

TAMIL GUARDIAN

No. 371 ISSN 1369-2208

WEDNESDAY APRIL 23, 2008

free fortnightly

Colombo blocks medical supplies for Tamils in Vanni

PAGE 10

Tigers smash Sri Lanka Army offensive in Jaffna

PAGE 2



Members of the public in LTTE-administered Vanni pay their respects to Rev. Father M X Karunaratnam, chairman of the NorthEast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR), who was killed in a roadside bomb attack by Sri Lanka Army commandos on Sunday. Two of the eleven founder members of NESoHR, the human rights body set up to highlight abuses in Sri Lanka's Northeast, and several parliamentarians of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), along with scores of Tamil civilians, have been killed in similar attacks in the past two years by Sri Lanka's military. Norway was the only country to condemn Fr. Karunaratnam's killing. *Report, photos, p4.*

CARLTON LEISURE		WEST LONDON		EAST LONDON		SOUTH LONDON		CENTRAL LONDON		NEWBURY PARK	
Worldwide Travel & Tours		299 RAYNERS LANE HARROW, MIDDX, HA5 5EG		7 STATION PARADE EAST HAM, LONDON, E6 1JD		233 MITCHAM ROAD TOOTING, LONDON, SW17 9JG		68 GREAT PORTLAND ST. LONDON, W1W 7NG		742 EASTERN AVENUE ILFORD, ESSEX, IG2 7HU	
		020 8426 1288		020 8586 7675		020 8672 5757		020 7636 7636		020 8554 4200	
web: www.carltonleisure.com email: info@carltonleisure.com											
COLOMBO	MADRAS	AUSTRALIA	TORONTO	For Worldwide Tour Packages							
fr£280+TAXES	fr£225+TAXES	fr£399+TAXES	fr£289+TAXES	Tour hotline 020 8429 2797							

ADCHAYA

**SRI LANKAN & SOUTH INDIAN
RESTAURANT & TAKEAWAY**

PROMPTLY ATTENDED SERVICE

The Best Caterers In
South West London

Opening Hours: 12 Noon to 11PM

**164 Merton High Street
South Wimbledon
London SW19 1AZ
Tel: 020 8540 8192**

Jenas Food & Wine

**225 Southcroft Road
London
SW16 6QT
Tel: 0208 677 5668**

With Compliments

Fresh

**59 Kingston Road
London
SW19 1JN
UK
Tel: 07723 614 183**

With Compliments

NEWS



Tiger ambush smashes Army offensive

A MAJOR offensive by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in the Jaffna peninsula was smashed Wednesday in an elaborate Tamil Tiger ambush, reports said.

More than 100 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed and another 400 wounded when troops attempted to advance toward Elephant Pass from Jaffna, highly placed army sources told CNN.

The army sources also told CNN that at least 30 soldiers were reported missing in action. LTTE sources reported some soldiers remained lying on the battleground, but did not divulge a number.

SLA forces, including units from the elite 53 Division, launched a three-pronged assault from the government forward defence line (FDL) which is separated from the LTTE's FDL by over half a kilometre wide strip of no-man's land.

Heavy fighting raged 3.30 am at all three sectors, across a 7km front. SLA units were defeated at two of the three sectors, in Mukamaalai and Ki'laali, by 10:30 a.m. after stiff LTTE resistance.

Heavy fighting raged till 12:40 p.m. in Kandal, the third sector.

The Tigers said they killed 150 soldiers, losing 16 fighters and capturing a large quantity of weapons and ammunition left behind by the fleeing soldiers.

"The [Tigers] feigned they had withdrawn from their first line of defenses in well-dug-out trenches," one official told CNN. "After the troops backed by battle tanks reached the area, the [Tigers] sprung a fierce attack."

A SLA source, which didn't wish to be named, verified to TamilNet that 104 dead soldiers' bodies were initially recovered by the army and more than 400 were wounded.

Thirty SLA soldiers' bodies were recovered by the Tigers. They are to be handed back through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Some of the injured were flown to Colombo hospitals. Officials appealed to the public on radio and television to donate blood.

A Colombo bound passenger at Palali airport said he had seen

12 bus loads of dead and wounded soldiers being rushed to the runway.

Wednesday's defeat deals a setback to military efforts to weaken the LTTE. Government leaders and military commanders vowed early this year to "eliminate" the Tigers by the end of the year, but later extended the deadline into 2009.

Until Wednesday, the heavy fighting had remained focused in the western coastal town of Mannar and the northeastern coastal area of Manal Aru.

Local and foreign media are barred from visiting battle-grounds, except on conducted tours, and casualty counts from the military and the LTTE are impossible to verify.

Initial information on the Wednesday incident came from the Media Centre for National Security, the only government agency disseminating information on the separatist war. In its latest update, it says 43 soldiers and more than 100 Tigers have been killed, while 120 soldiers are injured and 33 are missing.

'Victory' deadlines slip

LACK of significant victories in the Vanni battlefield due to fierce resistance from Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has forced the Sri Lankan government to extend its self-imposed deadline to defeat the LTTE in the north of the island.

Following the capture of Thoppoigala in the east of the island last year, Army Commander Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka and the government vowed to "wipe out" the LTTE by April, this year.

However, the 18 months long military campaign expected make inroads into LTTE administered Vanni from three fronts have not

yielded any results.

In a meeting of the National Security Council on March 28, to review the military's progress, Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse was informed by the top brass that the government forces would take 'at least till end 2009' to defeat the LTTE.

Responding to Rajapakse's question on why the earlier deadlines set by the security forces could not be met, Fonseka reportedly has said that 1,500 elite troops were now being trained and it would take time to deploy them and added that there was also fierce LTTE resistance.

Fonseka last year announced

that 3,000 Tigers would be killed before August 2008 and the LTTE eliminated before his term ended.

According to the defence ministry over 2,500 Tigers have been killed since January this year. Military analysts questioned why it would take another one and a half years to eliminate the LTTE if only 500 more Tigers are left to be eliminated.

Meanwhile, Senior Presidential Advisor and brother of President Rajapakse, Basil Rajapaksa pledged to hoist the Sri Lankan flag in LTTE-held areas by the end of the current Sinhala and Tamil New Year - April 2009. It had been promised this April.

NEWS

International experts slam Sri Lanka's sham rights abuse probes



Fifteen-year-old student A. Diluxana was the latest of many killed in indiscriminate bombing attacks by Sri Lankan forces, which have been condemned for their disregard for the human rights of Tamils

A PANEL of top international legal luminaries told Sri Lanka's government on Tuesday to clean up its human rights record, saying an escalating war against Tamil Tigers had brought with it grave abuses.

The International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP), headed by the former Indian chief justice J N Bhagwati and comprising 10 experts from Australia, Britain, Canada, Japan, France, Netherlands and the United States blamed the Government of Sri Lanka for "absence of will" in the present Inquiry to "investigate cases with vigour, where the conduct of its own forces has been called into question."

"The IIGEP has... found an absence of will on the part of the Government of Sri Lanka in the present inquiry to investigate cases with vigour, where the conduct of its own forces has been called into question," the panel said.

"Summary executions, massacres, disappearances, wanton destruction of property, and forcible transfers of populations can never be justified. No efforts should be spared to uncover responsibility, including recognition of command responsibility, for such actions."

Following international pressure, in September, 2006,

President Mahinda Rajapaksa announced that his government would "invite an international independent commission to probe abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings."

However, within days of his announcement, he deviated from the claim and said, that he would invite a group of international experts to act as observers of the activities of the Presidential Commission [consisting of Sri Lanka nationals] which will investigate alleged abductions, disappearances and extra judicial killings.

The IIGEP was setup in February 2007, to observe the work of the Commission of Inquiry to Investigate and Inquire into Alleged Serious Violations of Human Rights ("the Commission"), which was established in November 2006. The Serious Violations referred to in the Warrant establishing the Commission were 16 cases dating from 1 August 2005 until 16 October 2006.

However, in early March, the IIGEP announced its decision to quit, saying there was no cooperation from the authorities and the effort was virtually a sham to deflect international criticism.

Announcing the decision to quit IIGEP said: "The IIGEP is of the opinion that there has not been the minimum level of trust neces-

sary for the success of the work of the commission and the IIGEP."

The latest IIGEP report gave the following reasons for its decision to terminate the mission "with profound regret that more could not have been achieved."

- A conflict of interest in the proceedings before the Commission

- Lack of effective victim and witness protection

- Lack of transparency and timeliness in the proceedings

- Lack of full co-operation by State bodies

- Lack of financial independence of the Commission: "Sections of popular opinion suggest that human rights and respect for the rule of law should take second place to measures necessary to repel these hostilities," the panel said. "The IIGEP rejects this opinion."

Sri Lanka's Attorney General C. R. de Silva, however, hit back at the panel as "flawed" and a source of "unnecessary inconvenience to the government."

The panel's report said military operations and respect for civil liberties were not incompatible.

"It should be emphasised that respect for human rights and the conduct of military operations in strict accordance with international humanitarian law are powerful weapons in the struggle against dissident forces and terrorism," the IIGEP report said.

The group also asked the Sri Lankan government to ensure that senior military officers were held responsible for the actions of lower ranks, set up a witness protection mechanism and end a culture of impunity for perpetrators.

In its report, the IIGEP made following particular recommendations:

- That the President should ensure that all State bodies comply with international norms and standards and his directive to provide full disclosure of information and cooperation to the Commission.

