

# TAMIL GUARDIAN

No. 373 ISSN 1369-2208

WEDNESDAY MAY 21, 2008

*free fortnightly*

The logic of Sinhala 'insecurity' and the Tamil people

PAGE 9

## Tamils mourn Balraj



Brigadier Balraj, a top commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamileelam (LTTE), passed away Tuesday aof a sudden heart attack in Vanni. The LTTE leadership has announced national mourning for three days (21-23 May). In his 20-year career, Brig. Balraj led several victories against the Sri Lankan and Indian military. *Report p3*

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## NEWS

# Sri Lanka has 'underestimated' Tigers' tenacity

WHEN the commanders of Sri Lanka's military pledged in a New Year's message to wipe out terrorism by the end of 2008, they may have been anticipating a walkover in LTTE-held territory.

But weeks of fighting in the north and repeated bombings in other parts of the country have left Sri Lankans with the sinking feeling that it will only get worse before it gets any better.

"I don't think they have really appreciated the tenacity and fighting spirit of the LTTE," said Gen. Gerry de Silva, a retired army commander.

"After the euphoria of capturing the east with the assistance of the Karuna faction, they thought the Wannu (north region) would also be easy meat. But the Tigers have proved they are no pushover."

Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, alias Karuna – the LTTE's former eastern commander who broke away from the group in 2004 – is no longer of any help. Earlier this year, a British court sentenced him to nine months in jail for entering the country on a Sri Lankan diplomatic passport that carried his photograph but a different name.

While the military wants to thrust into the rebel-controlled Wannu as quickly as possible, most analysts warn that such an expedition could prove disastrous for the troops.

"The LTTE would want to defend the Wannu," de Silva said. "I think the 18-month-long military campaign in the east has allowed them time to fortify the Wannu. They are well prepared."

De Silva also said the rebels

were spreading violence to other parts of the country to "create a problem of overstretch and to draw troops away from the battlefield."

"They know we are also short of manpower resources," he pointed out. "They want forces to be deployed in other areas so that the military's fighting strength in the Wannu and the north is reduced."

The military does not officially admit to a shortage of manpower but in early May army announced a two-week amnesty to deserters. Also, recruitment ads have sprung up in newspapers, TV and billboards.

State-run television also aired a documentary last month about the lives of soldiers at the battlefield, hosted by a popular actress who had travelled to the conflict zone.

The Free Media Movement (FMM) said after recent fighting that government officials had barred photographers from hospitals containing injured soldiers.

"There is an unofficial censorship on the war by both sides," said Sunanda Deshapriya, FMM convenor.

"They are not letting independent journalists report on the conflict and are permitting only guided tours. As a result, this is a silent war," he added.

"The real tragedy is that journalists are not being allowed to report on the realities of civilian casualties or the refugee situation as the war happens. There is also an unofficial line that the media should not contradict the government when reporting war."

"Government statements have become news now."



LTTE fighters approach dead Sri Lankan troops during a clearing operation last week. Photo TamilNet

## Army progress slow amid heavy LTTE resistance

HEAVY fighting continues in the Mannar and Manal Aru areas as Sri Lankan forces attempt to move into Tamil Tiger-held areas amid heavy resistance. There have been sporadic clashes in the northern Jaffna peninsula also.

Following the crushing of a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) offensive in Jaffna on April 23 which left 185 soldiers dead, according to press reports, the northern front has been relatively quiet with sporadic artillery exchanges and raid by both sides.

However in one major clash, on May 5, eight SLA soldiers were killed and twenty wounded

in Mukamaalai, the centre of the frontline in Jaffna.

However, the Manal Aru and Mannar fronts have seen heavy battles. The SLA has been trying since mid-2007 to storm into these areas, but has made little progress. What advances have been made, especially in Mannar have been costly.

Whilst the Defence Ministry reports each day to have killed dozens of Tigers, its claims are not being taken seriously. Some media have started to mockingly publish the cumulative totals of the government's claims in response.

Since President Mahinda Rajapakse assumed office in November 2005, his government has claimed, through announcements and news releases, to have killed over 9,300 LTTE cadres to date, The Sunday Leader said.

So far, according to a compilation of military data, about 360 Tigers have been killed in the fighting in May with the loss of 41 soldiers, Reuters said.

Whilst commentators have questioned the painfully slow advance of the SLA, which is pitching two divisions against the LTTE in Mannar, the government has been announcing the hamlets and villages that it has reached as 'key' victories.

Adampan town, for example, a small cluster of a few houses and town buildings and Palampiddy, have been turned in the Defence Ministry's media briefings into strategic locations in its war to 'liberate' the north.

With the government's support amongst the Sinhala voters linked directly to progress in the war, especially amid the soaring cost of living, the propaganda

efforts have been stepped up.

Whilst a division is officially nine thousand men, many of the newly formed SLA divisions tasked with capturing Mannar and Manal Aru are said to be under-strength due to desertion.

Last Sunday May 18 the LTTE thwarted an SLA attempt to move deeper into Mannar region. At least 26 soldiers were killed and fifty wounded, the LTTE said.

The bodies of six soldiers, along with several weapons and ammunition, were left behind by their retreating comrades. The Army said it lost fifteen soldiers and killed sixty Tigers.

Earlier on May 9, the LTTE defeated another SLA advance towards Karukkaaykkulam, 2 km east of the hamlet of Adampan. Thirty soldiers were killed before the operation, launched with close-air-support from helicopter gunships, was halted. Seven SLA soldiers' bodies were recovered in LTTE clearing operations.

On May 6, another SLA push towards Vaddakkandal was defeated and nine soldiers killed when their armored personnel carrier (APC) blew up.

Battles in both Mannar and Manal Aru routinely involve heavy exchanges of artillery and mortar fire. In Mannar the SLA has also been using battle tanks and APCs. Manal Aru is a region with thick jungle areas.

Whilst the LTTE has put up fierce resistance in some locations, at other locations its fighters have melted away.

In several places inside Army-occupied parts of Mannar, LTTE infiltrators have been killing and wounding soldiers using landmines and explosive devices.



An LTTE machinegun crew setting up on the frontline in Mannar district last week. Photo TamilNet

## NEWS

# Brigadier Balraj passes away

Brigadier Balraj, one of the top commanders of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) passed away on Tuesday of a heart attack. The LTTE has announced three days of national mourning for 21-23 May.

In over two decades of service with the LTTE, Brig. Balraj, 43, rose rapidly through the ranks on the strength of his notable courage and shrewdness on the battlefield, fighters who served with him said.

He had been ailing for some time and had been hospitalised for three months earlier this year, reports said. He had undergone a heart-related operation in 2003, during the Norwegian peace process.

The operation was conducted in a Singapore hospital and he had spent several months recuperating in Vanni thereafter.

Throughout his career, Brig. Balraj, one of the most feared LTTE commanders, preferred to lead from the front and had been seriously wounded many times. His healing was often compounded by his diabetes.

LTTE soldiers who served with Brig. Balraj say preferred to direct battles from amid the exploding shells and flying bullets of the frontline - a few hundred meters from the enemy positions - rather than the confines of a command-centre.

He had twice commanded the LTTE's crack Charles Anthony Regiment. He was its first commander for two years from when it was established in 1991 and commanded it again for two years from 1995.

Brig. Balraj came to particular public prominence for his command of a daring LTTE operation in 2000: he led 1,500 Tigers deep into the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) - held Jaffna peninsula to capture and hold a section of the key A9 highway linking the SLA base complex at Elephant Pass with the Jaffna rearbase areas.

The large strike force slipped into the heavily fortified peninsula by sea and trekked inland from Thalayiadi to the Puthukkaattu Junction on the A9. With complex defences manned by thousands of Sri Lankan troops, such a move had hitherto been considered an impossibility.

It was also considered impossible for a lightly armed strike force, surrounded by thousands of Sri Lankan troops supported by artillery, tanks and airpower to seriously disrupt the key highway.

Brig. Balraj's raid gave the lie to the assumption that no rear depth of defence of a state's conventional army can be seriously threatened by anyone except an armed force with strategic air power.

Holding what became called the 'Vaththirayan Box', a perimeter of a few kilometres deep inside the Jaffna High Security Zone, with no hope of resupply, Brig. Balraj and his troops battled



**In a famous picture, Brigadier Balraj is seen leading Tamil Tiger fighters in one of the most daring missions the LTTE launched. Balraj's strike force is deep inside Sri Lanka Army-controlled territory, on its way to capture and hold a section of the Jaffna-Elephant Pass highway. With only the weapons they carried with them when they infiltrated the Jaffna peninsula by sea, the 1,500 Tiger fighters held their 'cut-out' or 'box' for several weeks against repeated attempts by thousands of Sri Lankan troops supported by tanks and artillery to open the highway. Starved of supplies from Jaffna, the SLA base complex at Elephant Pass collapsed before an LTTE offensive in April 2000.**

the SLA for 34 days with only the light weapons they had carried in or those arms captured from the enemy.

When the LTTE assault on the Elephant Pass base complex began, the garrison there was unable to receive supplies from Jaffna.

The SLA launched repeated ferocious onslaughts against Brig. Balraj's position. As the situation in Elephant Pass became critical, top Sri Lankan commanders converged in Jaffna to mobilise the relief effort, but to no avail: the 'Vaththirayan box' held until the Elephant Pass garrison collapsed before the LTTE offensive.

Balraj (Balasegaram Kandiah) was born on 27 November, 1965. He hails from Kokkuthoduvaay in Mullaitheevu district.

He joined the LTTE in 1983 as a part time member and became a full time member in 1984.

In 1985 he departed for India from Vanni for military training. His batch, travelling under the supervision of a senior LTTE cadre Kandeepan, was confronted by the SLA. Kandeepan and some of the other recruits were killed. Balraj was wounded.

Fellow fighters remark that he had been wounded in combat even before he received his military training: he was in the 9th batch of the LTTE training camp in Tamil Nadu.

When Balraj came back to Vanni, he served with Major

Pasilan in 1986.

Colonel Theepan, Northern Forces Commander of the LTTE, recalled that in one heavy battle at Munthirikaikkulam Balraj took part in an LTTE ambush in which fourteen SLA soldiers were killed and several weapons were seized by the Tigers.

Balraj took part in several ambushes on SLA forces in Vanni during that year, demonstrating

## Commander who rose through the ranks on the strength of his notable courage and shrewdness on the battlefield

considerable courage and battlefield acumen, Col. Theepan said.

However, Balraj's defining moment as a field commander came later during the India - LTTE war. In Jaffna, he fought side by side with Major Pasilan and Major Maran, when the conflict erupted between the LTTE and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in 1987.

Armed with an AK-47 assault rifle and a Rocket-Propelled-Grenade Launcher, Balraj fought Indian forces at Kopaay, destroying battle tanks of the Indian army.

