in June, 2006.

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FEATURES

Curse of being a people of a lesser god

Even Tamils who have lived in Colombo for many years have started to panic

Arthur Wamanan and Kshanika Argent
The Sunday Leader

THE fear that gripped the Tamil community in Colombo had only just begun to wane after a decline in the number of abductions when the indiscriminate arrests of over 2000 Tamils following the twin bombs in the city and a suburb, shook them to the core.

The cordon and search operations carried out last week in the city and the suburbs came as a surprise not only to the Tamils, but to people of other ethnicities as well.

The Tamils in the capital faced similar problems when bomb explosions were a part and parcel of Colombo life a few years ago.

The Tamils were therefore to heave a sigh of relief when the Ceasefire Agreement was signed five years back.

And a return now to the days of horror where an average Tamil would spend time at police stations to get themselves registered for police reports, has caused a despondency never before seen.

Last week's roundups and indiscriminate arrests have created fear not only among those who were arrested and packed off to the Boossa camp in Galle, but also every Tamil citizen who had come from the north east.

While several human rights activists raised concern over the arrests and detention of Tamils, the government claimed it was not targeting any particular community and the operations were merely for the protection of all citizens.

Panic stricken

However, these actions by the government purportedly to safeguard the city of Colombo and its people has only resulted in a large number of panic stricken Tamil parents and relatives from the north and upcountry rushing to Colombo to search for their loved ones and make sure they were safe.

M. Gnanapragasam was one of those anxious parents who had to come to Colombo from Mannar when he heard that his son was taken into custody.

The 57 year-old father from Murunkan, Mannar was waiting for his son, Anthony Lonson Gnanapragasam (22) who had come to Sri Lanka from Malaysia.

"He has been there for the last

six months and had arrived in Sri Lanka the previous day," Gnanapragasam said.

He added that his son had arrived with two other friends and the police had arrested two of them.

"His friend who was not arrested phoned us as soon as this happened," he said.

Anthony Gnanapragasam was arrested when he was on his way to Gunasinghapura bus terminal to board a bus to Mannar to visit his family.

Gnanapragasam told The Sunday Leader his son possessed all the necessary documentation that a Tamil is required to possess in case the police checked him.

"He had his national ID and his passport. I don't know why he was arrested," the father said.

His search for the whereabouts of his son was also futile, as he could not be traced anywhere.

Meanwhile religious workers were trying to help put families back together. Robina Paulin, is a Sister at the Holy Cross Church, Mannar.

She, together with another person from the church had rushed to the Boossa camp, scoured the premises at the Welikada prison, and other likely areas, to no avail.

"We could not locate Anthony anywhere. However, we are continuing to look for him," she told The Sunday Leader.

Parents' worry

Says Gnanapragasam, "My main worry is that we will be unable to find him though we know he has been arrested by the security forces. All I want to know is whether he is doing alright. I will do anything to get him out when I know where he is," Gnanapragasam added.

Gnanapragasam is not alone. His story unfortunately resonates among hundreds of other Tamils now in a desperate search for their kith and kin.

Certainly this issue brings into sharp focus the veracity of the government's claims as to the numbers arrested.

Chief Government Whip, Minister Fernandopulle said in parliament on Tuesday that 2184 persons were arrested and 1800 were released.



Protestors, including TNA MP R Sampanthan (right), seek UN assistance to release arrested Tamils

However on the same day at a press briefing, the Minister was to change his calculations and state that more than 2500 were arrested and around 2300 had been released.

"We don't know how many have been arrested and whether my son has been taken anywhere else," Gnanapragasam said.

Contradictions

Convener, Civil Monitoring Commission, (CMC), Mano Ganesan told The Sunday Leader that government statistics on the number of persons arrested were contradictory.

"The figures given by Minister Fernandopulle in parliament were different from what he said at the press briefing on the same day. Likewise, the Human Rights Ministry has a different number and the police have a different number," he said.

He said the parents whose children were arrested were feeling helpless as many people had gone missing during the arrest.

Seventeen Tamils from the upcountry were released last Thursday reducing the number in custody to 185.

Minister Fernandopulle last

week also said that 100 of the 185 were under detention orders and that some of them had connections with the LTTE.

Gnanapragasam told The Sunday Leader his son had been in Malaysia for six months and had been working in a shop.

"He was never involved in any illegal activities," he said.