- The Government should respect and implement the internationally agreed doctrine of command responsibility as part of the law of Sri Lanka, whereby superiors of those who have committed criminal acts may also be held responsible.

- The Government of Sri Lanka should establish, as a priority, a workable, effective and permanent system of victim and witness protection. The Commission should endeavour to train the staff of its victim and witness protection unit in order to provide the optimum level of security and assistance to potential witnesses. The IIGEP also calls for the establishment of a facility whereby essential witnesses, who have left Sri Lanka, and who can continue to give first hand evidence as to some of the events under examination by the Commission, can give their oral evidence to the Commission by video-links under conditions of complete safety. In this respect, international support to the Commission has proven critical.

- The Commission of Inquiry should include in the course of its inquiries an examination of the reasons for systemic failures and past impunity in relation to the cases under review, and consider the making of recommendations for the eventual appointment of

Continued on p14

ACF: 'Muttur slaughter was planned war crime'

A FRENCH aid agency that operated in conflict areas in Sri Lanka and lost 17 of their local workers in a single incident two years ago has labeled the massacre as a 'war crime' and decided to withdraw from Sri Lanka.

Action Contre la Faim (ACF or Action against Hunger) in a press release issued on Friday, April 18 said the execution style killing of the aid workers, mostly Tamils, could not be considered as collateral damage and the massacre is a war crime in violation of the Geneva Conventions.

"The Muttur slaughter can't be considered only as a "collateral damage" during the Muttur battle: our team has been specifically and deliberately targeted, their

death has been organised execution style with bullets shot in their head. Everything was consciously and brutally planned: the victims were kneeling, unarmed and defenceless. The culprits of this massacre are the ones who were carrying the arms. We can assert that this massacre is a war crime in violation of the Geneva Conventions", the ACF statement read.

The 17 local aid workers were killed when the military was taking over the LTTE controlled area of Muttur, 260 kilometres north east of the capital on August 4, 2006.

Explaining its decision to quit Sri Lanka the aid agency said, the decision by International Independent Group of Eminent Persons

(IIGEP), a group of international experts observing the proceedings of a presidential commission probing 15 violent incidents including the killing of the aid workers has made them lose confidence in the dragging inquiry process.

The Paris based ACF added, it considered the presence of the IIGEP as an essential condition for the credibility in the investigations into the killing of its staff in Muttur and now doubted whether the Commission of Inquiries would respect international standards.

Last month, the IIGEP, headed by P N Bhagwati, former Indian Chief Justice, told the Sri Lankan government they were withdrawing from the inquiry because of

official interference and lack of internationally acceptable standards.

At the time, the IIGEP said: "[We are] of the opinion that there has not been the minimum level of trust necessary for the success of the work of the commission and the IIGEP,"

Declaring that a massacre of so many NGO workers has never happened in the history of humanitarian organizations, the ACF said its overall aim was to help the affected population particularly during crises like natural disasters, wars or internal conflicts and to avoid humanitarian crises and massive displacements.

"ACF carries out its role in regions like Darfur and Chech-

nya, but no accident such as the one that happened in Muttur has ever been reported."

Founded in 1979, the non-profit-making organisation has programmes in 43 countries worldwide and its vocation is to save lives by fighting hunger, especially those of malnourished children, and to work with vulnerable populations to preserve and restore their livelihoods with dignity, ACF added.

Nordic truce monitors, from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission at the time blamed Sri Lankan security forces for the massacre - at the time the worst attack on aid workers since a 2003 bomb attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad.

NEWS

Fr. Karunaratnam, head of human rights group, killed by Army bomb

TamilNet

REV. Father M X Karunaratnam, the chairman of the NorthEast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR), was killed in a Claymore attack carried out by a Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) of the Sri Lanka Army on Sunday, according to initial reports from Tamillelam Police.

Officials at the NorthEast Secretariat on Human Rights (NESoHR), in a press release issued Sunday, expressed "profound shock and loss," and condemned the assassination of NESoHR's chairman, Fr. M. X. Karunaratnam.

Press release said, he "worked tirelessly championing the Human Rights of the Tamil people. He travelled to the United States, Canada and Geneva meeting with Foreign Governments and Organizations concerned in Human Rights. Rev. Fr. Karunaratnam pioneered the work of NESoHR in the field of psychological counseling of the war and tsunami affected people in the Tamil Homeland."

The attack took place on Mallaavi - Vavunikkulam Road in Vanni around 12:30 p.m. Sunday, according to initial reports.

Fr. Karunaratnam frequently uses the road as his residential prayer and counseling center is located in Vavunikkulam. His vehicle is known to everyone in the area, residents said implying that the Claymore attack has specifically targeted him.

The attack took place near Kuzhanthai Jesus Church at Vannivilaangkulam while his vehicle, which had broken down on his way back to his residence from Maangkulam Church, was being towed and he was seated in the driver seat steering it. A shrapnel hit his head, causing brain injuries and he died on the spot. His body was brought to Kilinochchi hospital.

Fr. Karunaratnam was the foremost Human Rights activist in Liberation Tigers of Tamillelam controlled Vanni. NESoHR was the only body in Vanni to report and voice for the Human Rights of the Tamil people in the NorthEast.

Fondly called as 'Kili Father,' he also played a key role in providing psychological support for those in the NorthEast affected by the war and the 2004 Tsunami.

NESoHR was launched, in July 2004, as part of the Norwegian - facilitated 2002 Peace Process to strengthen the human rights protection mechanisms in the NorthEast.

Karunaratnam led a NESoHR delegation to Geneva in October 2004 and met with several European organizations involved



in rights issues. Officials and diplomats visiting Kilinochchi had also made it a practice to meet Fr. Karunaratnam to discuss the humanitarian situation during their missions to Vanni.

In his latest report, issued on April 5, 2008, he noted:

"The [Sri Lankan] local mechanism to ensure good governance with respect for human rights has miserably failed and there is widespread call for the establishment of a UN body to monitor human rights violations. Sri Lanka's claim that establishing such a body is an infringement on the sovereignty and integrity of the state does not hold water as long as series of mass murders and disappearances of Tamil people during communal pogroms

and military offensives are not investigated by neutral agencies and perpetrators brought to book in a transparent manner. Diplomatic manipulations and unquestioned rhetoric by Sri Lanka in the world body should not be allowed to white wash the grim ground reality."

"NESoHR as the Human Rights body of the Tamil people had high hopes in the UN Human Rights session in view of the buildup of opinion against human rights violations committed by state actors in Sri Lanka."

"Most disappointingly we find that Sri Lanka was able to hold fort and technically defend its totally unacceptable human rights record in spite of the many adverse reports on rights viola-

tions against the Tamil people."

"This is the advantage rogue states have over unrepresented people in the UN. NESoHR has the responsibility to voice the concerns of an unrepresented people in the UN who have been deceptively made a minority in their land of birth to depend on a majority with a supremacist psychosis by the colonial powers when they left the island."

Two of the eleven founder members of NESoHR and parliamentarians of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) have been killed in Sri Lanka Army backed paramilitary attacks earlier.

A. Chandra Nehru, a founder member of NESoHR and former TNA Parliamentarian for the Ampaara District was killed by

paramilitary in February 2005.

Joseph Pararajasingam, a senior TNA MP from Batticaloa and a founder member of the NESoHR was shot dead in church during Christmas Mass in 2005.

The other founding members of the NESoHR are: K. Sivapalan, an attorney-at-law from Trincomalee, now exiled in Norway, TNA parliamentarian Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, whose father Kumar Ponnambalam was assassinated by the Sri Lankan establishment in January 2000, the general secretary of the Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union (CTTU) T. Mahasivam, Dr. K. Sivapalan, Ms. Sri Arulanathan, Mr. S. Achsuthan, Dr. N. Malathy and Dr. S. Sriskandaraja.

Sham rights probes p2

NEWS

Sri Lanka faces severe food shortage

WHILE Tamil homeland in the Northeast of the island is being subjected to a full-scale war, the Sinhala south is facing a severe food shortage and the highest rate of inflation in the history.

An escalating war, recent heavy flooding and economic policies of President Mahinda Rajapakse's administration are blamed for the spiraling inflation and severe shortage of food, specifically, rice, the staple food of Sri Lankans.

With the Sri Lankan government offensives against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to capture Vanni yielding no results, the continuing war is putting a heavy burden on the island nation's fragile economy.

According to the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI), the current rate of inflation in Sri Lanka is a dizzying 24 per cent. Even the revised index (CCPIN) estimates it at 21.6 per cent. On both counts, it is significantly higher than in other countries in the region, where the rates of inflation vary between 5 per cent and 7 per cent.

Adding to that the rain came down heavily in March - a usually a dry month during which the rice is harvested. Tens of thousands of paddy land went under water with thousands of farmers becoming destitute overnight, unable to reap the harvest. This has created a severe shortage in supply and led to price hikes.

Spiraling Prices

According to The Island newspaper, the average increase in the price of rice varieties in Sri Lanka is 68 per cent. For exam-

ple, the price of parboiled imported Indian rice has gone up from SLRs.40 to SLRs. 85 per kg in only a few weeks. Prices are expected to further rise because of an increasing local shortage due to bad weather, unwise import policies and increasing world prices.