Later, as the LTTE moved from urban- to jungle- warfare and shifted its base to Vanni, he

moved into the deep jungles of Ma'nalaa'ru, which is near his native place of Kokkuthoduvaay.

Balraj was wounded three times during direct confrontations with the Indian Army.

The Indian military launched its Operation Checkmate in several phases and in one phase deployed the elite Gurkha commandos. At one critical battlefront, Balraj launched a surprise frontal assault on the Gurkhas located in open terrain. The ferocity of the LTTE attack forced the elite commandos to scatter into deep into booby-trapped jungle where they suffered heavy casualties.

Adele Balasingham, wife of the LTTE's late theoretician, Anton Balasingham, recalls Brig. Balraj in her book 'Will to Freedom' based on her experiences of living several years with the LTTE.

"Incredible as it may seem, this fighting hero is a reserved man," she writes.

"Balraj is known, loved and respected not only for his legendary military successes and undisputed and abounding courage, but also for his utter commitment and devotion to the cadres under his command. Sensitive and respectful of the sacrifice and tribulations they have endured, Balraj opts to spend as much time as possible in the camps with them."

"A measure of Balraj's courage revealed itself to us when shrapnel smashed his right leg in the Yarl Devi battle of 1993. A decision not to amputate the limb was made and Balraj suffered excruciating pain of limb repair. Compounding his healing problems was unstable diabetes. After many months in bed and a great deal of pain, Balraj eventually walked again on his leg, but the injury left him with a permanent limp and a recurrent wound infection."

"Nevertheless, he viewed his injury as insignificant compared with the suffering and sacrifices of his cadres and continued to function as a field commander in the warzone."

Reports say that even as he was forced to rest in hospital by bouts of illness this year, Brig. Balraj had engaged himself in Mannaar and Manalaaru war fronts where LTTE fighters are putting up stiff resistance against the SLA.

Speaking in May 2006, soon after the Sri Lankan government had launched its opening offensive against the LTTE in Sampur, Brig. (then Colonel) Balraj observed: "The Fourth Eelam War will be the final war, and a terrible war that will bring the long awaited liberation to our people and our homeland. We are certainly positioned to be victorious. The people are with us and our leader will lead us to victory."

## NEWS

# Pillayan is made lord of the east

SIVANESATHURAI Chandrakanthan, alias Pillayan, the head of the paramilitary TMVP (Thamil Makkal Viduthalai Pullikal) has been appointed Chief Minister of the Eastern Provincial Council by President Mahinda Rajapakse, despite the opposition of Muslim leaders.

In the wake of the violently rigged elections in the Eastern Province, which Rajapakse's ruling parliamentary coalition, the UPFA, won in alliance with Pillayan's TMVP, Muslim leaders had insisted as Muslim candidates had been elected to the majority of the seats, a Muslim should be appointed Chief Minister.

And such was the volatility of the campaign based on ethnic lines, the results reflected the mood of the people in the province, The Sunday Leader reported.

The UPFA's 18 elected members comprised eight Muslims, six Tamils and four Sinhalese whilst the UNP-SLMC list returned nine Muslims four Tamils and two Sinhalese. The JVP and the TDNA returned one Sinhalese and one Tamil respectively. In total, of the 35 elected members from both sides, there were 17 Muslim representatives as opposed to 11 Tamils and seven Sinhalese.

The paramilitary TMVP, initially known colloquially as the Karuna Group (after the renegade Tamil Tiger commander which formed it after defecting the Sri Lankan military in 2004), now known as the Pillayan Group (Pillayan took over the leadership last year after a power struggle), was blamed by the opposition and independent election monitors for widespread intimidation and violence during the polls.

Whilst it had been widely expected that the TMVP would rig the elections, the main opposition United National Party, in alliance with the SLMC (Sri Lanka Muslim Congress), the island's largest Muslim party, expected nonetheless to win.

However, the scale and brazenness of the rigging, and the open campaigning by the military for the UPFA-TMVP – with even army helicopters used to drop hundreds of thousands of leaflets – ensured President Rajapakse's much desired win was assured.

The UNP accused the government of intimidating voters and of rigging the poll by using armed groups. Reports from the east say bundles of votes were found inside ballot boxes – evidence of wide scale rigging.

CMEV said it was concerned

that the fears expressed by political parties and monitors regarding an upsurge of violence and malpractice on polling day were confirmed by accounts of systematic impersonation, ballot stuffing, the chasing away of polling agents and the intimidatory presence of armed groups in the vicinity of polling.

The government was unperturbed and defiant.

"The government victory at the eastern polls has shattered the wild dreams of the West-backed Eelamists," Champika Ranawaka, the environment minister and leader of the ultra-nationalist JHU monks party, said.

Ranawaka claimed the results have proved "not only Sinhalese but even Tamils have placed their faith in the government".

The minister's comments were also an implicit attack on the UNP-SLMC combine, which had been openly supported by Western nations amid the expectation the rigging could not affect the outcome.

The UNP has made much of its links with the Western governments, press reports said.

For example, UNP parliamentarian Sajith Premadasa told one election meeting his party has the ability to go to the international community, foreign ambassadors, and aid agencies and obtain direct development aid to develop the East.

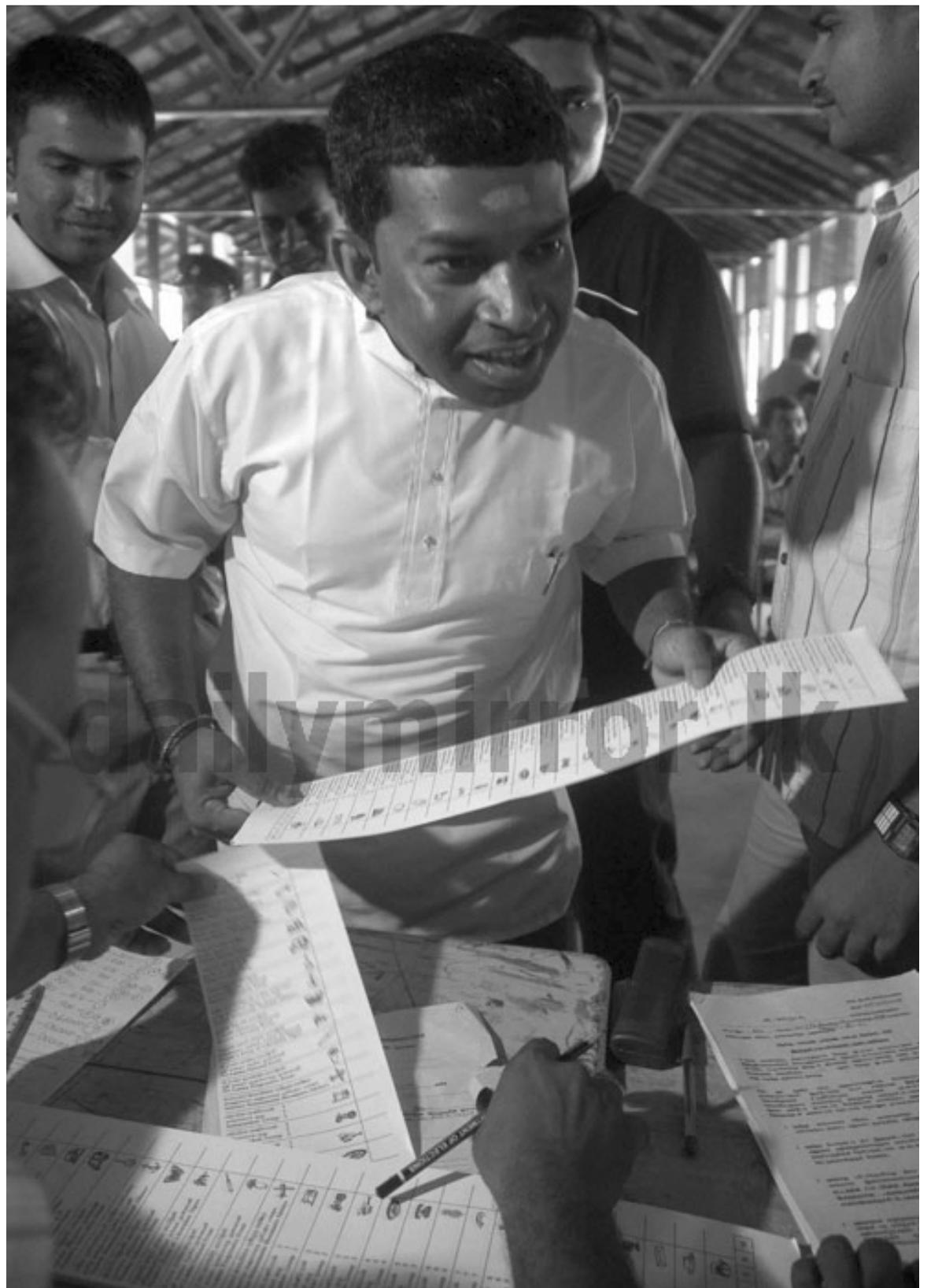
"Let me tell you one thing. Many foreign countries are waiting to provide aid to develop Trincomalee district, particularly the Kantale area. Thus, as soon as we snatch the power in the provincial council, we won't have to depend on the central government," he was quoted as saying.

SLMC leader Rauff Hakeem said the appointment of Pillayan as chief minister was a violation of the constitution.

The JVP said the appointment of Pillayan was a conspiracy by India. The Indian government wanted to achieve two agendas – give police and land powers to the Eastern Provincial Council and set up an interim council for the Northern Province. Both have been achieved, the JVP said.

After much controversy and heated exchanges between Muslim leaders and President Rajapakse, Pillayan was sworn in as Chief Minister at a ceremony in Colombo on May 16.

Just before the ceremony, a suicide bombing, blamed on the Tamil Tigers destroyed a bus carrying riot police deep within one of the city's High Security Zones.



LTTE defector, Pillayan (Sivanesanathurai Chandrakanthan) casting his vote. Rigging assured he won.

## The stakes of being Chief Minister

**Suranimala**  
The Sunday Leader

THE Eastern Provincial Council election came to be identified as one of the most fraudulent in Sri Lanka's political history with ballot stuffing, violence, intimidation and impersonation the order of the day.

From the outset, the government had only one objective in mind and that was to secure the Eastern Province and hand it to the armed TMVP leader Pillayan for administration, while the

security forces kept their focus on the north.

To achieve its overall military objectives the government wanted to ensure stability in the east and believed Pillayan was the way to do so by empowering him politically and set about that task by first holding the local authority elections in Batticaloa followed by the provincial poll.

In setting about this task however, the government knew only too well the importance of the Muslim factor without which securing the Eastern Provincial Council would be nothing more than a dream and moved to lure

the Muslim Congress aboard with Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapakse personally meeting Rauff Hakeem to woo him.

