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Sri Lankan soldiers patrolling along front lines in the North have faced stiff resistance as they attempted to push into LTTE-held territory around Mannar and Vavuniya. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi / AFP / Getty Images Story pages 2, 19

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NEWS



Colonel Soosai with LTTE commandos before the attack on Chirantheevu Naval base

Tiger Commandos destroy navy camp in strategic islet

LIBERATION Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighters belonging to a special marine wing of the Sea Tigers launched a pre-dawn attack against a strategic naval base on an islet off Jaffna peninsula last week killing at least 13 sailors and wounding many more.

Six civilians including children were killed when Sri Lankan forces in nearby bases retaliated by launching heavy artillery fire.

According to LTTE officials, the raid was launched at 1:25 a.m. on Thursday May 29 and the base was brought under the LTTE control at 2:00 a.m.

"At least 13 Sri Lanka navy (SLN) personnel were killed and many sailors wounded in the raid carried out by a special marine wing of the Sea Tigers," LTTE officials added.

The Sea Tigers also seized weapons, including a 50-caliber machine gun, a mortar, two Light Machine Guns and a radar from the camp on Chiruththeevu islet situated between to Mandaitheevu island and Jaffna city.

There were no LTTE casualties in the operation, the officials said adding that the marines safely returned to their base in Vanni mainland after destroying the SLN camp.

One 50 caliber machine gun, one radar equipment, one RPD LMG, one AK LMG, one 60 mm mortar, one 40 mm Rocket Launcher, four T-56 type-2 assault rifles were seized by the Sea Tigers.

141 shells for 60 mm mortar, 06 rockets for 40 mm Rocket Launcher, 930 rounds for 50 caliber machine gun, 430 linked 50 caliber rounds, an extra barrel for the 50 caliber gun, extra barrel for RPD LMG, 795 rounds for RPD LMG, and 1,380 linked 7.62 mm rounds were among the ammuni-



tions.

10 masks, a solar panel with battery and a binocular were among the accessories seized by the Tigers.

Three dead bodies of the Sri Lanka Navy sailors were recovered by the Tigers.

The LTTE last Thursday displayed the weapons and military equipments seized in the attack to media in Vanni.

The Tigers also identified one of the SLN sailors killed in action as Ranasingha Aarachchige Saman Pushpa Kumara from Bangalavaththa with Sri Lankan national identity card number 841912462 V.

However, Sri Lanka's defence ministry said army and navy personnel successfully repulsed the Tigers, killing at least 16 LTTE cadres and destroying three enemy boats.

"Troops have also mounted heavy artillery attacks towards the fleeing terrorists as enemy fatalities were expected to soar,"

the ministry said.

Following the raid Sri Lankan forces retaliated by directing heavy artillery fire towards coastal villages of Jaffna.

Six civilians, including children and a couple, were killed and 13 persons were wounded when shells hit the coastal villages Kurunakar, Kozhumpuththurai, Paasaiyoor and areas close to Jaffna Fort, Thuraiappa Stadium and the Sri Lanka Telecommunication building.

Two children, boys of 14 and 13, and their mother were killed in Paasaiyoor. The father and another brother were wounded.

In Kurunakar, Joseph Francis, 54, and his wife Joseph Francis Sagayarani, 53, were killed on the spot when shells hit their house.

Their children were wounded in the attack, according to initial reports. Their house was located near Kurunakar water tank.

13 civilians were admitted to Jaffna hospital following the shelling duel.

INTERVIEW

Development untenable without peace says LTTE political head

TamilNet

"DEVELOPMENT is possible only when there is permanent peace. To achieve peace the International Community (IC) should engage seriously in restoring the status quo which the IC itself has disturbed in recent times, and should pressurise the Sri Lankan government to come to terms with a negotiated settlement," said Liberation Tigers of Tamil-eelam (LTTE) Political Head B. Nadesan, in an exclusive interview to TamilNet on Friday, while responding to a question on LTTE's position on International involvement in Colombo's 'development-agenda'.

"Recognition of Tamil sovereignty and right to self-determination are key issues in creating a climate for a negotiated settlement," Nadesan added.