One shopper said the kilo of local rice which she bought at Rs 80 last month was being sold at Rs 112. The imported Indian rice, which two months ago fetched, a price of Rs 60 a kilo in Colombo's retail markets is now sold at Rs 100 - and the stocks are fast vanishing.

The government is confident that it will not allow the situation to get out of hand. However traders are not so confident and predict that the prices will go up further in the coming weeks.

Mismanagement

Rice merchants blame the government for the current crisis. They say timely imports from neighboring India would have saved the country from the present plight.

According to them, the government should have placed orders with foreign suppliers (ideally from India) when prices were low and a rise was on the cards.

In a last minute attempt to take control of the situation, the government this week began forcing traders to sell at prices it had fixed.

Consumer Affairs Minister Bandula Gunawardena told the BBC that selling above the price limit is prohibited under the

Continued on p14



Though food prices are rising the world over, including across Sri Lanka, Tamils in the NorthEast face extra hardships as the economic embargo means staples such as rice are often not available at any price.

Food insecurity a global problem

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has warned that a combination of poor rice harvest, rising global food prices and the escalating civil war are increasing food insecurity for hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans.

In a statement released on 9 April 2008 the UN agency said, only half the country's 20 million people are receiving the minimum daily calorie intake of 2,030, according to the latest poverty assessments compiled by the government.

"An average poor person in Sri Lanka receives only 1,696 kcal per day while a non-poor person receives 2,194 kcal," according to the Department of

Census and Statistics, in a report entitled Poverty Indicators - Household Income and Expenditure Survey - 2006/07, which was released in March 2008.

Officials at the UN World Food Programme (WFP) told IRIN that high levels of under-nourishment prevail, especially in rural areas and those regions in the north and east affected by more than 25 years of conflict between the government and the LTTE.

"The highest rates of under-nourishment are in the north and east as well as parts of the dry zone towards the centre of the island," Jean-Yves Lequime, the deputy head of WFP in Sri Lanka, said.

"Our information shows that these areas are some of the poorest on the island, with very high under-nutrition rates, poor education levels and poor sanitation, all of which contribute to under-nutrition," Lequime said.

Poverty and high energy requirements were also common in the rural agrarian areas, Gordon Weiss, chief of communications at the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Colombo, the capital, told IRIN.

"Especially in the agricultural areas, they engage with heavy work, so they need more calories. Most of the agricultural-based areas are considered poor areas."

Continued on p14

Sri Lanka: food, oil price rises worse than war

Peter Apps
Reuters

HIGH global food and fuel prices are damaging Sri Lanka's economic growth more than its ongoing civil war, the central bank governor said on Tuesday, but shrugged off suggestions it could miss a 7 percent target.

The Asian Development Bank said earlier this month growth would probably slow to 6 percent this year and next on high interest rates and global economic weakness.

But governor Ajith Nivard

Cabraal told Reuters rebuilding and new growth in areas of the island's east recaptured from the Tamil Tigers last year would help keep growth at or near the target from 2007 6.8 percent.

"It should be 7 percent or about that," he said in a telephone interview while on a visit to London. "Even with the war, 8 percent would be possible if it were not for the oil price and food price. I would say the growth was curtailed from the high oil and food prices much more than the war."

Cabraal said the Asian Development Bank's predictions of a downturn were because they

"did not have much information", and blamed a ratings downgrade from agency Fitch on the fact they had been embarrassed to be caught out by giving good ratings to major Western banks that then hit trouble.

The east would hopefully grow to provide one percent of gross domestic product from 0.25 percent now, he said. It would be by agriculture, fishing and the building of coal power plants including one on a former Tiger stronghold and ethnic Tamil settlement near the port of Trincomalee.

Annual inflation rate on a 12-month moving average hit 17.7

percent in March, its highest for five years, with consumer prices 23.8 percent up in March from a year earlier in contrast to a targeted 10 to 11 percent.

Cabraal said the target would be reachable if oil prices retreated to around \$85-\$90 a barrel, which was what the government had planned for. On Tuesday, they hit a new peak near \$114 a barrel.

"We are only in the fourth month of the year and some analysts believe the price will come back down," he said.

"If it does then the targeted 10 to 11 percent is achievable. Otherwise, if it stays where it is now it will be very tough."

He would not say what inflation would be if prices remained at current levels.

Rocketing global food prices were also outside the government's control, he said, although would at least benefit the island's rural poor who were food producers.

He would not comment on whether rates should be further tightened, but said the central bank's focus was on controlling inflation through money supply.

Sri Lanka's \$27 billion economy had some exposure to a global downturn, he said, but the key

Continued on p14

EDITORIAL & OPINION

TAMIL GUARDIAN

P.O.BOX. 450, Harrow, London, HA2 2AS, UK
 editor@tamilguardian.com www.tamilguardian.com
 Tel / Fax: 020 8677 4456

WEDNESDAY APRIL 23, 2008 No. 371

Guaranteed Oppression

No amount of force or funding will deliver the liberal peace.

Sri Lanka's conflict is steadily escalating and deepening. That the fighting, such as the abortive military offensive against the Liberation Tigers' northern defences this week, is becoming more intense is undeniable. But quite apart from the ebb and flow of the battlefield, however, is the stark polarization amongst the island's ethnic communities. The notion that Tamils will live in harmony with Sinhalese is now more a Western liberal hope, even demand, than a reflection of what these communities actually think of each other - a point reinforced by every credible opinion survey that bothers to investigate these 'alternative' truths. The point is that with geopolitical and geo-economic interests coming increasingly now to the fore, the 'liberal peace' - pursued so coercively by the West-led international community through the Norwegian initiative - has never looked so implausible.

The past two years have revealed the 'like-minded' states' wafer thin commitment to human rights. Thousands of Tamil civilians have been abducted and murdered or 'disappeared'. Hundreds more have died in Sri Lankan artillery and air attacks. Yet, apart from token withdrawals of aid, the West has done nothing, except routinely calling for 'monitoring'. Indeed, states like the US and UK have readily supplied weapons and training to the all-Sinhala military with its official Buddhist rituals - all the while lecturing the Tamils on the virtues of the 'multi-cultural' society that Sri Lanka is supposed to have.

The point is that, the international community has done absolutely nothing to restrain the state (there is a 'war on terror' to fight of course) and, moreover, has instead begun planning for life after the Tamil rebellion against Sinhala domination is smashed. Consider the island's east. When the British quit Sri Lanka, the Tamils were a majority, with the Sinhalese a tiny minority (as the Colonial state's own census points out). The state began a radical program of demographic alteration no sooner had the British left and now, Western diplomats and analysts who tumble off the plane sagely not that the East is 'multi-ethnic' (India, by contrast, has long understood the significance for perpetual conflict of Sinhala colonization of Tamil-speaking areas - as even the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord attests).

Despite the brutality with the Tamils of the east were swept from their homes and then brought under military administra-

tion (one far more insecure, from a Tamil perspective, than the one in Jaffna), the talk now is of 'developing' the east. The logic, a derivative of the 'poverty causes conflict' one, is that pouring massive international funds into the east will end this nonsense of 'competing nationalisms': Tamils, Muslims, Sinhalese and anyone else will be so taken up by economic opportunities that they will forget their petty squabbles and immerse themselves in 'development'. This fiction, which has been proven false time and again, not just in Sri Lanka, but so many other parts of the world, remains the foundation for Western policy towards 'peace'.

It is not that Tamils are opposed to 'development' per se: indeed, they rebuilt the war- and tsunami- devastated Vanni and Jaffna within whatever space the Norwegian peace process (and continuing military occupation of Tamil residential areas) offered. Rather, it is to assert, with absolute certainty, that development will not erase the pernicious injustices inflicted on the Tamil people in the name of sovereignty or, for that matter, Sri Lanka's institutionalised racism. The Tamil people have been scattered, but our sense of being a people is intact. As any of the world's peoples, we are not homogenous, but we know our collective belonging.

Ironically, it is the cold-blooded approach of the West-led international community that has contributed most to the sense of isolation from which notions of self-help and self-reliance, and therefore independence, have gathered new force amongst the Tamils. By reducing the conflict to one of anti-state 'terrorism' and thereby justifying and pursuing a policy of militarized pacification of the Northeast, the international community's actions have intensified the very conditions and dynamics that led to Tamil rebellion in the first place.

In other words, by consciously assisting the state-led process of exclusion and violent repression of the Tamils, the international community has also contributed to the Tamils' desire and demand for their independence: does anyone really think, especially given the dynamics of the recent past, that the Tamils will be content in this Sinhala-dominated state? As for development, the Sri Lankan state and polity's corruption, incompetence and sheer racism will ensure future foreign aid - like that of the past - will fuel Tamil grievances anew.

Why this selective sympathy?

Why does the world's media adopt one independence struggle, but often cynically ignore another?

Uri Avnery
Daily Times

LIKE everybody else, I support the right of the Tibetan people to independence, or at least autonomy. Like everybody else, I condemn the actions of the Chinese government there. But unlike everybody else, I am not ready to join in the demonstrations.

Why? Because I have an uneasy feeling that somebody is washing my brain, that what is going on is an exercise in hypocrisy.

I don't mind a bit of manipulation. After all, it is not by accident that the riots started in Tibet on the eve of the Olympic Games in Beijing. That's alright. A people fighting for their freedom have the right to use any opportunity that presents itself to further their struggle.