With that effort failing, the government next moved to split the opposition's prospective chief ministerial candidate, M.L.A.M. Hizbullah from the SLMC, dangling the chief ministerial carrot before him and he took the bait on the premise he would be given the top job if more Muslim representatives than Tamils will be returned to the council at the election.

*Continued on p6*

## NEWS



(left) A dozen police died in a suicide-bombing on May 16, the day the new Chief Minister was appointed. (right) the East is the focus of new Sinhala colonisation.

# All set for Sinhhalization of the East

## Who would oppose such Sinhala centralism ?

**Kusal Perera**  
Daily Mirror

THE much wholly manipulated elections for the de-merged Eastern Province came to a close during the week end of May 10-11.

The Sri Lankan government insists it was a free and fair election and said so even during the voting. The government says the victory it gained proves the people in the East have pinned their faith on democracy. JHU boss Champika Ranawake says even the Tamil people have joined in defeating Eelam separatism. Thus the government would now want the South to bear all its corruption, mismanagement and plundering till the war is won in the North.

The opposition rejects the election almost in unison and cries foul. The JVP and the SLMC / UNP alliance said so from the start.

The UNP and Rauf Hakeem came out very clearly in rejecting the results as totally rigged. Election monitoring groups kept pumping news of numerous incidents of thuggery, assault, vote rigging and stuffing all through the day the polling was on.

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) reported over 80 instances of severe rigging where they said voting would have to be cancelled and re-elections held in those booths.

Lanka Polls Watch (LPW) claimed the elections had been so violent it does not reflect the people's decision and therefore the whole election has to be declared null and void.

As for the quality of the elections held, the Opposition and the Election Monitoring groups are of the same mind, though PAFFREL would say the violence this time is a continuation of election violence from all previous regimes.

Granting it is so, the fact that this election was totally rigged does not in any way make any of those violations simple and pardonable. "So what now ?" is the most important question.

Now the Opposition could, if it is really serious about rejecting the election results on the basis of violent rigging, publicly declare they would not accept the results and therefore decide not to take oaths and sit in the Provincial Councils.

With such politics, the role of monitoring bodies too would fold up with a report or two and may be with a media conference that would provide many theoretical arguments.

While all those heavy decisions are deliberated in Colombo, what would happen to the people in the East ? Will their lives change for the better after the PC is established ? Will they get those powers as defined in the

13th Amendment and as promised by the government ?

On May 08th in the 'Daily Mirror' under the caption, 'What makes free and fair different in the East' I noted with much disgust that "Either way, Pillayan winning or losing, numbers of election related violence increasing or decreasing, elections being free and fair or heavily rigged, East will not have democracy under a PC that would any way have to maintain a heavy military presence to exist."

That most unfortunately seems the only option left now, after the elections.

With Trincomalee becoming the provincial capital of the East, the LTTE proved it could penetrate Trinco's most secured area with the sinking of the Navy ship within the harbour itself.

TMVP PC members would carry their arms and openly too as security for themselves. Most of them would have heavy presence of their own armed cadres with justifications that they need to have security in the face of LTTE threats.

State security forces would have to maintain all the barricades, all search operations and all other security measures to help the PC function amidst LTTE ambushes and sporadic attacks. The threat of the LTTE, the presence of heavy military deployments and armed Pillayan cadres would continue without a change.

Within that context, what relevance is there for the 13th Amendment and for its full implementation as promised by the President ? For sure, there is absolutely no chance for any devolution, even to the extent one sees in the South.

Chief Minister of the NC Province, Bertie Premalal, want-

ed the people in the East to vote for the UPFA as that would give them the benefit of having President's development projects in the East. It's thus the President who would decide the course of development, depending on which way the PC goes. That would be how the 13th Amendment is to be fully implemented.

Again, just 3 days before the Eastern elections, 5 schools in the East were taken over by the central government through a gazette notification. Although the 13th Amendment does have provisions for such central government interventions, if the government is politically determined to devolve all powers available under the 13th Amendment, then the government would not take over institutions that are already under the provincial administration.

The government has already moved in with the Oluvil port development work. There is that much marketed "Negenahira Udanaya" [Awakenig of the East] and then "Maga Neguma and Gama Neguma" [Road and village improvement programmes] going East.

All of them not only mean centralising whatever development the government is talking of, but also taking them under the Rajapaksa family. That simply is the petty mindset of Sinhala centralism.

The JHU reacted immediately to the 13th Amendment proposal with their own opposition to devolution and said, "no police powers to the East and even land must not be devolved".

The JVP with their version of "Indian expansionism" wants the 13th Amendment proposal dropped from the APRC. The government would use all of it to

prune the 13th Amendment and the way ahead is too conspicuous that it needs no forecasting.

Who would oppose such Sinhala centralism ?

Not the Opposition for sure. The UNP that tries to safely avoid the issue of devolution would not want to campaign for the 13th Amendment.

Right now the UNP is searching for escape routes to get back to a more Sinhala platform thinking they could also compete with the JHU and the government for Sinhala votes.

In the East too they played for the Sinhala votes. Ravi Karunanayake's stress on the D.S. Senanayake era as one who improved the East, was for the consumption of the Sinhala votes in the East.

He little knew that it was this same DS who changed the demographic pattern in the East against Tamil representation.

So was Ranil Wickremesinghe's last minute statement on the EU's GSP+. He wanted to promote himself as the saviour of the Sinhala labour in the apparel industry, at the expense of all HR violations, for all those violations effect mostly the Tamil polity.

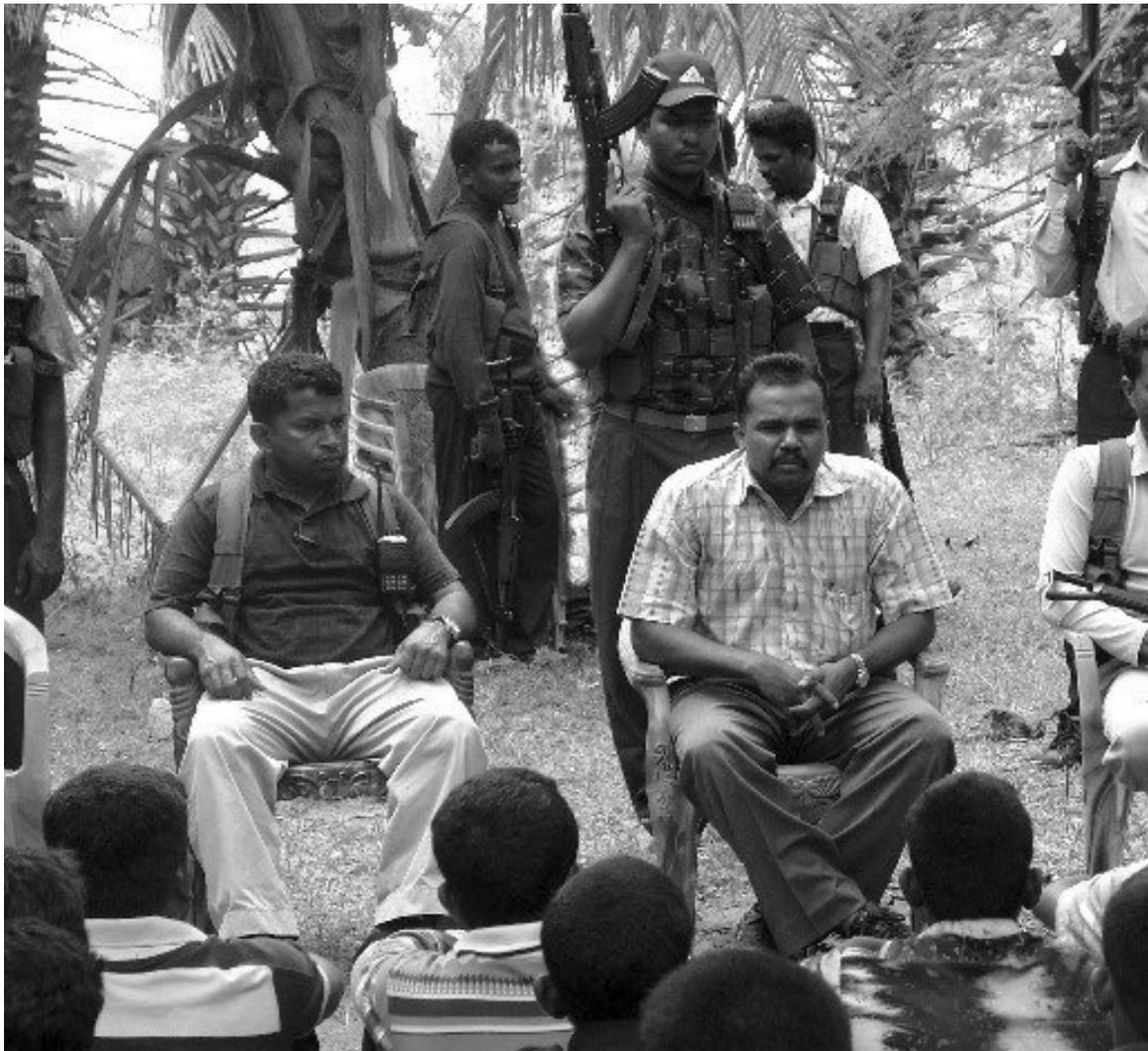
Therefore, in this society no political leadership would want the 13th Amendment implemented in full. Not even Pillayan who would only want that power which he has gained by joining the government. His project would have little or no relevance to the people in the East and their lives in a devolved province.

For them, as before, it would be living under a gun and no power no matter who holds it above them.

*Edited, first published by Daily Mirror May 15.*

## NEWS

## The stakes...



Karuna (r) with paramilitaries of the TMVP last year. Pillayan (l) who took over the TMVP leadership when Karuna fled to London. Pillayan became chief minister of the Eastern Province council last week after the TMVP contesting with the ruling UPFA, rigged the May 10 elections. Photo TamilNet

## Britain to deport Karuna to Sri Lanka

BRITAIN is on the verge of deporting the renegade Tamil Tiger commander, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan alias Col Karuna, to Colombo after he was prematurely released from prison last week, the Sunday Times reported.

Karuna, an embarrassment to the British government from the time it was known that he had travelled to Britain on a Sri Lankan diplomatic passport issued under another name, was serving a nine month sentence when he was given an early release and transferred to an immigration detention centre, believed to be at Harmondsworth.

If he returned to Sri Lanka as expected, the Lankan government too would have a problem on its hands given the reported split between Karuna and Pillayan who has taken over the leadership of the paramilitary group led by Karuna loyalists who split from the LTTE in 2004 and defected to the Sri Lankan military.

The British Home Office said it could not comment on the case when contacted by the Sunday Times. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office confirmed that Karuna had been moved to immigration care and drew attention to a statement by the Crown Prosecution Service which had

been studying the possibility of charging Karuna with other offences including those applicable under international law.

The CPS said there was "insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction for any criminal offences in the UK."