'Development' has long been used as a camouflage to deprive the Tamils of their homeland and to subordinate the Tamil regions by the Sinhala majoritarian government of Colombo, Mr. Nadesan further said.

He also revealed that the Sri Lankan government has not been providing access to the Norwegian facilitators to visit Vanni to meet with the LTTE representatives.

Full text of the interview follows:

TamilNet: In a recent interview, the U.S. Ambassador for Sri Lanka has stated that it would be very useful for LTTE leader Pirapaharan to give up the idea of seeking an independent Tamil State and agreeing to negotiate with a united Sri Lanka. What is your response?

Nadesan: The Tamil-eelam struggle is not simply a LTTE struggle. It is Tamil people's legitimate struggle with moral, political and legal reasons. It is a very democratic goal. And the LTTE represents only people's mandate.

As far as the LTTE is concerned, the ultimate aim is what is good for Eezham Tamils who were placed at the receiving end for more than a century and face genocide in Sri Lanka. Experience has made the Eezham Tamils to decide on a separate state and to fight for it. Recognition of Tamil sovereignty and right to self-determination are key issues in creating a climate for a negotiated settlement. As this has been the logical end for situations similar to that of the Tamils, in different parts of the contemporary world, it is a puzzle what makes it different only in the case of the Eezham Tamils.

TamilNet: The implementation of the 13th amendment appears to be the basis for political discussions at present. The U.S. Ambassador

also has commented on this regard while expressing his opinion that the political solution should go beyond the 13th amendment. How do you look at basing the discussions on the 13th amendment?

Nadesan: The Tamils have rejected the 13th amendment long back. In the last 21-years of its introduction, neither Tamils nor Sinhalese have shown any enthusiasm towards the 13th amendment. How can one consider it as a basis for settlement when it has been proven that people have no interest in it?

Mahinda regime uses this 13th amendment drama to pursue its war against the Tamil nation while paying lip service to the political solution.

TamilNet: 'Development' appears to be the paradigm associated with the political ongoing, especially in the Eastern Province. What is the position of the LTTE regarding International involvement in this process?

Nadesan: 'Development' has long been used as a camouflage to deprive the Tamils of their homeland and to subordinate the Tamil regions by the Sinhala majoritarian government of Colombo.

Historically, the so-called 'development schemes' were introduced with an ethnic oppressive agenda of disturbing the geographical contiguity of the Tamil homeland.

The coastal routes linking the villages in the Tamil homeland were neglected and instead the infrastructure was designed to link Sinhala areas with Tamil coastal villages. Administrative borders were expanded to include Sinhala areas to systematically alter the demographic proportions. Colonisation schemes were introduced under the pretext of development scheme, evicting Tamils from a large number of villages. Since the independence of Ceylon, there has been a continuous record of the Sri Lankan state systematically applying the 'development-agenda' to serve a 'colonisation-agenda'.

The Sinhalese leaders have mastered the art of misleading the donors and the International Community in sustaining their oppressive agenda while diverting the funds to the infrastructure, which has deprived Tamils of their economic opportunities and their very existence in their own villages.

Thus, there was no real capital accumulation in the Tamil regions in the past several decades. The capital accumulation was concentrating in Sinhala areas, especially in and around Colombo.

The Sri Lankan state is suc-



LTTE political head Nadesan called for peace as a precondition to sustainable development

cessfully making use of the unitary constitution for this anti-Tamil 'development agenda'.

This is why we envisaged extra-constitutional arrangements such as opting for the World Bank to act as a custodian of donor funds to rebuild the Northeast

Development schemes in Sri Lanka have historically been introduced with an ethnic oppressive agenda of disturbing the geographical contiguity of the Tamil homeland - B. Nadesan

during the negotiations as well as in the Post Tsunami agreement (P-TOMS) signed by the parties.

But, again, what happened to SIHRN and, especially to the P-TOMS agreement, which was a purely humanitarian agreement, has been widely witnessed by the International Community.

The Sri Lanka government can invoke provisions of the unitary constitution at any time it wishes to nullify development of the Tamils of the North and East.

We have witnessed precedence in this regard in the de-

merger of the merged North-East Province and in nullifying the P-TOMS.