I support the Tibetans in spite of it being obvious that the Americans are exploiting the struggle for their own purposes. Clearly, the CIA has planned and organised the riots, and the American media are leading the world-wide campaign.

It is a part of the hidden struggle between the US, the reigning super-power, and China, the rising super-power - a new version of the "Great Game" that was played in Central Asia in the 19th century by the British Empire and Russia. Tibet is a token in this game.

I am even ready to ignore the fact that the gentle Tibetans have carried out a murderous pogrom against innocent Chinese, killing women and men and burning homes and shops. Such detestable excesses do happen during a liberation struggle.

No, what is really bugging me is the hypocrisy of the world media. They storm and thunder about Tibet. In thousands of editorials and talk-shows they

heap curses and invective on the evil China. It seems as if the Tibetans are the only people on earth whose right to independence is being denied by brutal force, that if only Beijing would take its dirty hands off the saffron-robed monks, everything would be alright in this, the best of all possible worlds.

There is no doubt that the Tibetan people are entitled to rule their own country, to nurture their unique culture, to promote their religious institutions and to prevent foreign settlers from submerging them.

But are not the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria entitled to the same? The inhabitants of Western Sahara, whose territory is occupied by Morocco? The Basques in Spain? The Corsicans off the coast of France? And the list is long.

Why do the world's media adopt one independence struggle, but often cynically ignore another independence struggle? What makes the blood of one Tibetan redder than the blood of a thousand Africans in East Congo?

Again and again I try to find a satisfactory answer to this enigma. In vain.

Immanuel Kant demanded of us: "Act as if the principle by which you act were about to be turned into a universal law of nature." (Being a German philosopher, he expressed it in much more convoluted language.) Does the attitude towards the Tibetan problem conform to this rule? Not at all.

What, then, causes the international media to discriminate between the various liberation struggles that are going on throughout the world?

Here are some of the relevant considerations:

OPINION



* Do the people seeking independence have an especially exotic culture?
 * Are they an attractive people, i.e. "sexy" in the view of the media?
 * Is the struggle headed by a charismatic personality who is liked by the media?
 * Is the oppressing government disliked by the media?
 * Does the oppressing government belong to the pro-American camp? This is an important factor, since the United States dominates a large part of the international media, and its news agencies and TV networks largely define the agenda and the terminology of the news coverage.
 * Are economic interests involved in the conflict?
 * Does the oppressed people have gifted spokespersons, who are able to attract attention and manipulate the media?

From these points of view, there is nobody like the Tibetans. They enjoy ideal conditions.

Fringed by the Himalayas, they are located in one of the most beautiful landscapes on earth. For centuries, just to get there was an adventure. Their unique religion arouses curiosity and sympathy. Its non-violence is very attractive and elastic enough to cover even the ugliest

atrocities, like the recent pogrom.

The exiled leader, the Dalai Lama, is a romantic figure, a media rock-star. The Chinese regime is hated by many - by capitalists because it is a Communist dictatorship, by Communists because it has become capitalist. It promotes a crass and ugly materialism, the very opposite of the spiritual Buddhist monks, who spend their time in prayer and meditation.

When China builds a railway to the Tibetan capital over a thousand inhospitable kilometers, the West does not admire the engineering feat, but sees (quite rightly) an iron monster that brings hundreds of thousands of Han-Chinese settlers to the occupied territory.

And of course, China is a rising power, whose economic success threatens America's hegemony in the world.

Compared to these factors, what have the Basques, for example, to offer?

Like the Tibetans, they inhabit a contiguous territory, most of it in Spain, some of it in France. They, too, are an ancient people with their own language and culture. But these are not exotic and do not attract special notice. No prayer wheels. No robed monks.

The Basques do not have a romantic leader, like Nelson Mandela or the Dalai Lama. The Spanish state, which arose from

‘Every population that inhabits a defined territory and has a clear national character is entitled to independence. A state that wants to keep such a population must see to it that they feel comfortable, that they receive their full rights, enjoy equality and have autonomy that satisfies their aspirations.’

the ruins of Franco's detested dictatorship, enjoys great popularity around the world. Spain belongs to the European Union, which is more or less in the American camp, sometimes more, sometimes less.

The armed struggle of the Basque underground is abhorred by many and is considered "terrorism", especially after Spain has accorded the Basques a far-reaching autonomy. In these circumstances, the Basques have no chance at all of gaining world support for independence.

The Chechnyans should have been in a better position. They, too, are a separate people, who have for a long time been oppressed by the Czars of the Russian Empire, including Stalin and Putin. But alas, they are Muslims - and in the Western world, Islamophobia now occupies the place that had for centuries been reserved for anti-Semitism. Islam has turned into a synonym for terrorism, it is seen as a religion of blood and murder. Soon it will be revealed that Muslims slaughter Christian children and use their blood for baking Pita.

If Immanuel Kant knew what's going on in Kosova, he would be scratching his head.

The province demanded its independence from Serbia, and I, for one, supported that with all my heart. This is a separate people, with a different culture (Albanian) and its own religion (Islam). After the popular Serbian leader, Slobodan

Milosevic, tried to drive them out of their country, the world rose and provided moral and material support for their struggle for independence.

The Albanian Kosovars make up 90 percent of the citizens of the new state, which has a population of two million. The other 10 percent are Serbs, who want no part of the new Kosova. They want the areas they live in to be annexed to Serbia. According to Kant's maxim, are they entitled to this?

I would propose a pragmatic moral principle: Every population that inhabits a defined territory and has a clear national character is entitled to independence. A state that wants to keep such a population must see to it that they feel comfortable, that they receive their full rights, enjoy equality and have an autonomy that satisfies their aspirations.

In short: that they have no reason to desire separation.

That applies to the French in Canada, the Scots in Britain, the Kurds in Turkey and elsewhere, the various ethnic groups in Africa, the indigenous peoples in Latin America, the Tamils in Sri Lanka and many others. Each has a right to choose between full equality, autonomy and independence.

This leads us, of course, to the Palestinian issue.

In the competition for the sympathy of the world media, the Palestinians are unlucky. According to all the objective standards, they have a right to full independence, exactly like the Tibetans. They inhabit a defined territory, they are a specific nation, a clear border exists between them and Israel.

But the Palestinians are suffering from several cruel strokes of fate: The people that oppress them claim for themselves the crown of ultimate victimhood. The whole world sympathizes with the Israelis because the Jews were the victims of the most horrific crime of the Western world. That creates a strange situation: the oppressor is more popular than the victim.

Also, the great majority of the Palestinians are Muslims (nobody pays attention to the Palestinian Christians). Since Islam arouses fear and abhorrence in the West, the Palestinian struggle has automatically become a part of that shapeless, sinister threat, "international terrorism."

In the world-wide tumult about Tibet, the Israeli spokespersons compare themselves - strange as it sounds - to the poor Tibetans, not to the evil Chinese. Many think this quite logical. If Kant were dug up tomorrow and asked about the Palestinians, he would probably answer: "Give them what you think should be given to everybody, and don't wake me up again to ask silly questions."

Uri Avnery is an Israeli peace activist who has advocated the setting up of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. He served three terms in the Israeli parliament (Knesset), and is the founder of Gush Shalom (Peace Bloc)

BRITISH TAMIL ATHLETICS MEET 2008



1000 Tamil athletes compete in Britain

OVER one thousand Tamil expatriate athletes participated on April 23 in a number of sporting events at London's 2012 Olympics training centre.

The 'British Tamils Athletics Meet 2008' the first of a proposed annual competition was held before a capacity crowd at the Lee Valley stadium, equipped for indoor and open air events. It was organised by the newly formed British Tamils Sports Council (BTSC).

Tamil athletes competed in five houses, representing 4 sectors of the Greater London area and those expatriates resident outside London.

The event began at 10am with parade of all five houses' competitors, led by Joicy Theoginus.

The torch was carried by forthcoming Olympic participant Sutharshan Sivarasa accompanied by Banya Murugamoorthy. They were followed by representatives of each of the houses. Ms. Murugamoorthy lit the torch. An oath on behalf of the assembled athletes was taken by Mayuran Sathiyabalingham and Sugirthamalar Bavananthan.

At the start, the British flag was hoisted by Edmonton Deputy Mayor, Lee Chamberlin

and BTSC flag was hosted by one of the body's Governors, Dr M Theivendra.

The flag raisings were followed by two minutes silence in memory of the Tamils who have died due to Sri Lankan state oppression and the Tamil struggle for freedom.

A cultural program, performed by the students of Ms. Padmini Gunaseelan, followed after which Chairman of the BTSC, F Regi Ansalmar, gave a welcoming address. Deputy Mayor Chamberlin also spoke and declared the event open.

Competitors' determination to win their events' prizes, was combined with a festival like atmosphere emphasising community unity, organisers said. The final relay race between the houses brought out the spirit of both team and community unity spirit, with the whole stadium cheering on the runners.

Green House won the tournament, scoring 573 points, followed by Red (372 points), Yellow (338 points), Blue (223 points) and Purple (222 points).

Olympic participant Sivarasa, 21, will be competing in Taekwondo, the Korean martial arts. He as won British and World championships, including the China and US Opens.



NEWS

JVP heading for split?

P. Karunakharan
IAN S

SRI LANKA'S one-time political kingmaker, the Sinhalese nationalist Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), is headed for a split, just two and a half years after helping President Mahinda Rajapaksa to take power.