Since his arrest last November human rights activists have been crying for his blood and urging Britain to try him for war crimes and for violating the UN Convention Against Torture arguing that it was possible to do so under British law.

With no prospect of that happening now, Britain would like to get Karuna off their hands as quickly as possible, informed sources told the Sunday Times.

"Deporting him is the only way to get rid of him now that no other charges could be brought against him," a diplomatic source said.

He is expected to be put on a flight to Colombo, mostly likely on SriLankan Airlines, Sri Lanka's national carrier which is the only one flying direct to Colombo from here. Sri Lanka authorities here or in Colombo are likely to be given short notice of his deportation, if at all, out of courtesy.

It is not necessary for any

prior notice to be given of the deportation. The Home Office has often put detainees awaiting deportation on a flight at short notice and sometimes on a weekend or a public holiday making it difficult for detainees to contact their lawyers.

Karuna who was moved from Wormwood Scrubs prison to a detention centre had served less than four months of his nine month sentence. But apparently the 32 days he spent in custody awaiting trial had been taken into consideration in granting him early release for good behaviour.

Karuna's lawyer David Harvey Phillips of the legal firm David Phillips was quoted as saying that Karuna had not formally applied for asylum to remain in Britain. He could still do so but it is most unlikely it will be considered seriously as he had failed to do so shortly after arriving in the UK.

Karuna might not have done so because he was under the impression that the diplomatic passport he travelled on would protect him as he indicated to court before he was sentenced.

Karuna's wife and children who preceded him to Britain have applied for asylum. But sources told the Sunday Times that their case was still pending.

Continued from p4

But the government for a moment did not intend appointing any other than Pillayan as chief minister and only strung along Hizbullah and the other Muslim ministers supporting the government till the election was concluded, confident they will not rock the boat once the elections are over since they would have nowhere else to turn.

For, having 'liberated' the east the government could not possibly appoint a Muslim chief minister without throwing itself and Pillayan to the wolves because LTTE Leader Velupillai Pirapaharan would then wrest the initiative once again and tell the Tamil people the TMVP collaborated with President Mahinda Rajapakse and handed over the east to the Muslims. That to say the least would be the end of Pillayan and the TMVP.

Simply put, it would mean the Pillayan Group helped the government to 'liberate' the east from the LTTE and handed over the province to the Muslims who would then lord over the Tamils in the province especially on development and land issues.

Such a move the government knew would alienate Pillayan from the Tamils and may even force him once again to the LTTE's clutches turning the east into a theatre of war again.

On the other hand, with Pillayan's appointment as chief minister, the Tamils could boast of the prospect of two chief ministers, one from the east and one for the north as opposed to only one under a merged province.

Therefore the question of not appointing Pillayan was never on the cards though the Muslim ministers and Hizbullah, carried away by the assurances given by President Rajapakse and the government were lulled into a false sense of complacency they would get the top job if more Muslims were returned to the council.

With the UNP-SLMC combine pitching Hakeem as their chief ministerial candidate, the message to the eastern Muslim was clear. Vote for the UNP and you will have a Muslim chief minister.

It is to offset this disadvantage that the Muslim ministers backing the UPFA government including Reshard Bathiudeen, Ferial Ashraff, Ameer Ali, M. Nijamuddin, K. Baiz, Bhaila, A.L.M. Athaullah, Abdul Majeed, My Own Mustapha and Faizer Mustapha together with Hizbullah told the electorate the government too would appoint a Muslim chief minister if it returned more Muslim representatives to the council.

In other words, the Muslim votes which will go to ensure a UPFA victory will not be used to appoint Pillayan as chief minister but Hizbullah. That was the only justification they had to ask the Muslims not to vote for Hakeem.

There was also a bigger game plan as far as the UPFA Muslim

ministers were concerned in ensuring Hizbullah's appointment as chief minister and that was to once and for all seal the fate of the north and east merger.

The Muslim ministers in promoting the candidature of Hizbullah took the view that the appointment of a Muslim chief minister will once and for all take away the justification of a merger, whereas the appointment of a Tamil will always leave the option open for the future.

It is in this backdrop, Hizbullah and the Muslim ministers got activated making the claim for the chief ministership while Pillayan likewise called on the government to deliver on its promise to him and with that the stage was set for a right royal battle based on ethnicity.

Several of the Muslim ministers individually called on several diplomatic missions and placed their case, and told one neighbouring country not to push for Pillayan's appointment. That mission was to tell the Muslim minister they had advised the government against holding the Eastern Provincial Council election and would therefore not get involved in the chief ministerial stakes.

At the same time, Deputy Foreign Minister Hussein Bhaila called on the Iranian Ambassador Behnam Behrouz and said a great injustice was to be done to the Muslims and that Iran through its President Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad should speak with President Rajapakse and ensure the rights of the Muslim community are safeguarded.

The Iranian Ambassador who at the time of Bhaila's visit was going through the election statistics agreed to speak with President Rajapakse and also communicate the thinking of the Muslim ministers to the Iranian President.

President Rajapakse who was in London was of course kept briefed on the unfolding developments by Basil Rajapakse and he directed that the issue be nipped in the bud before it got out of hand by offering the Muslim ministers and Hizbullah whatever they want other than the chief ministership.

They will make some noise and eventually accept what is given, the President was to say.

Pillayan was to also call Hizbullah and say they should resolve the issue amicably through discussion to which the latter agreed on the basis he will be chief minister.

On Thursday, the stage was set by the government to appoint Pillayan as chief minister Friday afternoon and no sooner the President arrived in the country, he summoned all the Muslim ministers for a discussion to give effect to his decision.

(Edited)

The full text of this articles is available at <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/20080518/POLITICS.HTM>

## NEWS

# EU pledges GSP+ and approves \$100m more for Sri Lanka

THE European Union wants Sri Lanka to receive GSP+ concession, the EU Ambassador in Sri Lanka Julian Wilson has said, according to recent press reports.

The EU has also approved \$100m in humanitarian and development funds for Sri Lanka, the Daily Mirror paper quoted him as saying.

"I will only say that a lot of melodramatic rubbish has been written about the renewal of GSP+ in local press. The truth is simple if somewhat banal-the EU wants Sri Lanka to receive GSP+ again for the coming three years," Mr. Wilson said at an EU event on May 8.

Mr. Wilson also said that the EU has given substantial development assistance to Sri Lanka with over one billion US\$ in grants and subsidized loans over the last few years, specially for conflict and tsunami reconstruction in the South, East and North of Sri Lanka.

**'A lot of melodramatic rubbish has been written about the renewal of GSP+ in local press. The truth is simple - the EU wants Sri Lanka to receive GSP+ again'**

**- Julian Wilson, EU's Ambassador to Sri Lanka**

"We have approved this year a further instalment of over 100 million US\$ in humanitarian and longer term development funds to be spent over the coming two years," he said.

Also speaking at the function, Sri Lankan Minister M. H. Mohamed said the outcome of the EU-Sri Lanka Joint Commission will have a positive impact on Sri Lanka's application at the next revision of the EU GSP+ scheme scheduled to take place at the end of this year.

Main opposition United

National party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickremesinghe had on an earlier occasion said he is planning to meet with representatives of the European Union to secure a renewal of the GSP+ facility, the paper said.

Mr. Wickremesinghe had said he will take up the responsibility after setting aside political differences for the betterment of the garments industry, despite the lackadaisical attitude of the President Mahinda Rajapakse and his United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government.

The GSP+, preferential trade scheme from the EU allows Sri Lanka to export 7,200 items duty free into the EU and is credited with helping to boost Sri Lankan exports. The scheme is to be reviewed this year for its extension for another three years.

For eligibility, recipient countries need to have ratified 27 international conventions on human rights, labour standards, environmental protection, and governance principles by 31 December 2008.

Given the widespread allegations of human rights violations by the Rajapakse government, there has been much speculation recently that the European scheme may not be extended to Sri Lanka after the end of this year.

However, the European Commission maintains that whilst the continuation of the GSP+ scheme depends on the implementation of the 27 conventions, it does not expect "absolute compliance."

"No one expects absolute compliance. This would be unfair but we need to be clear that there would be an objective assessment on the implementation of these conventions," said Peter Maher, Head of Operations of the Delegation of the European Commission to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, recently.

Among the "core human and labour rights UN/ILO Conventions that must be ratified and effectively implemented for GSP Plus to apply" are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

# Sinhala Diaspora raises funds for 'ethnically pure' military

**'This is the time for all Sri Lankans to support our brothers and sisters committed to bringing peace to our motherland, Sri Lanka'**



THE Sri Lankan government has launched a fundraising drive amongst Sinhala expatriates in support of its military battling the Tamil Tigers in the island's north.

The initiative was formally launched Tuesday May 6 at the Sri Lankan High Commission in London and is to be continued in other capitals with Sinhala Diaspora.

Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe, the Defence Attaché of the London High Commissioner launched the Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence (MoD) sponsored "Api Wenuwen Api" initiative on May 6th.

At the event several businessmen came forward to contribute towards the UK target of GBP 100,000, press reports said.

The Sri Lankan High Commissioner in London, Mrs. Kshenuka Seniwiratne, bought the first ticket in a raffle.

The official website ([api-wenuwenapi.co.uk](http://api-wenuwenapi.co.uk)) says the "Api Wenuwen Api Fund" is collaboration of the Sri Lankan MoD and Central Bank to build 50,000 houses for serving Army, Navy and Air Force personnel.

"The gift of housing is one of the best and most tangible ways to demonstrate our gratitude and appreciation," the website urged expatriates.

"This is the time for all Sri Lankans to support our brothers and sisters who are committed to bringing peace to our motherland - Sri Lanka," it said.

Sri Lanka's military is 99% Sinhalese, according to the UN.

Brian Blodgett, a professor



**Sinhala expatriates who stepped forward to contribute funds for the Sri Lanka military include Sam Chandrasena (above), owner of the 'Sam's Chicken' outlets in London. The cheques were received by Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe. Photo Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence.**

with the American Military University who has written a book on Sri Lanka's military, a policy of recruiting only Sinhalese into the military was introduced in 1962, the beginning of today's 'ethnically pure army'.

Brigadier Samarasinghe told the gathering at the official launch on Tuesday that 1620 houses of the project are already nearing completion at Ipologama Anuradhapura, according to a report filed by the website of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence.

He said the UK raised money will be exclusively spent for the

second phase of the project which would include schools, shopping complexes, a gymnasium and health facilities to be built near Horowpatana.

Sam Chandrasena, owner of the "Sam's Chicken" outlets in London, pledged GBP 20,000 and donated half the sum at the event, the defence.lk also said.

Mr. Chandrasena said "was extremely happy to be part of a movement to help the soldiers who are ready to lay their lives for the motherland," the site quoted him as saying.