Gnanapragasam also said that his anxiety about his son was similar to that of a parent whose son was abducted.

"I don't know where he is," he said.

Abductions?

The fact that Anthony Gnanapragasam could not be located anywhere has also led to widespread speculation that some of the Tamils had been abducted during the roundups.

"I have my doubts. I think that certain people used this opportunity to abduct some people. The government has paved the way for them to do this," said Ganesan.

Ganesan called upon the police to release the names of those who were arrested, detained and those released.

"The government has said that

some of those arrested have been detained, and others discharged. This information is only in numbers. We call upon the police to immediately release the names and other details of those who have been arrested, discharged and still detained to avoid confusion among the family members."

While Gnanapragasam was worried about his son's whereabouts, Selvam Leelawathi was in a better position as she had met her son, Selvam Thushara in Boossa.

He was taken by the security forces from a lodge in Kotahena where he had stayed with his mother for the last one and a half years.

"We are from Ariyalai, Jaffna. I came here with my son to send him abroad. He had all the necessary documents, including the police report. I don't know why he was arrested," she said.

She added that she was relieved to see her son in Boossa.

"But I prefer that he is with me. I want to know that he is alright. I don't care whether he goes abroad or not. He has respiratory problems at nights. I want to be near him," she said.

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CULTURE

An introduction to Auvaiyar's Vinayagar Agaval

Culture Editor
Tamil Guardian

THE Vinayagar Agaval ('Song of Vinayaga') is a stunning example of Tamil sacred poetry. It is thought to be the greatest poem of the Chola era poet Auvaiyar, written shortly before her death.

The Chola dynasty, which emerged around the ninth century, went on to rule most of South India for the next four hundred years. The Cholas presided over an important renaissance in Tamil literature, art and architecture, particularly temple construction.

The name Auvaiyar has been given to a number of important female poets, of whom three in particular stand out as literary giants. Whereas Auvaiyar I lived in or around the early 1st century CE, it was Auvaiyar II of the medieval Chola period who wrote the Vinayakar Agaval. Auvaiyar II gained recognition in her life time as a court poet of the Chola monarch and as sometimes a peace envoy between warring states.

Among the Tamils of Sri Lanka Auvaiyar II is best known for her children's poems, which take the form of proverbs and instructions in ethics, and which are taught almost universally in kindergarten and primary schools in present day Tamil Nadu and Tamil Eelam.

Nevertheless, it is her less widely taught ode to Vinayaga, that stands out as one of the most important poems of classical Tamil. The Vinayakar Agaval remains one of the simplest and most accessible sacred poems in the vast collection of ancient Tamil literature and is hence chosen for our introduction to this subject.

"Agaval" is a form of blank verse, close to speech, but often lost in translation is the natural succinctness and rhythm of the Tamil language. Auvaiyar's poem is a journey through the Tamil devotional tradition known as "Bhakti". It begins with contemplation of the external form of the God and continues as an exposition of ancient Hindu spiritual belief and practice.

Auvaiyar follows the "Saivite" tradition of Hinduism, centred around the God Shiva, which is most popular in the Dravidian cultures of Southern India and Tamil Eelam. By contrast, the Vaishnavite tradition, following Vishnu (and his incarnations as Krishna, Rama etc) are popular in Northern India. There are also some sects that follow principally Durga (the mother).

And so, in keeping with traditions of Saivite sacred poetry the Vinayagar Agaval begins with contemplation of the jewelled feet of the god:

*Cool, fragrant lotus feet
with anklets tinkling sweet,*

The feet are a symbol of grace. One may see this poetic tradition of praising the feet also with the 7th century Sivapur-anam, which emphasises throughout that the presence of the God is felt on earth through the imprints of his feet. Without beginning with the earthly shadow or foot print of the God one may not aspire to understand his totality.

Yet even in the first few lines, the philosophical references of Auvaiyar's exposition are often lost in the translation from Tamil to English.

*seeta kalabhach chentaamarai
poovum
paathai chilambum pala isai
paada*

"cool earth (sandal paste), red lotus feet" is seen as a reference to the Muladhara or "Earth Chakra", Vinayagar's abode within the human body. Vinayagar is considered to sit at the gate of the Earth (Muladhara) Chakra, protecting us from the lower worlds beneath, represented by the lower chakras, the Hindu equivalent of hell. For a description of the Chakras, please refer to the section "Mystic References in the Agaval".