The rift in the closely-knit JVP surfaced with its firebrand propaganda secretary Wimal Weerawansa and the party leadership trading charges publicly.

A day after Weerawansa, widely considered the JVP's public face, told parliament that the JVP had decided to expel him after upcoming eastern provincial council elections, party leader Somawansa Amarasinghe rejected his allegations.

Charging that 'anti-nationalistic forces' had infiltrated the JVP leadership, Weerawansa said in an emotional speech in parliament that he was not aware why he was being forced out despite 20 years of hard work for the party.

On Tuesday, 10 of the 37 JVP MPs expressed solidarity with Weerawansa. Using Marxist language, they too said that the party had become a pawn in the hands of 'a few imperialist conspirators'.

Amarasinghe and three party seniors hit back Wednesday.

They told a press conference

here that Weerawansa had failed to answer repeated calls to appear before the party's central committee and politburo to explain his conduct.

The JVP chief said he was perplexed why Weerawansa refused to criticise the Rajapaksa government over charges of corruption, rights violations and high cost of living.

But Amarasinghe indirectly admitted that the JVP - one of Sri Lanka's best-organised political parties - was faced with a serious internal crisis.

He said the JVP had withstood 'many adversaries, conspiracies and intra-party standoffs' since its inception.

After ousting the United National Party (UNP) government of Ranil Wickremesinghe, the JVP formed an electoral alliance with then President Chandrika Kumaratunga in 2004. As a result it increased its membership in the 225-member parliament from 16 to 37.

It remains to see how President Rajapaksa, who was successful in breaking away 26 MPs from the UNP last year and accommodating them in his jumbo cabinet, would handle the crisis in the JVP.

The JVP has led two bloody insurrections in Sri Lanka - in 1971 and in 1989-90. Both violent uprisings were put down, causing thousands of deaths.



As civilian casualties mount, the Colombo government is blocking medical supplies. Photo TamilNet

Sri Lanka creates Vanni 'health disaster'

THE Sri Lankan Defence Ministry is engineering a health disaster in LTTE administered Vanni by blocking medical supplies to the region.

In its latest situation report released on April 17, the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) said the lack of regular deliveries of supplies from the country's health ministry has resulted in clinics and hospitals in the Vanni (the four northern districts of Sri Lanka) running out of basic medicines such as paracetamol, antibiotics and vaccines.

In addition, the limited number of staff available to care for routine cases alongside war casualties has become a critical issue for several hospitals in northern Sri Lanka, ICRC added.

The Deputy Provincial Directors of Health Services (DPDHS) for Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, have both recently raised their concerns about the severe lack of material resources to run the health services in the two districts. These two districts in Vanni suffer material shortages to run the health services because these materials are blocked at the checkpoints in Omanthai and Vavuniya by the Sri Lanka Defense Ministry.

Commenting on the situation, LTTE Spokesperson for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Selvi, said "the concerns raised by the DPDHS highlight the stark conditions in which the health services in Vanni are struggling by the man made disaster created by the Sri Lanka Defense

Ministry."

"It is worth reminding ourselves what the United Nations human rights instruments have to say about the responsibility to provide adequate health services, especially to the children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child in Article 24 it says:

"State Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health services."

Ms. Selvi questioned the Sri Lankan government logic for denying basic medical supplies to Tamils and urged the international community to react to this gross human rights violation committed by the state.

"Under the pretext of ensuring security in the south of the island is the Sri Lankan state denying the very basic medicines to the Tamil children? Has the international community failed to notice this gross human rights violation?" Selvi asked.

The DPDHS division office recently said that medicine quota for the district hospital for the first quarter of 2008 is yet to arrive.

This quota should have arrived prior to the start of the quarter in January but they have not arrived even after the quarter ended by end of March. The medicines have been stagnating in Vavuniya without permission

from the Ministry of Defense. The DPDHS expressed hope that they will arrive some time soon. There are no stocks for the Amoxil syrup, a common pediatric antibiotic, and Diabetes medication. Patients are in serious danger due to lack of these medicines.

Meanwhile, Mullaitheevu DPDHS has told media that only 20% of the fuel supplies needed to operate the district hospital, two sub-hospitals and six pharmacies in the district, has been allowed across the entry point at Omanthai by the Sri Lankan forces.

The Mullaitivu DPDHS also raised his concern about the huge reduction of the fuel allocation to his health services. Although unlimited amount of fuel was permitted during the ceasefire period the amount permitted has been gradually reduced further and further.

Mullaitivu DPDHS said that the health services in his district that is made up of a vast area and sparse population need 14,000 liters per month at the very minimum. With this fuel the Mullaitivu district hospital, two sub-hospitals in the district, and six pharmacies must be operated. This fuel is needed to run the electricity generation in these hospitals and also to run the ambulances that must take serious cases to the Vavuniya hospital. Despite these urgent needs only 2750 liters of fuel has been allocated for the health services in the Mullaitivu district.

OBITUARY

Dr. Adrian Thurairajah



Retired Chest and TB specialist, beloved husband of Wimala, loving father of Chandramohan, Nalayini, Pratheepan and Saseendran, father-in-law of Krishna, Sejal and Keshi and grandfather of Priti, Ishaan and Averneesh, passed away on 22nd April 2008. The funeral will be held in London at 1pm on Sunday, 27th April 2008 at Hendon Crematorium.

No 6 Glenalmond Road, Kenton, Middx HA8 6AA
Tel: 0208 204 9128

NEWS

Abuses threaten EU trade concessions

SRI LANKA'S garment industry is worried that the duty free access it enjoys to European markets will soon be cut due to the gross human rights violations related to the government's pursuit of a military solution to the long-standing ethnic conflict.

An end to European Union (EU) trade concessions, known as Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+), according to some estimates, will result in the direct loss of at least a 100,000 jobs in the pivotal garment industry and many more, indirectly.

The GSP+ scheme allows duty free exports of almost all major Sri Lankan products, into the EU, but the garment industry has been the main beneficiary, which generates an annual revenue of \$1.6 billion per year.

Poor rights record

The existing concession comes up for review in later this year, in October and earlier this year a visiting EU delegation linked trade concessions to human rights record and said that the extension of the GSP+ concessions for Sri Lanka were yet to be considered.

The EU has indicated that continuance of the GSP+ depends on how well the Sri Lankan government is seen to be implementing 27 international conventions on human rights, labour rights and environmental standards.

"It is totally based on fulfilling these conventions. This (current review) is a technical exercise on compliance with these conventions. This means not just having the laws, but also implementing them," said Julian Wilson, head of the European Commission (EC) delegation to Sri Lanka.

The EU has been severely critical of the government's human rights record. There is fear that such issues as the harassment of journalists and rising political abductions, could be used as a reason to discontinue the GSP+ scheme. As one of the four Co-Chairs of the 2003 Tokyo Conference on the Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka, the EU helped raise pledges for post-conflict development worth 4.5 billion US dollars.

300 years of trade

Wilson denied that the EU is using the GSP+ as a political tool. "We have a commercial relationship with Sri Lanka that spans 300 years. This is not to be thrown out on a whim. So the entire exercise will be undertaken with absolute professionalism. There will be no political games."

"The extension of the GSP Plus scheme appears to be an uphill task since Sri Lanka did not fully satisfy the conditions set out by the EU such as Human Rights, good governance and environment," according to Chairman of Sri Lanka Apparel Institute, Professor Lakdas Fernando.



The garment industry will be hardest hit as Sri Lanka's rights abuses result in the EU withdrawing concessions. Photo AFP/Getty Images

Sovereignty first

Whilst the garment industry is fearful of an end to concessions, the Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse is less worried and has taken the view that compliance with international human rights laws could lead to infringement of sovereignty.

Speaking at the launch of the Central Bank Annual Report 2007 the President insisted that although the government is taking every possible measure to receive the GSP+ concessions, compromising the sovereignty of the country is not one of them.

"If the influences of the treacherous parties in the country succeed and the EU rejects the concessions. Our private sector should be able to increase their productivity and face these external challenges as well".

However, worried about the prospect of losing the concessions, last month, the government appointed a four-member ministerial team to work with the garment industry and dispel some of the concerns raised by the EU.

In mid-March, trade minister Prof. G.L. Peiris led delegation to Europe for a series of meetings, including one with Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations.

According to reports, Ferrero-Waldner, indicated to Peiris in no uncertain terms that Sri Lanka would qualify for GSP plus benefits only if the human rights record was put in order.

She was also rather critical of the ongoing ethnic war and even told the Minister that; "the war

will never solve any problem in Sri Lanka."

In January, the government unilaterally ended a Norwegian-brokered ceasefire accord with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and embarked on a military campaign to defeat it.

According to Sri Lankan media, even as Peiris returned to the country after a failed mission in Brussels to convince the EU officials of Sri Lanka's compliance to human rights laws and good governance, Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Ajith Nivard Cabraal told the BBC that the GSP+ facility was not really necessary. He not only dismissed the concessions as disposable but also said he had personally advised the government the concessions were not essential to the garment industry.

Non-compliance

In 2005 when GSP+ came up for renewal, Sri Lanka made a plea for extension on compassionate grounds as the country had been badly hit by the December 2004 tsunami and was also recovering from the end of garment quotas offered by the United States.

Under the original agreement between the EU and the government in 2003, Sri Lanka was obliged to 'ratify and fully implement' a set of 27 international conventions including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

While most or all of these conventions were ratified by Colombo, far ahead of countries

like China or India, it's the implementation that concerns workers. "Yes we have ratified these covenants but the implementation is the problem," Anton Marcus, general secretary of the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees' Union said.