<http://www.apiwenuwenapi.co.uk>

## EDITORIAL

## TAMIL GUARDIAN

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WEDNESDAY MAY 21, 2008 No. 373

## Blunted Tool

**The world's powerful states have no more commitment to sovereignty than to human rights.**

That Sri Lanka this week failed to garner enough votes at the United Nations to get on to the Human Rights Council will bring cheer to many, including a coalition of international human rights groups and the three Nobel laureates who had publicly called for Colombo's bid to be rejected. However, this moment is neither some sort of watershed in the Sinhala state's fortunes nor of any consequence to the ongoing suffering of the Tamil people. In short, whether Sri Lanka is on the council or not, is largely an irrelevancy.

To begin with, it beggars belief that Sri Lanka could even be a credible candidate, given the brazen confidence with which the Sinhala military and its paramilitary allies murder, 'disappear', torture and, as news reports are beginning to acknowledge, rape - assuming, of course, that the HRC is taken seriously as site of human rights protection in the first place. Remember that Sri Lanka has actually been on the council for the past two years. Whilst the concept of 'human rights' has for almost two decades been promoted by powerful Western states and their associated institutions and organization as supposedly a key principle of modern governance, in practice it has proven remarkably brittle. Not because human rights are still violated, but because both Western states and their developing world favourites have been able to do so without real consequence.

Thus, rather than some sort of 'universal' principle, the concept of 'human rights' has, in actuality, served mainly as a tool for the West-led international community to (re)order the world to their preference. This is not to say that human rights, in themselves, are not of moral value. As a people who have endured sixty years of oppression, including thirty years of militarized violence by the Sinhala state, the Tamils have long documented and protested their suffering in the language of human rights. Our problem, rather, is the manifest hypocrisy of the West which has, whilst lecturing us solemnly on the overarching morality of human rights, steadfastly backed the state that brutalizes us.

This hypocrisy has become glaring in the past three years, as the Sinhala-supremacist regime of President Mahinda Rajapakse has enjoyed every practical assistance it requires from the West. This assistance has admittedly been rendered amid much admonishment. But harsh words won't hurt a state like Sri Lanka. No matter how brazen Sri Lanka's abuses against the Tamils are, concrete steps against the Sinhala state will not be forthcoming: the recent assurance by the EU - which in particular makes much about

'human rights' - to extend its trade concessions for three more years is a case in point.

Moreover, what is interesting about this week's tussle over Sri Lanka the UN is the polarization between various state groupings. For example, whilst Sri Lanka was passionately opposed by Western human rights groups and some states, the Sinhala regime was actively supported by China, India and, according to some reports, Japan. Clearly, this is not to say these states either have no respect for 'human rights' nor that they believe Sri Lanka was actually qualified to be on the council. Rather, what we are seeing is interest-driven international politics at play. Indeed, amid such polarization amongst powerful states - not in the overarching sense of the West and the Soviet Union, but on selected issues - the term 'international community' is increasingly losing its coherence.

We argued recently that, two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the emergence of new poles (with their own interests and values) has raised serious challenges to the US-led West's interests, as well as the ideological values it has promoted in the service of those interests. We also argued the Sinhala state is making a deliberate shift to the East and away from the West and that the logic behind this realignment is that Sinhala majoritarianism will inevitably always remain in tension with West's vision of global liberalism.

Sri Lanka has long been on the frontline of the West's efforts to expand this liberal order. The Norwegian-led peace process was the most ambitious effort yet to do this. The West mistakenly believed the UNP-led government of Ranil Wickremesinghe was a partner in the project. In reality, whilst the UNP regime was prepared to go along with the Western project (of which Japan, one of the Co-Chairs alongside the US, EU and Norway, was a reticent member), and shared the project's free-market logic the UNP had no more commitment to liberal political values than the SLFP. Rather, both Sinhala parties are committed to Sinhala majoritarianism and communalism. This has been demonstrated by the lurch towards the Sinhala right the UNP has attempted in the past three years (the Sinhala voters, however, trust the SLFP more than the UNP to safeguard their privileged position).

These dynamics are also at play in the Eastern Province, where, following the laughably unabashed rigging of the Provincial Council elections on May 10, Sivanesanathurai Chandrakan, alias Pillayan, the leader of the Army-backed paramilitary

group, the TMVP, has been appointed Chief Minister. It was clear that the Western states were clearly hoping for the UNP would win the elections, prompting the Sinhala ultra-nationalist Champika Ranawake, Sri Lanka's Environment minister, to mockingly declare the UPFA's election victory as a defeat for the 'West-backed Eelamists.'

The point here is that repeated insistence by powerful states, especially the United States, that Sri Lanka is not a strategic concern in no way diminishes their active involvement in the micro-dynamics of the island's politics and conflict. From the very outset, in the early eighties, of the armed resistance phase of the Tamil liberation struggle, countries such as the United States and India, for example, have sought to pursue their interests through such localized involvement.

What this means for the Tamils is that their grievances only matter when taking these up serves the geopolitical and geo-economic interests of powerful states. The long-running efforts by the wider Tamil liberation movement to 'internationalise' the Tamil cause has therefore not been merely to seek sympathy abroad, but to make it clear that it is not the Tamil demand for independence that makes Sri Lanka a zone of instability and disruption in the international order, but, rather it is the ferocity of the Sinhala state's efforts to maintain its chauvinistic domination of our people.

The main point for Tamils to bear in mind is this: the world's powerful states have no more commitment to sovereignty than to human rights. Sri Lanka's territorial integrity is no more important to them than Tamils' freedom. It's just more useful at this point. And as the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston put, 'we have no permanent friends and we have no permanent enemies. We have permanent interests'. It is no different for any other state today's world.

It is in this context the LTTE leader, Vellupillai Pirapaharan, observed in 1993: "Every country in this world advances its own interests. It is economic and trade interests that determine the order of the present world, not the moral law of justice nor the rights of people. International relations and diplomacy between countries are determined by such interests. Therefore we cannot expect an immediate recognition of the moral legitimacy of our cause by the international community. ... In reality, the success of our struggle depends on us, not on the world. Our success depends on our own efforts, on our own strength, on our own determination..."

## OPINION



(r) Many Germans, like these at a Nazi rally, supported the racist regime, (l) but despite the hostility of their 'host' society, some Jews tried to carry on with their lives.

# Insecurity and the lessons of history

How does one community become 'the enemy within' to another?

**J. T. Janani**  
Tamil Guardian

AT the heart of the Sri Lankan conflict is racism. And the insecurity, envy and hatred that always accompanies racism.

A common explanatory adage for the bitter conflict today is that the Sinhala people suffer from 'insecurity'; that they see themselves as a unique island people under perpetual threat.

Apparently there are 'only' 17 million Sinhalese in the world, in fear of being swamped by the billion Indians across the Palk Straits, especially the 60 million Tamils – because there are 'already' 3 million Tamils on the island.

'Surrounded' by these 'others' in the region, the Sinhalese are reportedly a 'majority with a minority complex'.

International analysts and diplomats routinely accept this 'insecurity.' For example a report

by the conflict think tank, International Crisis Group, worries that "the international community has struggled to come to terms with Sinhala nationalism, frequently misunderstanding its nature and legitimacy."

"Interventions, even including the Norwegian-sponsored 2002 ceasefire, which most Sinhalese ultimately judged as too favourable to the LTTE, have tended to stimulate xenophobic elements in the Sinhala community and help the extreme nationalist parties gain ground," the ICG patiently spells out.

A BBC survey of the mood on the street in Colombo quotes a middle class Sinhala professional explaining the historic insecurity of the Sinhalese, how they are a minority compared to neighbouring India and how this

has fuelled the race 'tension' with the Tamils.

Bear in mind that not once has India, the Indian Tamils or, for that matter, the Sri Lankan Tamils, laid claim to the Sinhala territories.

The irrationality of this 'minority while a majority' complex struck me when a Dutch colleague expansively informed me, in a recent discussion about identity: "you know, there are almost 17 million of us Dutch."

Arguably, the 'just' 16.57 million Dutch in Holland are very much 'surrounded' by over 700 million "others" in Europe, including 82 million Germans who not so long ago invaded and occupied their homeland.

But there is no minority complex, despite a resurgent Germany driving European fortunes. Indeed, Holland is an enthusiastic participant in the European project.

Moreover, The Netherlands is the 25th most densely populated country in the world whereas Sri Lanka is 39th.

Nonetheless, the Dutch do not think of themselves as a 'small' nation under threat of being swamped. But apparently, the Sinhalese are to be seen as a fearful 'small' nation under

siege.

This alone is not enough for conflict, of course. Having found themselves an enemy without, the Sinhalese have also found an enemy within: the island's Tamils.

Of course, every nation has its bit of racism. In Europe, for example, far right groups in many states love to hate immigrants (usually, but not exclusively, the dark-skinned kind): "they are taking away our jobs", "they don't want to fit in", "our identity will be lost" and so on. 17% of the French voted for the National Front in 2002.

It shouldn't be forgotten that the Sinhala people also had their form of 'immigration angst': immediately after independence, they enthusiastically supported the stripping of citizenship from a million 'Indian' Tamils who had been brought to the island by the British generations earlier to work on the plantations.

What was served by this act of pure racism? What were these people who had been born on the island and knew no other home expected to do? The answer is the war cry of far rightists everywhere: "go back to your country!"

But the deep-seated racism in

Sri Lanka is different. For the Tamils of the Northeast are not recent immigrants and this is not the usual angst of 'integration'.

Rather, the Tamil people have lived on the island in their own contiguous, distinct, geographical territory for millennia. They lay claim only to the territory they have historically lived in.

In fact, the 3 million Tamils constituted a nation with distinct self-governance until invaded and occupied by Colonial powers – who amalgamated them with the Sinhala nation and territory for pure administrative convenience.

However, having accorded themselves an insecurity complex, the Sinhalese are now apparently entitled to dictate the fortunes of the Tamils. Hence their 'legitimate fears and grievances' in the conflict.

The destruction of a people begins with the shattering of its identity. But to create the necessary conditions for the destruction of a minority, there needs to be not only an 'insecurity complex', but shared focus on the 'enemy within' – demonization necessarily precedes annihilation.