Besides the handicapped constitution, large-scale misappropriation of development funds by the government for sustaining the war, and through that sustaining its regime, will never allow any real development.

Further, corruption within the ranks and files of the Sri Lankan government is a serious impediment for any development programme. Even Sinhalese who bring to light such malpractices are penalised violently.

Therefore, the priority of the International Community should first be placed at finding a political solution, before embarking upon a development-agenda in this Island.

Development is possible only when there is permanent peace. For that the International Community should engage seriously in restoring the status quo which it itself has disturbed in recent times and should pressurise the Sri Lankan government to come to terms with a negotiated settlement. This only can pave way for a true development.

TamilNet: What is the present status of your dialogue with the Norwegian peace facilitators?

Nadesan: We have requested the Royal Norwegian Government to continue the facilitation. It should also be noted that the Co-Chairs, representing the United States,

the European Union, Japan, and Norway, have told the Sri Lankan government to provide access to their representatives and the facilitator to visit Vanni and discuss with us. Norwegian Special Envoy and the Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka have expressed their desire to have dialogue. But, the Sri Lankan government has not been providing access to the Norwegian facilitators in an attempt to block our diplomatic dialogue with the facilitator.

TamilNet: The LTTE is accused of carrying out attacks on civilian targets in the South. Can you comment?

Nadesan: The LTTE categorically denies responsibility for the attacks on civilians in Sri Lanka. We never mean ill-will against the Sinhalese people. Attacks on civilian targets by the Sri Lankan armed forces have become routine occurrences in Vanni. Human Rights violations of civilians such as abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings take place throughout the Sri Lanka government controlled territories, every day. Now the Sinhala regime unleashes violence against the Sinhala and Tamil journalists. Many attacks and violations by known perpetrators such as the armed forces have still not been brought to justice. One needs a holistic approach to stop such anti-people activities in Sri Lanka.

NEWS

Give up Eelam US Ambassador tells LTTE

THE Liberation Tigers should give up its demand for a separate state, the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka told a government owned newspaper, saying that the Tamil community wanted a solution to the over two-decade-old ethnic conflict within a "united" Sri Lanka.

"I think it would be very useful for Pirapaharan to give up this idea of seeking an independent Tamil state and agreeing to negotiate with a united Sri Lanka," US ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake told the Sunday Observer newspaper in an interview.

He thinks "95 per cent of them support a solution within a framework of a united Sri Lanka" Blake said, citing his discussions with Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

"They (the Tamil people) are not seeking an independent Tamil Eelam which Pirapaharan is seeking," Blake told the Sunday Observer.

Blake said giving up the idea of a separate state would give Pirapaharan "lots of credibility to respond to lots of scepticism here in the South (Sri Lanka) that the LTTE would never negotiate with the government."

The US envoy said Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims have been living together in a peaceful manner in the country.

"I always remind people who are visiting from US that Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims lived together and continue to live peacefully together."

"Tamils are living in Colombo peacefully with their Sinhalese and Muslim friends. So there is no ethnic conflict here. And certainly the government is defending itself against terrorism," he said.

In reply to another question, Blake said US believes that the answer to the conflict lies with a power sharing concept which can respond to the aspirations of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims.

Blake also pledged his country's continued support for Sri Lanka.

"The US has provided military, law enforcement and other kinds of support to help the government to defend itself while believing that a purely a military solution would not be the correct solution for this conflict," he said.

"The US also has concerns about Tamils who suffer disproportionately due to human rights violations. It is important to give them a sense of feeling that they could live with respect and dignity here. So improving the human rights performances is also an important aspect of our dialogue with the government."

Ambassador Blake also pledged US support for continued development of the East. "We have proposed to give more assis-

tance for the East and the US government is considering it now," he said.

When questioned about a solution for Sri Lanka, Blake refused to be drawn. "I don't really want to come up with a proposal because whenever I try to say something I am later accused of trying to dictate to the Sri Lankan people. The US does not have any intention of doing that."

But Blake called on the government to go beyond the 13th Amendment, the political solution suggested by the All Party Representative Committee (APRC). However, he did stress that he was not calling for negotiations with the LTTE.