Union Support

Last month, the government gained unexpected support from local trade unions, which once said that employers and government violated core labour conventions and therefore should not be benefit from the GSP+.

"They don't comply by the labour standards but if Sri Lanka loses the GSP+ the impact will be on the workers. So we do not want to see the GSP+ being taken away. But we do want some indication that core labour standards will be adhered to," said Marcus, last month.

Marcus said the labour groups met a EU delegation visiting Colombo last month and said that they would back the government request for an extension of the special concession if the roadmap is implemented and international trade unions are also appointed as monitors in this process.

"We have no problem in supporting this as long as the workers get their rights," he said, adding that one of the issues in the roadmap is the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

"This is a key element in the core labour standards agreed by the government in 2003 to the EU which is yet to be implemented,"

Marcus said.

Last week, US Ambassador Robert Blake told a meeting of the garment trade, that while Sri Lanka is trying to convince U.S. policy makers to give preferential trade treatment, on the grounds of being a vulnerable economy and on the basis of ethical manufacturing standards, the country's negative human rights image 'eclipsed' everything else.

The U.S. is the biggest market for Sri Lanka's garment industry which expects to bring in three billion US dollars this year.

Escape again

Whilst Sri Lanka continues to commit gross human rights violation, it may, as in the past, yet again escape from any punitive measures or sanctions by the international community.

According to local media, Roshan Lyman, EU Economic and Trade Advisor in Sri Lanka, has sent out an optimistic note to the country, informing that Sri Lanka still has plenty of opportunities to improve her human rights situation.

"We have to first do an evaluation of all the applications and that will start only in October. Certainly, Sri Lanka has time till October. We have a legal department in Brussels and only when they get all the documents for evaluation, the department will release its final results. And this will be on December 15, or so. It is after December 15 that the legal department of the EU will give out the list of countries that qualify for GSP plus benefits."

NEWS

US aid flows despite abuses

DESPITE continuing human rights violations including intimidation of media personnel, abductions and killings attributed to state security forces, the US has announced \$ 12 million in aid to Sri Lanka.

The U.S. government announcement comes, even as the U.S. congress ruled out Sri Lanka for a debt cancellation programme due to its human rights situation.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded a five-year, \$12 million contract to support regional government in Sri Lanka's eastern and north central provinces.

Prior to the Pradeshiya sabha elections, US Ambassador Robert Blake raised his concerns of a stage managed 'election' in the Batticaloa District and emphasized the urgent need to disarm all armed groups operating in the East. He also publicly warned that US aid to Batticaloa would not be forthcoming if the elections were not free and fair.

The elections conducted under in an atmosphere of fear and violence were won by Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), an Army-backed paramilitary group. However deviating from its initial position the U.S. has now decided to fund the regional government headed by the paramilitary group, accused of numerous rights abuses including torture, extortion, kidnapping, and killings.

According to USAID, the investment will expand the agency's democracy and governance work by helping to improve the areas of security, local government accountability

and conflict resolution.

"USAID remains committed to its assistance programs in Sri Lanka despite the renewed conflict," said Rebecca Cohn, USAID/Sri Lanka mission director. "We're confident our new partnership with ARD will support our goal of helping Sri Lanka and apply the best governance practices from around the world."

The program, called Supporting Regional Governance, will build on USAID/Sri Lanka's successful democracy and governance efforts, designed several years ago to address development needs resulting from the on-going ethnic conflict after the ceasefire agreement. The new program also aims to improve regional government in eastern Sri Lanka by increasing citizen participation.

In the meantime, the United States Congress is expected to endorse a legislative proposal shortly urging for the cancellation of debts owed by some of the world's poorest countries but nations including Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Laos have been singled out due to their human rights situation and other financial management standard issues.

Sri Lanka's debt to the United States alone amounts to a whopping Rs. 53 billion while the total foreign debt is a massive Rs. 1.3 trillion according to the Central Bank 2007 Annual Report.

Jubilee USA Network, a group representing more than 80 religious denominations, development agencies, and human rights organisations from across the United States are spearheading the campaign calling for the cancellations of the debts.



Tamil aid workers are amongst thousands murdered by Sri Lankan forces in the past two years alone

The network is of the view that the lending practices of international financial institutions are responsible for the suffering of the poor in developing nations.

"Twenty-two countries have already received close to 100 per cent cancellation of their debts to the IMF, World Bank and regional development banks," the network disclosed.

Sri Lanka falls under the International Monetary Fund's Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) programme but according to reports, the island does not meet the Jubilee Act standards in human rights and financial management standards.

The proposed legislation calls for 'greater responsibility' in lending and borrowing in the future. Supporters of the bill say current lending practices are hampering development initiatives in many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Iran and Sri Lanka strength relations

RECENT announcements of an investment of US \$ one billion by Iran in Sri Lanka and a two-day state visit by Iranian president demonstrated the growing ties between Sri Lanka and Iran.

According to Sri Lanka's Petroleum and Petroleum Resources Development Minister A.H.M. Fowzie, Iran, the largest provider of crude oil to Sri Lanka, will increase its investment in the expansion project of an oil refinery in Sri Lanka.

Fowzie in an interview with Japanese news agency Kyodo on Wednesday said: "Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has allocated this amount which would cover 70 per cent of the required investment for the refinery's expansion, in the form of a 10 year loan, with a five year exemption period from payment of the loan's installments."

Fowzie added: "Iran had earlier too provided the oil we need free from interest for four months."

Fowzie said the project would yield noticeable benefits for its investors. He said: "From the economic point of view my affiliated ministry too is interested in making investments there."

Managing Director Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) Ashantha De Mel commenting on the investment said that the pilot study for increasing the production of Sri Lanka's only refinery from 50,000 to 100,000 barrels per day has been completed by Iranian oil engineers.

De Mel added: "Iran would make the major part of the required investment for expansion of this oil refinery (70 per cent) and the CPC would cover the rest (30 per cent)."

De Mel who visited Iran in

early April 2008, expects the project's executive phase to begin within the next three to four months. Oil experts predict that Sri Lanka's oil refinery would increase its production after the Iranian oil engineers would end their work within three years.

Reflecting the growing trade and political ties between the two nations, Iranian President Ahmadinejad is making a two-day state visit to Sri Lanka from April 28 on an invitation from President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

"We are privileged to have him as this is his first Asian tour," said Deputy Foreign Minister Hussain Baila.

Among the projects to be launched by the Iranian president is the Uma Oya hydropower project at Wellawaya in Monaragala district, Baila said, adding Iran had agreed to grant \$450 million for it. The project has been estimated to produce 100 MW of electricity and supply water to agricultural and industrial sectors.

Ahmadinejad is also expected to enter into an agreement with his Sri Lankan counterpart for modernizing the Sapugaskanda oil refinery, Sri Lanka's lone enhancing project. The refinery is to handle Iran's light crude.

"We have friendly relations with all the nations and Iran is one of our best friends," Baila stressed.

Following the Rajapaksa's visit to Tehran in November 2007, Iran agreed to invest 1.9 billion dollars in Sri Lanka.

The Iranian president's visit comes at a time when US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown have said they are working to extend sanctions against Iran's nuclear programme.

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM

CHETTY & CO.
SOLICITORS

- ★ CRIME
- ★ IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY
- ★ FAMILY(DIVORCE/CHILDREN ACT)
- ★ CONVEYANCE(Residential & Business)
- ★ LANDLORD & TENANT
- ★ CIVIL LITIGATION

- ★ PERSONAL INJURY CLAIM
- ★ WILLS, PROBATE & TRUSTS
- ★ BUSINESS MATTERS
- ★ HOUSING AND WELFARE BENIFT
- ★ EMPLOYMENT
- ★ CONSUMER AFFAIRS

894 Garratt Lane
Tooting, London SW19 0NB
Tel: 020 8677 4770

79, Hoe Street
Walthamstow, London E17 4SA
Tel: 020 8521 1313

NEWS

India's Tamils wants arms stopped

TAMIL NADU leaders, including Chief Minister of the state called on the Indian government to stop supplying weapons to the Sri Lankan state and assist in finding a last solution to decades long ethnic conflict.

Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi suggested that India organise negotiations between the warring parties in Sri Lanka to bring peace to the island nation.

"To bring about peace in Sri Lanka, the Union government should come forward to organise useful negotiations so that a proper political solution is thrashed out," he said in an interview to The Times of India.

Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder-leader S. Ramadoss, also reflected similar sentiments when met the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

Ramadoss said he had also brought to Singh's notice the genocide of innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka.

"The Prime Minister sympathised with the plight of the Tamils and said the government would take all measures to restore peace and tranquility in Sri Lanka. India would not supply to Sri Lanka any arms and weapons

which would be offensive in nature."

He also drew the attention of Singh on the frequent "attacks" on Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy and asked the government to stop them.

The general secretary of Tamil Nadu's Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Vaiko on Thursday met Indian Premier Manmohan Singh in Delhi and requested the Indian government to mount diplomatic pressure on the Sri Lankan government to stop its military offensive and initiate peace talks for a workable solution to fulfill the aspirations of Sri Lankan Tamils.

Vaiko met Indian PM to brief him on his meeting with Erik Solheim and Jon Hanssen-Bauer in Oslo and the outcome of the conference organised by the International Association for Human Values (IAHV) in Norway's capital last week.