*Continued on p12*

A THOUSAND WORDS



Several Catholic groups in Jaffna are demanding the Sri Lankan government rebuild the St. Philips Narrie's church in Allaiappiddi, which was destroyed in a Sri Lanka Army multiple rocket attack in August 2006 which also killed 40 people and seriously injured more than hundred others who had sought protection there. *Report page 19*



Members of the Sri Lankan Special Task Force (STF), an elite police unit with a history of massacres and rights abuses, on patrol in Batticaloa. The government says it has restored peace to the region. Sri Lanka's military is 99% Sinhala, the United Nations says. Batticaloa is a predominantly Tamil region. *Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi/AFP/Getty Images*



Sivasathurai Chandrakanthan, alias Pillayan, leader of the Army-backed paramilitary group, the TMVP (Thamil Makkal Viduthala Pullikal), was inaugurated last Friday as Chief Minister of the Eastern Province. Pillayan took his oaths before President Mahinda Rajapakse, whose brutal offensive against the LTTE-held parts of the East in 2006 and 2007 was supported by the TMVP. A former Tamil Tiger, Pillayan abandoned the liberation struggle at the same time as Karuna, the renegade LTTE commander who defected to the military in 2004. Since then the TMVP has been responsible for widespread human abuses in the province, including torture, 'disappearances' and rape. The TMVP contested in alliance with Rajapakse's UPFA ruling coalition in the provincial council elections of May 10. The opposition and election monitors have protested widespread rigging, intimidation and violence, but the result stands. *Photos Daily Mirror*

## OPINION

# Insecurity and history's lessons ...

Continued from p9

The Tamils may have never claimed any Sinhala territory. Yet within years of independence in 1948 (at which point, both 3m Tamils and 17m Sinhalese inherited a reasonably healthy state), Sinhala 'insecurity' came to the fore as reality for them to contend with.

Knowing that the island was home to two distinct, though not antagonistic, cultures, what could possibly be the Sinhala population's rationale in opting for the 'Sinhala Only' Language Act in 1956?

Except to deny that 'other', enemy, nation its identity and, ergo, its legitimate existence?

What is the mind set of the civil service official, the teacher, the academic or other worker who casts his or her vote on the promise of such a chauvinistic act - knowing full well that it will require their Tamil colleagues to either learn Sinhalese and pass a fluency test or lose their jobs?

And, 25 years later, what could possibly be the logic of Sinhala ministers and police torching the Jaffna library and its 97,000 (yes, ninety seven thousand) rare historical books and archival manuscripts in June 1981?

Why did this act of cultural vandalism provoke, not shock and dismay amongst the Sinhala nation, but quiet satisfaction?

Sixty years after independence, the Tamils are still, apparently, a source of Sinhala 'insecurity'. That is why all manner of violence can be unleashed against them - all in the name of the making the Sinhalese 'secure'.

Tamils are bombed, starved en masse, abducted, 'disappeared', driven from their towns and villages into refugee camps. The Toronto Star last week quoted a Western diplomat as saying: "nowhere in Sri Lanka are the Tamils safe. What's happening here is de facto ethnic cleansing."

And yet all this is apparently explainable through the logic of Sinhala 'insecurity'.

Amid racially-driven antagonism, minorities sometimes seek to camouflage themselves: integrating, lowering their profile and so on. But, ultimately, none of this will offer protection against a chauvinistic adversary.

And 'democracy' is no hindrance to racism. Indeed, democracy only serves to allow racism - on the basis of democratic will itself - to gain momentum.

If this sounds familiar it should be; the story of such racism mobilising by winning elections and leading to genocide is not new: this is the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel by the then long-persecuted Jewish people.

The Nazis came to power through the elections of July 1932, as Germany's single largest party, with 37.5% of the popular vote. They took over 13 million votes compared to their nearest rivals, the Social Democrats with 8 million votes.

Moreover, the Nazis had increased their base from the previous elections in 1928 by appealing, not to the ignorant, but to middle class voters.

The marginalisation and persecution of the Jews in Germany also started with legislation; in 1933 the Nazis passed a law purging the civil service of officials of Jewish descent. Admission to the legal profession was restricted, media was purged of Jews, as were artistic professions. The military was sine quo non.

The parallels these dynamics have to Sri Lanka's post-independence history are unmistakable.

The conditions often cited for the rise of Nazism were the economic depression of the inter-war years and the grievances of the German people against the 'peace' that the Allies

**Racism is the underlying logic of mass displacement, cleansing of historically habited Tamil land, bombing of schools and non-Buddhist places of worship, use of starvation and medical blockade.**

imposed following Germany's defeat in the WWI.

Herein was the 'enemy without'. And the Jews were the 'enemy within'.

In 'Mein Kampf' Hitler opines: "the strength of a nation lies first of all, not in its arms but its will, and before conquering the external enemy the enemy at home would have to be eliminated."

The Jews, according to Hitler, held unfair economic advantage; they were the cause of Germany's ills.

This, by the way, is the exact claim the Sinhalese made whilst justifying 'Sinhala Only'; that Tamils had been 'privileged' by the British over the Sinhalese. There is no explanation as to why, however.

As early as 1925 Hitler had stressed to the Nazi party the

need to focus on a single combined enemy: 'Marxism and the Jew.'

Today, replace 'Marxism' with 'Terrorism'. With this all purpose label, the demonization of the Tamils is complete.

There is an interesting difference between Nazi Germany and Sri Lanka: unlike the Tamil people, the Jewish people did not live in contiguous territory where they were a majority. Indeed, the Jews were deeply integrated into the host German population for centuries. And many believed, quite erroneously, as we now know, that such integration would protect them.

It is also known now that even as the Nazi intent unfolded, even as the racist legislation was passed and thereafter followed by mob violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, following Kristallnacht, (when over 1000 Synagogues were burned as were Jewish shops and businesses, hundreds killed and 30,000 men imprisoned in concentration camps), just over 50% of the Jewish population of the Reich (Germany, Austria, the German Czech areas) emigrated.

What is interesting is that he other half of the Jews stayed. As Lucille Eichengreen, a survivor interviewed by Laurance Rees for his book 'Auschwitz' says: "when we asked at home, the answer was "It's a passing phase, it will normalise"."

And this too is part of the human psyche. The clinging to the familiar, the semblance of safety, even when cold logic says it is not there. In short, a refusal to acknowledge what is unfolding.

In the initial stages of the Holocaust, the Nazis were content to 'cleanse' Germany via the forced emigration of Jews. They even profited from it by taking money from those who left.

Sounds familiar? In Sri Lanka, almost a quarter of the Tamils have been forced abroad. But over 400,000 live in Colombo, though many are awaiting visas or otherwise hoping to go abroad: Colombo's high rental prices are sustained by these people 'in transit'.

In contrast to Kristallnacht, the July 1983 pogrom saw, not hundreds, but three thousand Tamils butchered.

And in the pre-statehood history of the Jewish people is the answer to those who argue that there are Tamils who choose to remain in Colombo 'amongst the Sinhalese' - despite the checkpoints, the midnight round ups and the occasional deportations to the Northeast.

Indeed, as the Nazis marched through Europe, there were Jewish people in many of the occupied countries who stayed instead of fleeing, hoping that somehow they would be able to

live through the 'abnormality'.

And these members of the Jewish nations were not the only ones who refused to see what was inescapable before them.

Laurence Rees interviewed Germans on their attitudes towards the deportations of the Jews amongst them. Uwe Storjohann from Hamburg told him: "maybe around 20% [of Germans] welcomed this with huge joy ("They are only parasites"). But the vast majority bypassed what was happening with silence."

Moreover, Uwe recalled "the thought occurred: What will happen to these people. I knew of course that it couldn't be positive. They would be sent off into a terrible world".

According to Rees: "Uwe Storjohann's admission that he knew the Jews were being sent into a terrible world is probably close to the state of mind of most Germans at the time."

These two dynamics - the 'insecure' majority and the minority 'enemy within' - are visibly at play in Sri Lanka. For a quarter of a century, the Sinhala majority have supported

**Amid racially-driven antagonism, minorities sometimes seek to camouflage themselves: integrating, lowering their profile and so on. But, ultimately, none of this will offer protection against a chauvinistic adversary**

the brutality of their governments - after all, it is about their 'security', isn't it?

Rees also interviewed middle level German officials who ran the concentration camps. Interestingly, he found few who relied on the excuse that they were following orders. On the contrary, the explanation often given to him by interviewees was that they believed they were doing the right thing. They believed the Jewish people were the enemy within. No different from the external enemy being fought in the war.

They now accepted they may have been wrong in that belief, but the facts as they then knew at the time led them to that firm belief and, hence, to their murderous actions.

Rees believes so many former Nazis (as an interesting

aside, when does a Nazi become a 'former' Nazi?) found this self-justification because the Nazi regime built on strongly held prior prejudices against Jews.

Just as in Sri Lanka, there is a solid foundation of existing anti-Tamil prejudices that have been drawn up by Sinhala nationalism - from the 'privileged' Tamil to the 'threatening outsiders' to 'terrorist supporters' and so on.

Of course, it is easy - and convenient - to dismiss Hitler and the Nazis as an aberration, an extreme example, and therefore not a valid comparator.

But historians such as Alan Bullock (author of 'Hitler: A Study in Tyranny') and Rees converge in the belief that the terrible outcome, the Holocaust, cannot be attributed only to the Nazi regime but also to the prevalent culture, both in Germany and, moreover, in wider Europe: a racist logic of animosity towards the Jewish people.

As Alan Bullock notes, "Hitler indeed was a European no less a German phenomenon. The conditions and state of mind, which he exploited, the malaise of which he was the symptom were not confined to one country."

Rees concurs: "Indeed the view that the crime of extermination of the Jews was somehow imposed by a few mad people upon an unwilling Europe is the most dangerous of all."

Racism is a well known phenomenon now and the path that a racist ideology must trace when it comes to power via democratic government is predictable.

Hitler was able to openly articulate his racial ideology due to the prevailing bigotry in Europe. However, amid the global expectations of the 21st century, Sinhala racism has to be more inhibited in its rhetoric.

As A. Shastri notes, since the end of the Cold War, Sri Lanka's main Sinhala political parties, increasingly sensitive to international opinion, were becoming 'careful how they expressed themselves on the ethnic issue.'

The racist process that culminated in the horror of the concentration camps took years to advance. And it evolved organically not through explicit directives from above, but from circulating sentiments amongst the German majority.

"This notion that the Nazis proceeded incrementally against the Jews goes against the understandable desire to point to a single moment when one crucial decision was made for the final solution .. the Nazi regime was one that practised what one historian famously called 'cumulative radicalisation'," says Rees.

Continued on p19

## NEWS

# 'A rapid downhill course'

## - IFJ on media freedom in Sri Lanka

NOTING that in the past year the relationship between Sri Lanka's civil society actors and the State has continued to deteriorate, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), protested this week at the persecution of the media by the Sinhala-nationalist regime.

In a substantial report released earlier this month on "In the Balance: Press Freedom in South Asia 2007-2008," the media watchdog, said: "Verbal and physical attacks, harassment, restrictions on access and vilification of media personnel have become a common feature in the lives of journalists, photographers and all those engaged in the gathering, publication and dissemination of information in Sri Lanka."

"Access to areas of the country's north and east where the military conflict is ongoing is extremely restricted, and the state-created Media Centre for National Security (MCNS) has a monopoly on official information regarding the conflict."

"As a consequence of these restrictions, members of the media remain unable to provide an accurate picture of the conflict to their viewers and readers, and the people of Sri Lanka are deprived of their right to know exactly what kind of war is being carried out against the people of the north and east in the cause, supposedly, of their security."