"anklets, which sing many notes" is seen as a reference to the concept of the primal sound or vibration of the universe, which precedes the material world, and which is also embodied in Vinayagar. And so one sees that Auvaiyar's poem is a many layered experience of philosophical concepts brought to life via devotional poetry.

The Vinayagar Agaval swiftly moves beyond contemplation of the feet to adoration of the face and body of the God.

*gold girdle, flower-soft garment
setting off the comely hips,
pot-belly and big, heavy tusk,
elephant-face with the bright red mark,*

The story of how Ganesha acquired his elephant face is one of the staples of Tamil children's fables. It is so well known that we have omitted it here.

The elephant symbolises strength and intelligence, the white elephant being a symbol of purity and luck. The birth of a white elephant was said to bring a period of plenitude and abundance for a whole nation.

But the images of the gods are constructed upon deeper symbolic significance. The God Ganesha (Vinayagar) is considered the personification of the material universe, which is contained in his belly. "The universe in all of varied and magnificent manifestations is nothing other than the body of this cheerful and portly God" says Subramuniya Swami

in his book on Ganesha. And we will see later in the poem a play upon the material universe as the womb of the God.

*five hands, the goad, the noose,
blue body dwelling in the heart,
pendulous jaws, four mighty
shoulders,
three eyes and the three required
marks,
two ears, the gold crown gleam-
ing,
the breast aglow with the triple
thread,
O Being, bright and beautiful!
Wish-yielding elephant, born of
the
Master of Mystery in Mount
Kailasa,*

When the Agaval refers to the five hands of Vinayaka, this includes the four hands and the elephant's trunk, which is curved to form the sacred symbol Aum (see also the section Physical Symbolism of the Body of Ganesha) The motion of the hands also has symbolic significance, representing the creation, preservation, destruction of the world and two further states of hidden grace and revelation.

Vinayaka as the God most closely connected to (or containing) the universe is bountiful, the "wish yielding elephant", who bestows success and abundance and averts obstacles and calamities. Vinayaka is customarily invoked at the beginning of new enterprise and for guidance in worldly matters. Mount Kailasa is of course the home of Siva, referred to here, as the master of mystery.

But Auvaiyar now moves away from contemplation of external form and the material universe into her metaphysical journey.

*mouse-rider, fond of the three
famed fruits,
desiring to make me yours this
instant,
you like a mother have appeared
before me
and cut the delusion of unending
births.*

In Hindu theology as in Buddhism, the goal of the sequence of birth and deaths is to merge with God.

And so above, Ganesha who holds the universe in his womb, cuts the umbilical cord that binds the soul of the poetess to the material world, and frees her up to gain union with him. It is worth noting that the Hindu Gods do not strictly have gender, encompassing both the male and female principles. There is a female version of Vinayaka in the scriptures and so Auvaiyar's reference to the mother is not the radical departure from tradition that it has sometimes been made out to be.

*You have come and entered my
heart,
imprinting clear the five prime
letters,*

*set foot in the world in the form of
a guru,
declared the final truth is this,
gladly,
graciously shown the way of life
unfading.*

Auvaiyar restates the general belief in Saivite Hinduism, that Vinayagar, the God of wisdom and all beginnings is also the foremost teacher on the spiritual path.

*With that unfailing weapon, your
glance,
you have put an end to my
heinous sins,*

The glance of the God is also called Darshan (or grace). In the bhakti tradition there is much emphasis on physical sight: the presence of a sacred person or idol is considered to be purifying. So Auvaiyar says that the mere glance of Vinayaka purifies her of sin

*poured in my ear uncloying pre-
cepts,
laid bare for me the clarity
of ever-fresh awareness,
sweetly given me your sweet
grace
for firm control of the senses five,
taught how to still the organs of
action;
snapped my two-fold karma and
dispelled
my darkness, giving, out of grace,
a place for me in all four states;
dissolved the illusion of triple
filth,
taught me how to shut the five
sense gates of the nine-door tem-
ple,
fixed me firm in the six yogic cen-
ters,*

The "clarity of ever-fresh awareness" refers to the state of pure awareness that is the objective of meditation. Auvaiyar describes the process of meditation as the shutting of the five senses, and the awakening of the chakras. The nine door temple is the human body, which is considered to have nine apertures (eyes, ears etc).