Vaiko told the Prime Minister that the situation in Sri Lanka was becoming grave day by day, endangering the life and security of Tamils. Innocent Tamils were being killed by the military. He explained the plight and misery of Tamils living in jungles without

food and medicine. While seeking the government's intervention, he requested that India should not provide arms to Sri Lanka.

However, Indian Premier Manmohan Singh told Vaiko who met him Thursday in New Delhi that there is no truth in reports on Indian supply of arms to Sri Lanka.

Vaiko said the Prime Minister told him about India's stand -that there could be no military solution to the problem. Singh assured him, saying: "We are not supplying arms to Sri Lanka. I will discuss the matter with the Foreign Minister and see what can be done."

The MDMK leader also urged the Indian Prime Minister to prevail upon Colombo to abide by its earlier pledge to honor the contiguity of the traditional homeland of Tamil speaking people in a merged NorthEast.

He also brought the grave human rights situation in Sri Lanka, where Tamils are subjected to a systematic genocide, to the attention of the Indian PM.

He reminded the Indian PM on his earlier promise, in a meeting with him on March 10, 2007, to facilitate the transport of

humanitarian supplies through the ICRC to Eelam Tamils who are heavily affected by the war and the blockade by the Government of Sri Lanka. The humanitarian supplies were collected from Tamils in Tamil Nadu.

Urging the Indian Prime Minister to take immediate steps to dispatch humanitarian supplies he also requested Mr. Manmohan Singh to withdraw the radar equipments supplied by India to the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF), which has been responsible for many attacks on Tamil civilians. Many Tamil children have been killed and seriously injured in the attacks carried out by the SLAF, Vaiko told the Indian PM.

He later met the External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee at his residence in Delhi.

Mukherjee told Vaiko that India had repeatedly reminded Colombo that military solution was not the option to solve the Tamil question.

Vaiko urged Mukherjee to prevail upon Colombo to cease all military hostilities as it was the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) which was responsible for the aggression.

Prior to his visit to Delhi,

Vaiko was in Oslo attending a conference, titled "Peace and Reconciliation in South Asia," organized by the International Association for Human Values.

In Oslo, Vaiko met Norwegian International Development Minister Erik Solheim and Jon Hanssen-Bauer, the Norwegian Special Envoy and held discussion relating to the ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

The International Community should be made aware that the Norwegian facilitated CFA had collapsed as the Sri Lankan Government seriously violated the CFA, clause by clause, and systematically scuttled it fully, before unilaterally withdrawing from the ceasefire, he said.

The International Community, which had failed to apply timely pressure on the GoSL to honour the CFA, while the agreement was still in force, should now re-evaluate its approach to Sri Lanka based on the past experiences and adopt a strategy, which will result in restoring the diplomatic balance between the protagonists to the conflict so as to create and sustain a conducive environment for negotiations.

War continues, p2

Norway urges India to play key peace role

Sri Lanka rejects future Oslo role

NORWAY last week urged India to play a more proactive role in the Sri Lankan conflict by mediating between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and said it stands ready to fully support such an initiative.

However Sri Lanka dismissed any Norwegian involvement in future peace efforts and said it will not issue a special invitation to its 'big brother' to play the role of mediator.

Speaking to Indian media on the sidelines of a Conference on Peace and Reconciliation in South Asia, organised in Oslo by Art of Living Foundation of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Norway's special envoy to Colombo Jon Hanssen-Bauer said that India was to be the "main partner" for Sri Lanka in the future, and that Oslo was in regular touch with New Delhi over the issue of peace process in its neighbouring country.

India will play the "most decisive" role in the peace process in Sri Lanka being the "best-placed regional power" to help the island nation, Baur said.

The top Norwegian diplomat, who was appointed the special envoy in 2006, said: "India is the main neighbour to Sri Lanka and they are always taking a keen interest in helping Sri Lanka. I think India will play the most decisive role in the peace process."

"India is Sri Lanka's big trade partner, it is also a political partner for a long time and they (India) would be the best-placed regional power to actually help Sri Lanka in the best way."

Stressing that Norway was having "very open communications" with India on the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, the envoy said: "We are consulting with them very frequently because we think India has a lot of good advice to give."

Bauer also insisted it is still not the end of the road for the Norwegian's as facilitators to the conflict and says they will resume their mediation if an invitation is extended by the parties in Sri Lanka.

Norway brokered the now-defunct ceasefire between the Sri



Indian, Sri Lankan, Norwegian and other delegates at the 'Peace' conference in Oslo last week.

Lankan government and the LTTE in 2002 and mediated six rounds of talks.

"We have always supported the Sri Lankan government and are hopeful that an invitation will soon be extended to us by both parties to re-enter the facilitation process", Bauer added.

"It will turn out to be vital if India can mediate and get both the Government and the LTTE back to the peace table. Norway has never abandoned the Sri Lankan Government and if India mediates, we will fully support them"

Bauer further said no "externally designed solution" would end Sri Lanka's dragging ethnic conflict and Oslo would be more than happy to back "any solution endorsed by the Sri Lankan people. One should not be tempted to

impose externally designed solutions to conflicts, but assist the parties in defining a domestic one.

"The common understanding between the Government and the LTTE has been that talks are aimed at finding a political solution that is acceptable to all communities in the country."

"For Norway, any solution endorsed by the Sri Lankan people is acceptable" he claimed.

Although Sri Lanka has withdrawn from the Norway-brokered ceasefire agreement of 2002 with the LTTE, Oslo remains the designated facilitator between the two sides.

Reacting to Norway's offer to continue its mediating role, Government Defence Spokesperson, Minister Keheliya Ramb-

ukwella said the Sri Lankan government would not re-extend an invitation to Norway to enter the country as mediators.

He also said that the Sri Lankan government will not issue a special invitation to India to play the role of mediator.

"We do not need to offer any special invitation to India. The moment we get our friends involved in the Sri Lankan conflict, it turns out to be volatile as the LTTE does not want peace in this country," Rambukwella told the Daily Mirror newspaper.

Rambukwella added, India has always been involved in the Sri Lankan conflict by offering its assistance to the Sri Lankan government when required and as such there was no need to invite them for any direct involvement.

K & K Stationers & Printers Ltd

**Supplier of Stationery, Art, Craft
and Computer Printer Accessories**

**94 Mitcham Road
London, SW17 9NG
Tel: 020 8767 5149 / 2398
Fax: 020 8767 3210
e-mail: kandk@kandkstationers.com**

**Associate Company
Partridges
295-297 Lavender Hill
London SW11 1LP
Tel: 020 7228 7271 / 8204
Fax: 020 7978 4148
e-mail: partridges@kandkstationers.com**

SHAUN FOODS & WINE



**229, STREATHAM ROAD
LONDON
SW16 6NZ
TEL: 0208 769 3105**

With Compliments

SELVARAJA GOLD HOUSE Retailer & Wholesaler of Designers Jewelleries

Specilised in 22CT. Gold Jewellery

**162 B Mitcham Road
London
SW17 9NJ
Tel: 020 8767 3795**

NEWS

Severe food shortage ...

Continued from p5

Consumer Protection Act.

However traders are not happy with the move and they shut down Colombo's wholesale market on Thursday in protest against the new, uneconomical administered prices.

Interference in private trade by the Mahinda Rajapaksa government in recent times has harmed the economy and social welfare, traders added.

The controlled price of a 65-kg sack of "samba" rice is now SLRs.4030, but the purchase price is SLRs.5400, traders point out.

"The government has taken a hasty decision without consulting us," the president of the Old Moor Street Traders' Association, K Palaniandi Sunderam, said.

"We can't sell at the price that the government is imposing because we have bought the rice already at a higher price."

He also said the country's civil

war was having an effect on supplies, with restrictions on movement meaning that the harvest from the north could not reach the south of the island.

Gunawardena rejected the suggestion that there was a rice shortage in Sri Lanka and said it was a propaganda campaign that was launched before the New Year by "groups with vested interests" to artificially increase rice prices.

Whilst Gunawardena added that traders were free to import any amount of rice, without tax, from any country, a desperate Sri Lankan government pleaded with India, Pakistan and Myanmar to sell some rice.

Hunger hotspot

The World Food Programme in a recent report listed Sri Lanka among eleven countries identified as "hunger's global hotspots". The other countries on the list are Afghanistan, Chad, Democratic

Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Rise in food prices is worrying because food accounts for 80 per cent of household expenditure in Sri Lanka. An average family has to spend as much as SLRs.4,000 (\$37) per month on rice alone, making it unaffordable.

Many may have to resort to cutting down on food, but this will only worsen the already worrying nutritional status of the population.

According to the Department of Census and Statistics, only half of Sri Lanka's total population of 20 million receives the minimum daily intake of 2,030 calories. The actual intake is 1,696 calories per day in the case of the poor, and 2,194 in the case of others.

But according to the UNICEF, 14 per cent of children under the age of five show signs of wasting or acute undernourishment, and 29 per cent are underweight.

Food security ...

Continued from p5

Child nutrition

"Sri Lanka has a significantly higher child underweight rate than would be expected on the basis of its [annual] per capita GDP [of US\$1,599]," Lequime said. "Indeed, Sri Lanka has a child underweight rate that may be three times as high as what would be expected from a country with Sri Lanka's level of infant mortality."