"A range of emergency regulations has been promulgated that restrict access to conflict-affected areas for civil society actors, including humanitarian agencies and the media. The regulations enable arbitrary arrest and detention, and control dissemination of information considered to be contrary to the interests of national security."

"MCNS spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella declared that anyone who criticised the army at that juncture could be considered to be a traitor since he or she was undermining the morale of the security forces. This opinion was reiterated by military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara"

"Restrictions on journalists and media institutions are coupled with systematic and regular attacks on nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and on individual members of civil society, including those engaged in media freedom issues. The Parliamentary Select Committee on NGOs continues to summon key officials of NGOs in order to inquire into the nature and scope of their activities and their funding portfolios."

"In terms of media freedom, it is a matter of particular concern that government officials and politicians - including the President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, not to mention the government spokesman and the Minister of Information and Media - have at various times made speeches that have indiscriminately attacked journalists and media organisations. This is despite rhetorical commitments to media freedom and to ethical media practices."

"The lackadaisical approach of law enforcement agencies toward complaints made by media personnel about attacks and harassment has enhanced the culture of impunity for attacks on the media community. No progress has been made in any investigations into killings of journalists that have occurred during the period under review."

"In addition, media personnel have filed complaints of being summoned to several provincial police stations for interrogation about the content of their news reports. These interrogations amount to intimidation and interference with the right of journalists and media workers to engage in their profession."

The Sri Lankan airstrike on the Voice of Tigers (VoT) radio station last November in which several media workers were killed or injured was amongst those singled out in the IFJ report:

"Several statements were issued by media freedom organisations in Sri Lanka and outside, including by the head of UNESCO, condemning the deaths of VoT workers during the air attacks on the station. Media and Information Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa challenged these sentiments on the grounds that none of those killed in the attacks had been issued with a media card from his ministry and therefore could not be considered to be media personnel."

"According to the ministry's figures, using this criterion, only one journalist was killed in Sri Lanka in 2006-07."

Separately, the IFJ also condemned the anti-media statements made by Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa.

IFJ joins its affiliate, the Free Media Movement (FMM), in calling on the Government to explain chilling and inflammatory statements by Defence Secretary suggesting independent media should be prevented from running reports allegedly detrimental to the security forces," it said.



14 journalists were killed in recent years, 8 were abducted, 4 were imprisoned. Photo TamilNet

## Slain journalists mourned

THE Movement Against Media Suppression (MAMS), a common front organization consisting of five major media organizations, held a memorial event Tuesday May 6 in front of Fort Railway Station, Colombo, in remembrance of fourteen journalists slain in the island in recent years.

More than a hundred journalists from Sinhala, Tamil and English media participated in the event conducted under the banner: "Stop the war against journalists in Sri Lanka".

The MAMS, in a leaflet gave the statistics, describing the state of media freedom in Sri Lanka where 14 journalists were killed in recent years, 8 journalists were subjected to abductions, 4 were imprisoned, 5 electronic broadcasts were blocked, 1 website blocked, 3 records of suppressive

laws against media and countless number of harassments against media and media personnel.

Sunanda Deshapriya, the convener of Free Media Movement (FMM), a Colombo based media watchdog, Poddala Jayantha of Working Journalists' Association, Sanath Balasooriya, the secretary of the Working Journalists' Association, R. Barathi, the secretary of Ceylon Tamil Journalists' Organization, Vithiyatharan, the editor of Uthayan and Chudaroli Tamil news papers and several other journalists took part in the candle light campaign.

Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne, the leader of the New Left Front and prominent members of the party were present. Addressing the crowd, Dr. Karunaratne said, "the [media] repression has increased dramati-

cally with the intensification of the war against Tamil liberation fighters. The first victim of a war is the truth. In particular, any war to curb an uprising demanding national freedom has to be fought with lies and distortions. This means that media freedom will be curbed. Any one who comes out with the truth will be in danger."

"There were disappearances and we were told at first these were done for exhorting money by ransom takers. Soon media people were taken away in the same manner and either killed or dropped back after grievous bodily harm."

"Many threats were made to nongovernmental media centers. Arson and bombing [against press] became open and severe."

He called on all democratic forces to defend press freedom.

## OPINION

# NGOs urged UN to reject Sri Lanka bid

*THIS is the text of a joint letter sent to country representatives by senior officials from the members of a coalition of human rights and press freedom NGOs urging them to vote against Sri Lanka joining the Human Rights Council.*

Your Excellency,

We are a coalition of non-governmental organizations from all parts of the world.

We write to urge that your government not vote for Sri Lanka for membership in the U.N. Human Rights Council in the election in the General Assembly on 21 May 2008 because of Sri Lanka's failure to meet the Council's membership standards.

In doing so, we strongly support the position of human rights organizations from within Sri Lanka, who state that their government fails to meet the membership standards, has "presided over a grave deterioration of human rights protection" since first winning Council membership in 2006, and "has used its membership of the Human Rights Council to protect itself from scrutiny."

Their letter of 28 April 2008 is available online at [http://www.cpalanka.org/research\\_papers/civil\\_society\\_letter\\_on\\_re%20election\\_of\\_SL\\_to\\_HRC\\_April%2028.pdf](http://www.cpalanka.org/research_papers/civil_society_letter_on_re%20election_of_SL_to_HRC_April%2028.pdf)

As you know, General Assembly (GA) resolution 60/251 requires that "members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" and "fully cooperate" with the Council. Sri Lanka falls far short of meeting these requirements.

I. Sri Lanka is failing to protect human rights

We recognize that that the armed separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have long been responsible for numerous and horrific human rights abuses. However, abuses by non-state armed groups do not justify rights violations by government forces.

In the last two years, Sri Lankan government forces have been directly implicated in a wide range of serious abuses of human rights, and have failed to ensure investigations and bring those responsible to justice. These include :

- hundreds of extrajudicial killings, including of humanitarian workers

- hundreds of enforced disappearances, the highest rate of new cases recorded by the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances in 2007

- arbitrary arrests and long-term

- detentions without charge or trial
- widespread torture of detainees, "a routine practice ... both by the police and the armed forces" according to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture.

- forcibly returning internally displaced persons to unsafe areas
- unwarranted restrictions on media freedoms, and threats and killings of journalists

- complicity with the recruitment of child soldiers by the Karuna militia

- denunciations and threats against human rights defenders and humanitarian workers.

These problems are compounded by the authorities having failed to provide easily accessible avenues enabling victims of human rights abuses to make complaints. Extreme delays in adjudication make it near-futile to pursue such complaints, when made. The absence of a witness protection law and system has led to the harassment and even killing of victims seeking redress and witnesses.

A full list of U.N. and other reports documenting these and other abuses are posted on our coalition website at [www.hrw.org/effectiveHRC/SriLanka](http://www.hrw.org/effectiveHRC/SriLanka).

A government which has been proven to engage in such serious human rights violations cannot be said to be upholding the "highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights." Based on its current record, Sri Lanka is simply not qualified for re-election to the U.N. Human Rights Council.

II. Sri Lanka refuses to cooperate with the Council and U.N. human rights mechanisms

Government officials have launched unacceptable and unfounded personal attacks on respected international officials who have visited Sri Lanka and raised human rights concerns. Rather than consider the recommendations made in good faith by these officials, the Sri Lankan authorities have instead chosen to question the officials' integrity. Senior Sri Lankan officials have accused:

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour of having become "a football, to be kicked about at will, to score goals for terrorists and others who do not mind sharing a terrorist agenda provided it gets them their goals too."

U.N. Special Advisor on Children and Armed Conflict Allan Rock of being a sympathizer of the LTTE.



An international ceasefire monitor pictured in 2006 with two more victims of government death squads

## 'Sri Lanka not fit to be in Rights Council' - Bishop Tutu

WITH a terrible record of torture and disappearance, Sri Lanka doesn't deserve a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council and Colombo's application should be voted out, the veteran South African human rights activist, Archbishop Tutu said.

*The full text of impassioned op-ed in the British newspaper, The Guardian follows:*

"It would seem self-evident that a country which tortures and kidnaps its own people has no place on the world's leading human rights body. Apparently not: Sri Lanka, despite repeated criticism for its human rights record, is running for re-election to the UN human rights council, with a vote to be held in New York on May 21.

"Governments owe it to Sri Lankan human rights victims - and to victims of human rights abuses around the world - to ensure that the Sri Lankan bid fails. This will be an important test of the 47-member council, to show that the UN's standards for it will be honoured.

"If Sri Lanka is defeated this year, that will be important not just for the Sri Lankan human rights leaders who, at great personal risk, have called for Sri Lanka's defeat, and for Sri Lankan civil society.

"In combination with the humiliating defeat last year of Belarus, it will send an important signal for the future: governments

with track records of serious human rights abuses do not belong on a body set up to protect the victims of such abuses.

"Sri Lanka has failed to honour its pledges of upholding human rights standards and cooperating with the UN since joining the council two years ago. Indeed, its human rights record has worsened during that time. The Sri Lankan idea of cooperation with the UN, meanwhile, has been to condemn senior UN officials (including the high commissioner for human rights, Louise Arbour, and the under secretary general for humanitarian affairs, John Holmes) as "terrorists" or "terrorist sympathisers."

"The systematic abuses by Sri Lankan government forces are among the most serious imaginable. Government security forces summarily remove their own citizens from their homes and families in the middle of the night, never to be heard from again. Torture and extrajudicial killings are widespread.

"When the human rights council was established, UN members required that states elected must themselves "uphold the highest standards" of human rights. On that count, Sri Lanka is clearly disqualified.

"The separatist Tamil Tigers have used despicable tactics in their war against the government, including frequent suicide bombings. But that can in no way

excuse the scale of government abuses.

"Fortunately, the news from the council is not all bad. Countries running from other regions of the world have credible claims to be leaders in promoting human rights. Argentina and Chile, which suffered terribly from torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the past, have become leading supporters of human rights, and now seek to join the council. On the African slate, there are some true human rights leaders, and - thankfully - no candidacy from Zimbabwe or Sudan.

"In the entire world, Sri Lanka stands out as the most clearly unqualified state seeking election to the council this year, and the place where things are getting unambiguously worse.

"Defeating the Sri Lankan candidacy would be a comfort to the people of Sri Lanka. It would place international pressure on the government to respect human rights, and to accept a UN human rights monitoring mission, which it has stubbornly refused. It would help make the council a place where true human rights leaders in all regions can help lead the world towards greater respect for human life and human dignity.

"An outcome, in short, that would benefit those who care about human rights in the world. Any other result would be a travesty."

*Continued on p19*

## NEWS

# India to build power plant on displaced Tamils' land

IN a surprise development, India has agreed to build Sri Lanka's proposed second coal power plant in Sampur, the site originally proposed by the Sinhala government, partners in the joint-venture, the Sunday Times reported.