The four states are waking, sleep, dream and turiya (or pure consciousness gained in meditation). The 'triple filth' or triple impurities are described in the 500 AD work, Thirumantiram, as egoism, illusion and karma. It is the wheel of Karma which ties Auvaiyar to this world and this is now snapped, freeing her.

The two fold Karma refers to the classification of Karma in Hindu scripture as on the one hand Karma of all the accumulated past, and on the other the Karma that is manufactured instantaneously in the process of living, and which will manifest as future lives.

Alternatively the Karmas are classified as those which are begun or undertaken (arabdhya) and those which are latent, in seed form to appear later (anarabdhya).

The six yogic centres are the Chakras, there being six which

are above the Muladhara, which represent the higher states of consciousness, the Muladhara or abode of Vinayaga being the dividing point between the higher and lower worlds. In Hindu mysticism, heaven and hell are hence states of consciousness.

*stilled my speech, taught me
the writ of ida and pingala,
shown me at last the head of
sushumna.
To the tongue of the serpent that
sinks and soars
you have brought the force sus-
taining the three
bright spheres of sun, moon and
fire --
the mantra unspoken asleep in the
snake --
and explicitly uttered it;
imparted the skill of raising by
breath
the raging flame of muladhara;*

In the stanza above the poetess explains further her experience of the physical yoga tradition, which is first mentioned in the circa 3000 year old Rig Veda texts.

She refers to the energy centres of the body and energy rivers ("Nadis") such as the Ida and Pingala. She talks of wakening the "Kundalini" energy source, which is symbolised as a coiled serpent at the base of the spine. The rising of the Kundalini, its "sinking and soaring", achieved through meditation and physical yoga, signifies spiritual awakening. For an explanation of the Nadis and the Kundalini, please refer to the section entitled "Mystical reference in the Agaval".

The "skill of raising by breath" is the art of Pranayama, the yoga discipline of breath control. Pranayama is complementary to the much more commonly practiced physical yoga of Asanas (or postures).

Again, Pranayama is considered to be an important technique for awakening the Kundalini.

*explained the secret of immortality,
the sun's movement and the
charm
of the moon; the water lily's
friend,
the sixteen states of the prasada
mantra;
revealed to me in thoughtful wis-
dom
the six-faced form and the mean-
ings four;
disclosed to me the subtle body
and the eight separate modes of
being;
the orifice of Brahman opened,
giving me miraculous powers,
by your sweet grace, and mukti,
too;
revealed my Self to me and by
your grace
swept away accumulated karma,
stilled my mind in tranquil calm
beyond speech and thought;
clarified my intellect, plunged me
in bliss which is the common
ground*

CULTURE

The symbolism of Vinayaka



A DETAILED exposition of the sacred symbols associated with Vinayaka is given by Swami Subramuniya in his modern classic "Loving Ganesha" (Himaayan Academy Press).

Vinayaka has 108 names including, Ganesha and Ganapati ("Lord of the Ganas or hosts" in Tamil) and Pillaiyar ("Sacred Child" in Tamil).

There are 32 forms of Ganapati in various colours and postures, with differing numbers of arms, holding different symbols. Shown below, for example is 'Bhakti Ganapati' where bhakti means devotion.

Of the many symbols associated with Vinayaga here are a few mentioned in the Vinayagar Agaval:

The Elephant Head

The elephant is also the symbol of the stage when existence begins: the "unmanifest". Whereas in contrast the human part of Vinayaga is what can be physically seen.

The Trunk

Similarly the trunk is often curved in the shape of the symbol Aum, which is the vibration that existed before the manifest universe. Aum precedes both human thought and speech.

The Stomach

Vinayaga's stomach contains the material universe as we know it. It represents abundance.

The Tusk

The single tusk on the face stands for single pointed concentration and focus considered an essential quality of the mind.

The broken tusk in his hand is a writing implement, in keeping

with Vinayaga's role as the patron of literature and the great scribe. Vinayaga, as the scribe, is said to have written down the Mahabharata epic for the blind poet Vyasa.

The Mouse

The mouse represents the all pervasive, all knowing nature of Ganesha: it can carry him into every corner of the mind. The other Gods have mounts which symbolise speed. Ganesha is slow but diligent.

Three Eyes

Vinayaka's three eyes include the two physical eyes that we see with, but also the third spiritual eye located in Hindu mythology on the forehead of all beings, human and otherwise. With the third eye one sees the reality behind the seeming.