"I think that it is important for the government to consult a wide range of Tamils. We are not calling for negotiations with the LTTE. That is something that the government has to decide."

"It is important to recognize more than half of the Tamils are living outside the Wann. I think their interests also should be respected as well. So, people like Anandasangaree and other elected representatives in the government controlled areas are needed to be brought into this process and consulted," he said.

On being questioned about the recent visit to Sri Lanka by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Blake expressed his country's concern about Iran, but acknowledged Sri Lanka's continued interactions.

"We always want all our friends to make the same point for Iran. At the same time we understand that Sri Lanka has to develop relationships with Iran and we do not have objections if they donate funds education projects in the South."

"Our concerns about Iran is well-known. President Bush, Secretary of State Rice and many our leaders are concerned about their nuclear capabilities. We acknowledge their right to develop civil nuclear energy for energy purposes. But the US opposes nuclear weapons. Similarly we have expressed our deep concern about the Iranian support for international terrorism particularly in the Middle East, especially the support for groups like Hisbulla," he said.

Following are excerpts of the interview published in the Sunday Observer:

Q: Are you satisfied with the support that the US had offered so far to Sri Lanka and what are the strategic areas where the US and Sri Lanka should work closely?

A: Yes. The US and Sri Lanka are close friends for more than 50

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US Ambassador Robert Blake (r) alleges that 95% of Tamils want a solution within a united Sri Lanka

Hold referendum to test support for Tamil statehood - Fein

TamilNet

Full text of Fein's note to Ambassador Blake follows:

United States Ambassador Robert Blake urged LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran to renounce the Tamil quest for statehood in an interview published in the Sunday Observer Newspaper on May 25.

With the owlsh certainty which earmarks the glitterati, the Ambassador proclaimed that the Tamil people "are not seeking an independent Tamil Eelam which Prabhakaran is seeking."

Indeed, he had discerned from his opulent ambassadorial milieu that a staggering "95%" supported a solution within a united Sri Lanka, leaving Prabhakaran with a depleted 5% following.

The Rajapaksa brothers rejoiced. The Ambassador confirmed their fairy tale that Tamils from the north and east had flocked by the hundreds of thousands to Colombo not to escape from aerial bombardments, an embargo on humanitarian aid, and routine assassinations and kidnappings; but to enjoy the blessings of racial and religious harmony fostered

by the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Among other things, the Act makes criminal any peaceful Tamil protest against their persecution that upsets a Sinhalese. General Fonseka sulked like Achilles in his tent.

"If Prabhakaran enjoys such microscopic popular support," he ruminated with the dullness of a jackal, "then I will be soon asked why the Sri Lankan armed forces are not running victory laps around the Jaffna Peninsula."

It seems reasonable to conjecture that Ambassador Blake 95% estimate of Tamil statehood opposition may have ignored grisly or odious landmarks in the history of Sri Lanka:

1. The Citizenship Act which denied civic and political rights to one million Tamils of Indian descent who toiled on the tea plantations; and, subjected the remaining Tamils to a Sinhalese majority tyranny.

2. The 1956 Official Language Act providing that "Sinhala Only" shall be the official lan-

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NEWS

Business as usual despite rights record

Feizal Samath
IPS

IS Sri Lanka's bloody ethnic conflict and dismal human rights record an issue for international corporations and multinationals doing business in the country? Business leaders and rights activists are divided on this.

The economy, despite the conflict, is recording an average growth of over five percent per annum. Last year it was 6.2 percent, a figure which the World Bank commended last week. In fact, the Bank is putting together a higher four-year funding programme totalling 900 million dollars starting from June 2008, up from around 700 million dollars in the previous 2005-2008 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). The Bank's board is meeting on Jun. 5 to approve the new CAS.

"Yes, certainly people are concerned about the violence in Sri Lanka and the human rights situation, and big corporations are not investing. But Sri Lanka has a small domestic market for them to invest in and their concentration currently is on the global crisis of high food and fuel prices, which is seen touching 150 dollars per barrel in coming months," said Mahendra Amarasuriya, a local business leader who is currently chairman of Lions International, the global charity driven by big business.