UNICEF said 14 percent of children under five in Sri Lanka showed signs of wasting (acute underweight) and stunting (chronic underweight) while 29 percent of children younger than five were underweight for their age.

However, districts that have been affected by conflict record even higher rates, according to UNICEF's Weiss.

WFP said the continuing conflict between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had also raised concerns regarding overall food

security and nutrition levels in the conflict zone.

"Food insecurity levels are high in areas affected by the conflict, according to the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification conducted by WFP in April 2007," Lequime said. "Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Mannar and parts of Vavuniya [districts] are classified as acute food and livelihood crises. Jaffna and Batticaloa are classified as a humanitarian emergency."

There are also fears that national nutritional levels will deteriorate further due to rising food prices caused by inflation running at a record high of 17.5 percent, the WFP official said.

"Heavy unseasonal rainfall over much of Sri Lanka, including the conflict-affected areas, has destroyed much of the main 'Maha' rice harvest, which when combined with global price rises and food shortages may indicate major problems for the future," according to Lequime.

Sham abuse probes ...

Continued from p3

independent special prosecutors in cases in which the security forces have been involved in serious human rights violations.

- The Government of Sri Lanka should provide the immediate and necessary financial resources to the Commission of Inquiry, and place adequate funds at its disposal, to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

Among the cases being probed by the Commission of Inquiries and monitored by IIGEP was the August 2006 massacre of 17 local aid staff working with a French charity in the island's northeast.

The evidence in this case has pointed to the involvement of security forces and a state cover-up.

Food, oil price rises worse ...

Continued from p5

textile sector was likely to be more resilient than industries on which some other countries rely such as vehicle manufacturer or electronic goods.

Given global market conditions, he said Sri Lanka had no intentions of following last year's Eurobond issue with another.

He said the island's foreign direct investment was at its high-

est level ever at \$450 million in the last year, coming from China, Asia, Australia and Europe amongst other places - but with increasing volumes coming from emerging Asian economies.

Investors seemed largely unconcerned by the collapse of a 2002 ceasefire, he said, as well as a series of reports from human rights groups on worsening trends in abductions, torture and killings as the two-decade-old war

resumed.

"In a conflict of this nature it is inevitable the stories are going around," he said, saying any "hot-headed moments and excesses" were being investigated.

"But we find those who are investing are doing it only on economic grounds. If you look at some other countries where there are lots of human rights violations they are attracting a lot of investment."

FEATURES

Life in Jaffna: the seen and the unseen, the told and the untold

Asif Fuard
Sunday Times

WHEN we visited Jaffna town last week, it appeared to be buzzing with life. People were attending to their New Year shopping while Tamil music blared in the background--probably from the shops that were being decorated for the festivities. Buses were plying and young girls were cycling to temple even as dusk fell.

These are scenes that were rarely seen in the recent past. However, people still live in fear, although the government claims that troops have successfully eliminated Tigers operating in the town area, ushering a sense of freedom for the people.

A shopkeeper, who spoke on grounds of anonymity, said he and his family lived in constant fear in spite of the air of normality. "Things are normal compared to what it was. But some paramilitary groups still demand money from us. We have no choice but to give into their demands or else we would be abducted or killed. A few months ago a man who had not paid to a certain group, went missing the next day. We don't complain to the authorities since they do little about it anyway."

Although Jaffna peninsula was liberated during the December 1995 Operation Riviresa (Sun Rays), LTTE cells continued to operate in the region. It is argued that the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement gave the LTTE the opportunity to capitalize on the situation, by forcibly recruiting people, conscripting child soldiers, attacking government troops and organizing agitation campaigns that crippled the region.

In the past few months the government has been claiming that troops had successfully eliminated many LTTE cells. But the ground situation tells another story. We were escorted amidst tight security in convoys of BTR armoured personnel carriers, even to the Jaffna town, which has been proclaimed safe.

In spite of government propaganda, Jaffna Security Forces commander Major General G.A Chandrasiri conceded that there were about 1000 to 1500 LTTE cadres still within the peninsula.

"We have managed to bring the situation under control. People in Jaffna have started rebuilding their lives. We are in the process of clearing the region of the LTTE that has caused hardship to the people. We kill about 10-15 LTTE cadres, daily. Normality has returned to the region," he said.

But still the people have many woes, especially the consumers. While some traders say they are losing out on business others say

they are even making profits. A merchant Arun Jayakumar said the prices of goods in Jaffna has sky rocketed due to the closure of the A-9 road and the high cost of sea transport.

"People can no longer afford not to work even for one day. They have hardly any money, so they buy just a few essential items," he complained. While the price of a kilo of rice at Rs. 90 and a coconut at Rs. 50 were similar to the going prices in the South now, sugar was an exorbitant Rs. 140, followed closely by dhal at Rs. 130 and flour at Rs. 120.

With fuel rationed, black market sales were thriving openly in the market. A bottle of kerosene oil sold at Rs. 200, while petrol was sold at Rs. 300. "We have no choice but to sell essential items at high prices. We have to fight against the shortage of supplies," a black market vendor said.

Mohamed Raufi who is from Kathankudi, Batticaloa says he has started doing business in Jaffna as it was profitable. "In spite of the A 9 being closed I make a good profit. I buy material from Colombo and bring it here by ship. Sometimes of course I don't make any money at all," he said.

However, S. Kandaiyah, a clothes shop owner said he was losing out on business. He said he is compelled to sell his goods at a high price because transport costs were high. However he lamented people were not buying clothes.

"I have three schooling children and a mother who is sick. I don't know how I will survive the next few weeks if I don't get customers. People just don't buy clothes or material anymore. If this trend continues I will have to close my shop," he said.

On visiting a fishing village, Gurnagar, we noticed there were no fishermen although boats had been moored. A senior military official explaining the situation said this was because fishermen avoided the scorching afternoon sun. He also added that fishing was done on a low key because the LTTE was firing artillery and mortar into the village from a locality identified as Kalmunai point (K-point). However, residents said it was the heavy security restrictions on fishermen that had virtually crippled the industry. The health sector in the peninsula is also facing a crisis with there being more than 1300 vacancies for nearly 86 hospitals and dispensaries.

Muhamalai: A view from the FDL

We are at the frontlines of Muhamalai, a deep rumbling sound of a blast is heard from the army Forward Defence Line (FDL). Seconds later thick black smoke rises into the air. "Sir do we



Life continues in Jaffna, but locals live in constant fear of abductions and murders.

retaliate," a captain asks his commanding officer, a Lt. Colonel.

In a casual tone he says, "They must have learnt about the movement of armoured vehicles. They don't usually attack in the afternoons, other than a bit of sporadic fire and maybe a few mortars falling in front of our FDL." This time what we heard, we are told is a mortar fired from the FDL lines of the LTTE to the FDL lines of the Army. This is followed by sounds of some sporadic gun fire that dies down within minutes.

We are asked to put on body

armour and helmets before approaching the bunkers on the Army FDLs and are warned that LTTE snipers are scanning the area to target soldiers guarding the FDL. Later the Army shells the LTTE side of the FDL, a routine afternoon operation we are told.

"The stretch between the Forward Defence Line of the armed forces in Muhamalai and that of the LTTE, designated as no-man's land has been successfully infiltrated by the military. Our special units have reached the edge of the perimeter beyond which the LTTE stronghold lies,"

Division-55 Commander, Brigadier Kamal Guneratne says.

He says their movements are being hampered by anti personnel mines, improvised explosive devices strung together to form a high-impact cluster bomb and booby traps. Later we hear at the Jaffna Security Forces headquarters, that a soldier who had been part of the operation in the frontlines of Muhamalai, when we visited the area, had lost a leg to an improvised explosive device. *Asif Fuard was a member of a media team taken on a conducted tour of Jaffna by the military.*

Easan & co

Chartered Management Accountants

- ❖ Self Assessment
- ❖ VAT Returns
- ❖ Accounts & Book Keeping
- ❖ Management Accounting
- ❖ Tax Returns
- ❖ PAYE

Specialists in Arranging Commercial Loan

196 Merton High Street South, Wimbledon
London SW19 1AX

Tel: 020 8543 8484, Fax: 020 8540 0107



The Yellow House, one of five Houses who competed in the British Tamils Athletics Meet on April 13, is pictured during the parade at the start of the event. *More p8-9*

**BRITISH
TAMIL
INFORMATION
DIRECTORY**

Murasam Publications Ltd
P.O. Box 2803
Mitcham CR4 2WW
Tel: 020 8665 2751
email: info@murasam.com
web: www.murasam.com

முரசம்

www.murasam.com

**TOOTING
SUPERMARKET**

66 Tooting High
Street
London
SW17 0RL

**Tel: 0208 682 1157
Mob: 07951 103 636**

RAGU TRAVELS
A world wide travel agents

For reliable, friendly and efficient service at competitive rates

- ☆ Air tickets
- ☆ Travel Insurance
- ☆ Transportation
- ☆ Visa arrangement for India

Ragu Estate agents

- ☆ Property Management
- ☆ Lettings, Sales
- ☆ Mortgages
- ☆ Construction

**Call Ragu on
020 8586 2323
020 8471 9100**

**258, High Street North
Manor Park, E12 6SB
Tel: 020 8471 4454, Fax: 020 8586 2489**

Advertise in Tamil Guardian

Email info@tamilguardian.com
for rates and details.