The Noose

Swami Subramuniya says of the noose "Loving Ganesha's provident mind, like the noose, draws close those He loves most dearly and reaches out to encircle and save strayed ones in extraordinary ways."

The Goad

Swami Subramuniya says of the Goad, "Loving Ganesha's deliberate mind prods dullards on in their birth karmas whenever they tarry, with His ankusha He goads forward all souls that are moving too slowly."

The Fruits

The fruits represent the earth's abundance and fertility and also the sharing of these. Ganesha generally holds a whole variety of other sweet things, representing the sweetness of life: rice pudding, modhaka balls.

of light and darkness.

The lines above reiterate concepts from previous verses, but include references from earlier and older works from the Tantra and Saiva Siddhanta.

In Saivite beliefs, spiritual awakening, leads to immortality and miraculous powers. The term Siddhanta is also connected to the term "Siddhi", meaning miraculous gifts and so the Siddhanta is the discipline of awakening these gifts.

Hence the eight modes are thought to be the eight Siddhis or miraculous powers gained through the awakening of the Kundalini as described in the Tirumantiram text dated circa 500 AD.

We should note that Auvaiyar throughout uses the language of

"gift" as opposed to that which is acquired or earned. Wisdom, clarity, bliss, eternal life: these are all gifts of the God

Auvaiyar's poem remains in essence devotional, born out of her experience of the divine. And so the poem continues:

*Boundless beatitude you have given me,
ended all affliction, shown the way of grace:
Siva eternal at the core of sound,
Siva linga within the heart,
atom within atom, vast beyond all vastness,
sweetness hid in the hardened node.
You have steadied me clear in human form
all besmeared with holy ashes;
added me to the congregation
of your servants true and trusty;*

*made me experience in my heart
the inmost meaning of the five letters;
restored my real state to me;
and rule me now, O Master of Wisdom,
Vinayaka. Your feet alone,
O Master of Wisdom, Vinayaka,
your feet alone, are my sole refuge.*

Like all great poems, the Agaval speaks to us on many levels. Written at the culmination of her life, this, Auvaiyar's last work, speaks to us of an old woman's readiness for death.

Yet it speaks with gratitude and wonder of the poetess's journey through life, seen as a gift from the God, testifying to the completeness of the poetess's human experience.

Simultaneously it celebrates a

new birth, her emergence from the womb of the God who holds the material universe in his belly. She speaks explicitly of her new immortality, of her experience of her real state, of Siva within the eternal sound, of bliss at the boundary of darkness and light.

Although the individual may die, the soul having merged with the cosmos does not. Interleaved within the poem is the presence of Vinayaka, the breath taking God of new beginnings.

Unlike the ancient greek gods of Homer, the Tamil gods never act wilfully or arbitrarily, nor have they human failings.

They are instead embodiments of their divine principles.

Ganesha is hence the embodiment of wisdom, the foremost teacher on the path of life.

It is inconceivable that he acts

in any other way than this mandate, because he is not separate from it.

The Vinayagar Agaval stands comparison with the best traditions of sacred poetry anywhere.

Yet it is quintessentially Tamil. There is no concept of guilt or retribution or of the power imbalance between man and God.

While the Agaval remains deeply instructive of ancient Hindu philosophy, it is above all a celebration of beauty and love; a richly enunciated vision of the astonishing beauty of the ancient Tamil Gods, who remain endearingly human while simultaneously containing within themselves the micro and macrocosms of the cosmos, or in Auvaiyar's own words: "being, bright and beautiful, atom within atom, vast beyond all vastness"

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FEATURES

Why Tamils are not citizens of Sri Lanka

Kishali Pinto Jayawardena
Sunday Times

IN the year 1998, Joubert Gnanamuttu an engineer by profession (a slightly built, soft spoken and self effacing gentleman who had lived for more than twenty nine years in Colombo and who spoke with a slight stammer), was travelling in the bus to Borella when it was stopped at an Army checkpoint at Stanley Wijesundera Mawatha. Asked to show his identity, he produced his national identity card and a driving licence as well as a student identity card issued to him by the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies.