Amarasuriya, who heads Sri Lanka's most profitable private bank, Commercial Bank, says that despite concerns Sri Lanka continues to draw investments from Asian Tigers like Malaysia and Korea.

Malaysia was Sri Lanka's biggest foreign investor in 2007, the third year running, ousting countries like Britain and Japan. Neighbouring India is also a major investor in Sri Lanka.

Human rights activists see different. They point to the country's inability to retain its seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council, at last week's poll, as a negative trend that could affect trade and one that is likely to affect Sri Lanka's chances of continuing to benefit from European duty free concessions.

Sri Lanka is the only South Asian nation to enjoy generalised system of preferences (GSP+) duty free trade concessions from the European Community. The three-year scheme that covers 7,200 items, including garments, ends in December 2008 and is up for renewal.

The EC says retaining GSP+ depends on how well the Sri Lankan government is seen implementing 27 international conventions on human rights, labour rights and environmental standards.

But Julian Wilson, EU ambassador in Colombo, has criticised newspaper reports on the continuation of GSP+ being linked to human rights abuses as 'rubbish'.

The 'Daily Mirror' newspaper recently quoted him as saying at a function on the issue of GSP+ that "I will only say that a lot of melodramatic rubbish has been written about the renewal of GSP+ in the local press. The truth is simple if somewhat banal--the EU wants Sri Lanka to receive GSP+ again for the coming three years," he said.

Yet respected activists like Jehan Perera, director at the local National Peace Council, says despite these public statements the EU is "very, very" concerned about the human rights situation and has privately expressed this.

"There is a great deal of disappointment being expressed over the lack of implementation of the conventions. EU officials say Sri Lanka has all the institutions in place but no political will to implement them (conventions)," said.

Perera says Sri Lanka's loss at the U.N. Human Rights Council vote will give added strength to the EU to hold the government accountable for the growing number of human rights abuses when Sri Lanka's application for a continuation of the trade concessions is made this year.

Garments, Sri Lanka's biggest commodity export, are the biggest beneficiary of the concessions. The industry, workers and trade unions fear up to 200,000 workers and their dependants would be affected if these concessions are lost.

Sri Lanka's human rights record is appalling, with intimidation of the media being amongst the worst forms of abuse. Last week, Keith Noyahr, defence columnist and associate editor of the English-language 'Nation' newspaper, a weekly, was abducted by an unidentified group near his Colombo home and brutally assaulted.

Newspapers, rights groups and colleagues of Noyahr had recently criticised the army com-

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Sri Lankan garment factories will be hardest hit should the European Union not extend the country's GSP+ status, but reports of that possibility as 'rubbish' says the EU Ambassador to the country

Sri Lanka warns against Western sanctions

AFP

SRI LANKA called on Western powers last week to be wary of imposing sanctions for its alleged human rights violations, warning that the action could worsen the island's long-running ethnic conflict.

The United States and the European Union have withheld various aid programs and are debating whether to withdraw special trade benefits from Sri Lanka amid concerns the human rights situation has deteriorated since the government pulled out of a Norwegian-brokered truce with the Tamil Tigers in January.

"It really is necessary to have sympathy for and understanding of the problems of a developing country that is grappling with terrorism," Sri Lanka's minister of international trade G.L. Peiris said in Washington on May 29.

"And to cut off resources, to threaten to withdraw trade benefits, GSP (General System of Preference) and so on -- all of that is unhelpful because that will only mean the dissemination of poverty, deprivation and adversity," he told AFP.

Peiris said under such sanctions and other pressures on "a democratic government pitted against terrorism, you can't possibly prevail."

Peiris was in Washington for talks with US officials and to woo US investors to set up shop in Sri

Lanka's eastern province.

Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse vowed this week to press on with a military campaign to crush the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who have been fighting for a homeland since 1972.

Expressing concern over the rights violations and the raging

"The truth is simple if somewhat banal - the EU wants Sri Lanka to receive GSP+ again for the coming three years" - Julian Wilson, European Union ambassador in Colombo criticising newspaper reports that linked the continuation of Sri Lanka's GSP+ status to human rights abuses

civil war, the US State Department said Thursday that there was no military solution to the ethnic conflict, and emphasized the need for a political settlement.