Last week the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) and India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) shook hands in New Delhi over India's acceptance of the site, according to a well-placed CEB source.

While NTPC Chairman Ram Charan Sharma told the media that the 500-MW thermal power project in Trincomalee district will be one of the largest infrastructure investment in Sri Lanka, residents and rights activists complained that the Indian decision to pick that site for the power project had added to the misery of Tamil people displaced from there.

The controversial site is in the North Eastern province, across the Koddiiyar Bay from Trincomalee. Sampur is a large and populous fishing village overlooking the famous port.

The two countries signed an agreement in December 2006, after the Sri Lanka Army captured Sampur from the LTTE in September that year, driving thirty thousand Tamils from their homes.

However, the location of the

plant in Sampur became an issue, with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) raising political and environmental objections.

Under the agreement, NTPC is to soon launch a feasibility study on the proposed 500MW plant, estimated to cost US\$500 million, while Sri Lanka will conduct a survey and secure 500 acres in Sampur for the project.

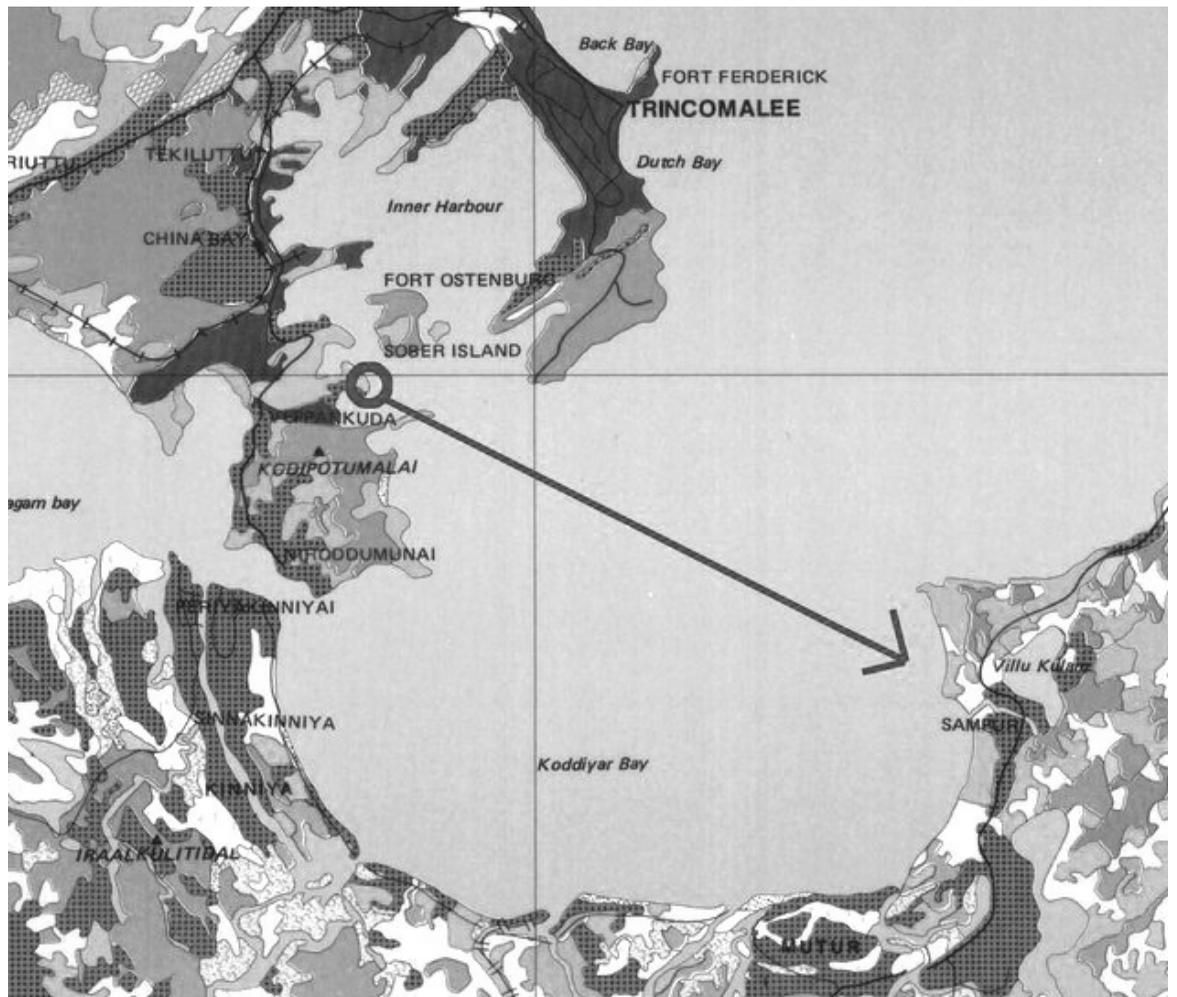
Sources told the Sunday Times there was plenty of government land in Sampur to accommodate the project, adding that no persons would be displaced by the project because the area comes within a high security zone.

Accommodation would be found for any persons who had been displaced earlier because of the proposed project, the government claims.

However, the Tamil National Alliance alleged that there was a hidden agenda to the project to permanently evict Tamils from the Muttur east region.

The TNA claims that about 30,000 Tamils were forced to leave the southern Trincomalee region when the military launched a major operation in 2006 to retake the area.

The advocates of power plant in Sampur region seem to think that a military victory alone would not be sufficient, in the



The Sampur region across from the Trincomalee harbour, was home to 30,000 Tamils. They were driven out by a massive Sri Lankan offensive in mid-2006. Colombo scrapped the 2002 Ceasefire in 2008.

long run, to evict Tamils permanently from the region.

Up to as recently as March this year, the CEB was busy trying to secure Velloor, a site north of Trincomalee town, for the joint-venture power project.

The NTPC had expressed a preference for a site that was near the Indian Oil Corporation complex. It is believed that Delhi's sudden change of heart came after the CEB made it known that it would invite bids to build a third coal power plant at Sampur, where the Sri Lankan government was already making arrangements to build a jetty to unload coal for the second joint venture power project with the Indians.

The Sunday Times' sources believe the Indians, fearing the presence of other powers in the strategic port region, had quickly decided to accept the CEB designated location.

The project, which is expected to be completed in May 2012, will see CEB and NTPC each taking an equity stake of US\$75 million, while the balance money will be raised through borrowings, making a debt equity ratio of 70:30.

"Indian arguments that the coal-based plant is meant to benefit locals in Trincomalee are having no effect on rights activists and the thousands who fled the region after fighting between the

Tamil Tigers and the military," IANS reported.

The NTPC project will affect a large number of people," the IANS report quoted K. Thurairatnasingham, a Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP from Trincomalee, as saying.

"We have conveyed our feelings to Indian diplomats. Our people cannot accept this," he added.

"This is where our forefathers lived. It is the only land in a largely dry area with water resources suitable for cultivation. We are not saying we don't want the project. But why build it in an area that will force Tamils to give up for ever their ancestral land?"

## Sea Tiger frogmen sink Navy supply ship

A troop carrier cum supply ship of the Sri Lanka Navy was sunk by Sea Tiger naval commandos in the Trincomalee Harbour in the early hours of Saturday May 10.

The underwater attack by Black Tigers was carried out when the supply vessel, A-520, named 'MV Invincible', was loaded with explosives to be transported to KKS Harbour in Jaffna, the LTTE said.

The 80-meter long ship, which had lately been engaged in naval resupply service between KKS and Trincomalee, was sunk within the first 13-minutes of the attack, the Tigers said.

In a similar underwater attack earlier this year, one of the Navy's Dvora Fast Attack Craft (FAC) was blown up, killing a dozen sailors. Three Black Sea Tigers

died in that sudden attack.

The A-520 supply ship and troop carrier had also been deployed in the Navy's deep sea operations against Tiger vessels in 2007.

The Sri Lanka Navy seized the ship in 2003 when it was reportedly involved in a people-smuggling operations. Operated by a Russian or Georgian crew, it had 250 Pakistanis on board, who had flown legitimately to Colombo, the BBC reported.

Commandos from Kangkai Amaran unit of the Sea Tigers took part in the mission, the LTTE also said. The unit was named after a senior commander of the Sea Tigers killed by Sri Lankan Army Deep Penetration Unit on 29 June 2001 in an attack in Mannaar district.

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## DIASPORA



Tamil youngsters in Germany were amongst 13,300 who sat the exams this year. Photo TamilNet

# Diaspora children attend Europe-wide exams in Tamil

**Language skills path to knowledge of history and culture**

13,300 children and students from the Tamil Diaspora earlier this month attended annual exams in Tamil language across various countries in Europe and in New Zealand.

The exams, conducted on May 4 by the Tamil Education Development Council (TEDC), a European trans-national Tamil initiative, are largely sustained through volunteer effort and from the contribution of Tamil educational institutions in Europe.

The TEDC, with an expert panel, is responsible for the design of curricula, provides workshops to teachers in Tamil language and conducts the annual exams.

The pass-out ratio last year was more than 90 percent, according to Administrative Coordinator of TEDC, Nakula Ariyaratnam.

"The primary aim of the exams is to encourage Tamil language skills among the students who learn Tamil. However, we also focus on their ability to use the language as a means of gaining knowledge on other subjects such as the history of Tamils, and their ability to interrelate texts in Tamil with the mainstream languages in their countries," says Mrs. Ariyaratnam.

5,557 students from Germany, 2,880 from France, 1,993 from the United Kingdom, 1,330 from Norway, 1,030 from Denmark, 300 from the Netherlands, 170 from Italy, 95 from Sweden, 07 from Belgium and 35 from New Zealand sat for exams from grade



01 to grade 10 this year.

90-minutes written exams were held for children between grade 01 and grade 04. two-hour exams for children in grade 05 and grade 06, 150-minutes papers for grades 07,08 and 09 and 3-hour exams were held for grade 10 students, Mrs. Ariyaratnam said.

The trans-national education effort is supported by participating educational services in member countries and is largely sustained through volunteer effort by thousands of Tamil teachers in

various cities and towns of Europe.

35 teachers from various countries were on their way to correct the papers being dispatched from various schools to France, this year.

Diaspora schools in Switzerland, with a large population of Tamils, also conducted their exams on Saturday with their own exams as they were following a different curricula introduced prior to the one designed by the TEDC.

The TEDC has a Book Committee, Examinations Committee and an Expert Panel on Curricula Design.

The exam paper for grades 09 and 10 also incorporated text from the native languages of the students' residing countries. Texts were provided in English, French, Danish, Norwegian and other languages for rendition in Tamil by the students.

"So far, the TEDC has been conducting written exams. Fully aware of importance of the examinations for oral language skills among the students, we are examining ways and means for effectively incorporating oral exams for the next year," said the administrative coordinator of the institution.