Despite this proof of identification, he was asked to show a 'police registration form' to which request, Gnanamuttu replied that he did not have one and was not aware that the law required him to possess one. This sufficed for him to be rudely abused and detained while the rest of the passengers were allowed to proceed on their way. Gnamuttu was then taken to the Cinnamon Gardens police station where all his belongings, including his money, were taken from him and thence to the Bambalapitiya police station to be photographed. In a bizarre scenario thereafter, Gnanamuttu had been 'misplaced' by the police officer escorting the party of detainees, resulting in this mild mannered man having to, (since all his money and identification documents were at the Cinnamon Gardens Police Station), walk back by himself all the way from Bambalapitiya to the Cinnamon Gardens Police Station, whereupon he was greeted with consternation by the police officers and immediately detained. He was then produced before the Magistrate's Court, Hulftsdorp on a "B" Report which stated that he was suspected of "terrorist activities."

A further shock then awaited him in the form of a lawyer who had informed Gnanamuttu that his identity card was in his possession and therefore that he had to appear for him for which fees would need to be paid. Gnanamuttu had refused stating that he had no money whereupon the lawyer had turned hostile. Gnanamuttu was then brought before the magistrate, allowed to sign a personal bond and asked to appear in court on a later date a week hence on which subsequent date, he was discharged.

This Kafka scenario was not conceived as a figment of my imagination but instead is an incident that was brought before the Supreme Court shortly thereafter, fully probed into and decided in favour of this unfortunate man who had undergone public humiliation and personal trauma, all

due to the fact that he was Tamil, coupled with perhaps the fact that he stammered when he spoke. In 1999, the Supreme Court, examining this incident, declared a violation of the right to be free from unlawful arrest and detention declaring, in the judgment of Shiranee A. Bandaranayake J (with the then Chief Justice G.P.S. de Silva and Wijetunge J agreeing) that 'If the purpose at the security check-point was to ascertain the identity of the person travelling in that bus, these documents in my view, were more than sufficient.'

Eight years later, the impact of this judgment appears to have been minimal. Ironically, V.I.S. Rodrigo, the petitioner in whose favour the Court decided this week and who had undergone a similar harrowing experience, this time at the Polhengoda checkpoint and at the hands of a female sub-inspector, had also been arrested and detained because (in the words of the respondent police officer as disclosed to court) "he had stammered and appeared to be excited." One is constrained to question whether there is, therefore some highly confidential and secretive directive or departmental order nestling in the desks of the police stations that define stammering as a justifiable ground on which arrests may be made? Perhaps this is a moot question that the Inspector General of Police may be called upon by the public to answer.

In this week's judgment, Chief Justice Sarath Nanda Silva (with Shiranee Tillekewardene and Balapatabendi JJ agreeing) passed severe strictures on the arrest and later detention of V.I.S. Rodrigo by the Officer in Charge of the Traffic Branch of the Kirulapona police station purportedly on the suspicion that his driving licence was forged. The Court referred to a 'vicious scheme' of the police as well as the 'abuse of power, rampant dishonesty and corruption and also misuse of the process of law that take place at 'check points' that have sprouted up."

In the Gnanamuttu case, the Registrar of the Supreme Court was directed to send a copy of the judgment to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) for appropriate action but to all intents and purposes, nothing was done. In the judgment relating to the complaint brought by V.I.S. Rodrigo, the non-implementation of previous orders by Court, particularly regarding another recent instance where a person who was transporting furniture for personal use was wrongfully arrested, detained

and tortured because he refused to give a bribe that was demanded, was specifically adverted to. It is in the context of this non-implementation that the Court, this week, issued directions in terms of Article 126(4) of the Constitution ordering the dismantling of permanent 'checkpoints' and proper regulation of the total prohibition of parking vehicles on principal roads. Further, IGP and Secretary, Defence was directed to ensure that minimum inconvenience be caused to the public as a result of movements of politicians on these roads.

It is unfortunate that judicial intervention is required in order to drive home the thinking that while interests of national security may be paramount, ordinary citizens of any ethnicity cannot be harassed and threatened by law enforcement officers who besmirch the good name of the entire service in so doing.

This rule applies not only to behaviour on the roads but also to all other procedures that are being put into place in the name of national security. What befell V.I.S. Rodrigo, (which is surely a plight common to many other roadusers), demonstrates that arbitrary police abuse is not limited to members of one particular ethnicity alone. But there is no doubt that it is citizens of this ethnicity who bear the very brunt of such attacks.

The manner in which the mass arrests of Tamils took place early this week, ostensibly as a security measure is another instance of highhanded, insensitive and overtly discriminatory action. Each and every action of this nature only alienates the ordinary Tamil community, many of whom do not support the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

In many instances, none of these measures have a rational justification besides possessing racist undertones. Why, for example, are civilians in Jaffna required to have a special identification card issued by the Army in which moreover, it is required to be stated as to what the political opinion of the applicant is? Where is the rational justification between this requirement and national security? Why should passengers, when traveling on the bus be separated by ethnicity and one lot of passengers detained without proper checking of their identification but solely because they are Tamil? Such occurrences make me ashamed to say that I am Sri Lankan and that I live in a country where such incidents are commonplace. These are issues that we should be putting to the Government of Sri Lanka sans any particular political persuasion and as citizens of Sri Lanka, not as Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others.

FEATURES

Curse of being a people of a lesser god

Continued from p11

Recalling past horror

In June this year Tamils from the north and upcountry were targeted when over 300 were evicted from lodges in and around Colombo and unceremoniously packed into buses and deported to the north. However, they were eventually brought back to Colombo following severe opposition from human rights activists.

The government has continuously stated that Tamils were never a target.

However, the Tamils who have been living in Colombo for many years have started to panic following the latest action taken by the government, purportedly on security grounds.

Meanwhile, some of the upcountry Tamils who were arrested last week were released on Thursday. Politicians representing the upcountry had gone to Boossa and secured the release of these youths.

Vocational Training Deputy Minister, P. Radhakrishnan told The Sunday Leader that there are still several upcountry youth in detention.

"I'm not sure of the exact number released. However, there are some more under detention," he said.

Court appeal

The CWC had also complained to the Supreme Court against last week's mass arrest of Tamil persons.

The CWC in its petition to courts had stated that the arrests had taken place in an irresponsible manner, causing great inconvenience and humiliation.

The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) also filed a petition at the Supreme Court on December 4 over what they claim to be arbitrary arrests and detention of persons on grounds of ethnicity.

The CPA said that the government specifically targeted the Tamil community in an unlawful manner and did not keep the Human Rights Commission informed of the arrests, let alone the families of most taken into custody.

In a statement to The Sunday Leader, the CPA charged, "The camp that these people were sent to was overcrowded and ill equipped which has led to cruel and inhumane treatment. By sending so many people to a place like this, this is not the first time that Tamil people have been persecuted in this manner," referring to the eviction of Tamils in June.

The CPA added that the mass arrests were a violation of human rights, and that they have received reports from organisations monitoring the situation at Boossa, and from people who have been released from the camp, that the conditions were poor to say the least.

The CPA went on to say that despite the international community, human rights groups and the media outcry over the arrests, it is now up to the Supreme Court to look into the matter.

The sudden roundups and search cordons have not only affected the Tamils who had arrived recently from the north or the hill country, but also those who have been living in Colombo for many years.

These actions in the name of security measures have only resulted in the movements of Tamils being restricted.

Sordid conditions

The government established the Boossa detention camp 1971 to house suspects arrested following the first insurrection by the JVP.

Apart from being notorious for the detention of suspects in the second insurrection of the JVP, in 1987, many Tamil youths were arrested in the north east and sent to Boossa. Despite rumours of the detention camp being used as a torture chamber to interrogate Tamil civilians, none of these rumours have been substantiated according to UNP MP, John Amaratunge. Speaking to The Sunday Leader the former interior minister said, "There has been talk of torture, but no one can be sure at the moment."

Amaratunge added that the camp has been used many times in the past as a detention centre following mass arrests. However, he stated that human rights of the detainees are violated due to the poor facilities at the camp.

Reports have emerged that detainees are led out at gun point and spend six minutes in the latrines with no option other than defecating and urinating into a gutter deep inside the camp which overflows.

Officials remain tight lipped

Chief Government Whip, Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle stated at a media briefing last week that the cordon and search operations carried out by the security forces did not target any particular community.

Minister Fernandopulle stated that he cannot divulge what measures will be carried out in the future.

"How can we tell? These operations are carried out suddenly," he told reporters last week.

The government however has stated that the Tamils were never a target when carrying out search operations.

Speaking to The Sunday Leader, Military Spokesperson Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said that there were Sinhalese and Muslims among those arrested but government officials remained tight lipped when questioned about the treatment of those taken in.

Canada getting tough...

Continued from p10

Sri Lankan MP M.K. Eelavethan, a member of the Tamil National Alliance who recently visited Canada, blamed the security forces for abduction, killings and disappearances.

"Disappearance is now becoming a normal feature. I will call it a normality. When a person disappears and doesn't appear for three days, you can safely say that he is among the dead."

Sri Lankan police are blamed for some of those abuses.

Chief Inspector Kasturiarachchi spent more than 25 years in the police force.

He moved to Canada with his family after retiring in 2002.

Even though there was no evidence he had personally committed war crimes, the CBSA argued he was nonetheless to blame.

As a long-time senior officer of a police force that engaged in abuses that were "disproportionate and routinely committed throughout the country with impunity" he was found responsible.

"By virtue of his membership and activity with the Force, he shared in its common purpose or objectives and was therefore complicit in the commission of crimes against humanity," according to the Federal Court ruling on his case.

"That's pretty harsh," responded Mr. Sriskanda, Mr. Kasturiarachchi's lawyer.

"That means any police officer from Sri Lanka cannot even apply for a visitor's visa. They are excluded for all purposes under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act."

Mr. Kasturiarachchi's last hope for remaining in Canada is a letter that is being sent to Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day.

"As there is no personal allegation against him, I think that the Minister will give him an exception," Mr. Sriskanda said.

But Ms. Pape, the CBSA spokeswoman, said the agency "intends to remove Mr. Kasturiarachchi from Canada based on his complicity in crimes against humanity committed against a civilian population in Sri Lanka."

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NEWS

Attacks on ambulances condemned

MORE than 700 medical staff in Vanni, including doctors, nurses, technical staff, midwives and minor staff from K'ilinochchi and Mullaitheevu districts, staged a protest on December 6 against targeted claymore attacks by the Sri Lanka Army commandos against ambulances and humanitarian vehicles.

Several schoolchildren were killed on Nov 27 in an attack on an ambulance. The protesters had brought the ambulance which was damaged in a recent Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) attack at Mudkompan.

Protests were staged at Kilinochchi General hospital, at the office of the Regional Director of Health Services, Akkarayan Hospital, Muzhangkaavil hospital, Tharmapuram Hospital and Mullaitheevu Hospital. The protesters demanded their security guaranteed from DPU attacks.

Vehicles belonging to Road Development Authority, Agricultural Department, Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society, North-East Irrigated Agriculture Project, humanitarian organisations engaged in serving the needs of displaced people and the vehicles of private firms engaged in development work (contractors) have also been targeted by the DPU claymore attacks during the past 24 months.

Civilians fleeing from air and artillery attacks from the SLA in bicycles, tractors and motorbikes have also become victims of the DPU Claymore attacks.

On Nov 27 seven school girls,

three male volunteers and the driver of a Hiace van, engaged in rural first aid service, were killed on the spot at Iyangkeani on Kokkaavil - Thunukkaay Road in a claymore attack carried out by an SLA DPU unit.

On Nov 27 an ambulance that belongs to Muzhangkaavil hospital, engaged on medical service to the displaced civilians from Poonakari living in Mudkompan area, was targeted by a SLA DPU claymore attack at Mudkompan. The driver of the ambulance, Thavaseelan, 29, was seriously wounded.

On Sep 26, Rev. Fr. Nicholaspillai Packiyaranjith, 40, the Mannaar district coordinator of Jesuit Refugee Service was killed when SLA DPU attackers launched a Claymore attack on his Hiace vehicle, at Kalvilaan on Maangkulam - Vellaangkulam road. The JRS vehicle was bringing in baby milk and essential humanitarian supplies for displaced children.

In August 2006, a DPU attack on the ambulance of Nedungkeani claimed the lives of the doctor of Nedungkeani hospital, his wife, two nurses and the driver of the ambulance. On 25 November, the driver of the ambulance of Muzhangkaavil hospital was seriously wounded in a Claymore attack at Mudkompan in Poonakari (Pooneyn).

In June 2006 four health officials of Tamileelam Health Service Mobile Medical Service, including a nurse and the driver of the vehicle, were wounded at Akkaraayan when an SLA DPU team exploded a Claymore mine.



Sri Lankan military targetting of ambulances was condemned by a rally of medical personnel.

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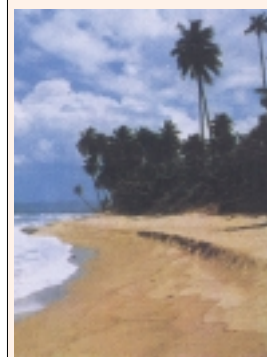
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