"We have said repeatedly that there is no military solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka and there needs to be a political solution,"

said Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Evan Feigenbaum.

"So we are encouraging everybody not least the government to pursue a political solution," Feigenbaum said.

Washington considers the LTTE as a terrorist group.

Sri Lanka was thrown out of the UN's Human Rights Council this month, with the watchdog group Human Rights Watch even branding them as one of the world's worst perpetrators of "disappearances" and abductions.

According to the New York-based group, at least 1,500 people "disappeared" between 2006 and 2007 - mostly ethnic Tamils living in the Sinhalese-majority island's restive north and east.

Peiris cited 60 indictments sent out recently by the office of Sri Lanka's attorney general seeking criminal prosecution on suspected rights abusers, as well as Colombo's action to halt the conscription of child soldiers among paramilitary troops.

If the Western powers pulled back GSP preferential duty-free privileges from Sri Lanka, he said, "then hundreds of thousands of poor people are going to be thrown out of employment."

"It is not going to be a measure directed against the government as 65 to 70 percent of garment factories is situated in the rural sector and people working on garment factories are women who have become breadwinners of families," he said.

NEWS

East erupts in communal violence

HEIGHTENED tension in the Batticaloa District, following clashes between the Tamil Makkal Vidudalai Puligal (TMVP) and the Muslims, is expected to cast its shadow on the June 4 maiden session of the newly elected Eastern Provincial Council.

Continuing skirmishes between the TMVP and a group of Muslim youths has compelled the police to impose local curfew. Two Muslim youth abducted last week, allegedly by the TMVP cadres, have still not been released, despite repeated appeals.

Intervention of senior Muslim politicians, both local and national, to diffuse the simmering situation, has so far failed to produce any positive results.

The TMVP is adamant not to release the two youths from Eravur.

TMVP's refusal to release the abductees has sent a strong message to the rest of the country that, the party is ready to take on the Muslims, who the party suspects to have masterminded the assassination last week of Shanthan - a senior TMVP cadre in Kathankudi, reported The Bottom Line agency.

As TMVP cadres continue to go berserk in the Muslim hamlets in the east, threatening and intimidating Muslims, the police failed to bring the TMVP under control, resulting in Muslim youths and militants taking up arms against the TMVP.

While the TMVP cadres pose threats to the Muslims, the Muslim militants, on the other hand, have threatened to strike at Tamils living in some of the Muslim villages.

This has resulted in more than 400 to 500 Tamil families living in the border villages, fleeing to safer locations.

Already some 252 Tamil families have sought refuge at Thannamunai Punitha Valanar Vidyalaya and another 250 families at Mylampaveli Sri Vigneswara School.

The Government has, to date, not evolved a mechanism to issue dry rations and other relief to these people.

However, the TMVP has initiated a relief programme and begun distributing dry rations to the refugees.

Similarly, several hundreds of Muslims are also living in fear for the same reasons.

The police, to date, have not made any arrests in connection with the killing of Shanthan and his bodyguard Dharshan on 22 May. A

native of Savalakadai in Amparai, Shanthan's father was killed in a Tamil-Muslim conflict in the early 90s, after which Shanthan joined the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF - Razeek group).

Former TMVP leader Karuna Amman appointed him to be in charge of the Ariyampathi division in Batticaloa. Shanthan functioned as the de facto chairman and delivered the goods to the people of the area. Shanthan also took a strong stance against Muslim colonisation within the division, resulting in a feud between him and the Muslim community.

Shanthan's wife later contested the March 10 local polls and became the chairperson of the council, but according to local reports, her husband virtually ran the council. Shanthan was also a trusted lieutenant of the present Eastern Province chief minister Sivanethurai Chandrakanthan alias Pillaiyan.

Local intelligence sources point out that Shanthan's killing in a predominantly Muslim area has not only led to suspicion, but is construed as a mischievous act aimed at triggering off fresh clashes between the Muslims and the Tamils.

A polarisation of the Tamils and the Muslims was widely speculated following the May 10 Eastern Provincial Councils election, as, for the first time, the ruling party fielded two chief ministerial candidates from both the Tamil and Muslim communities.

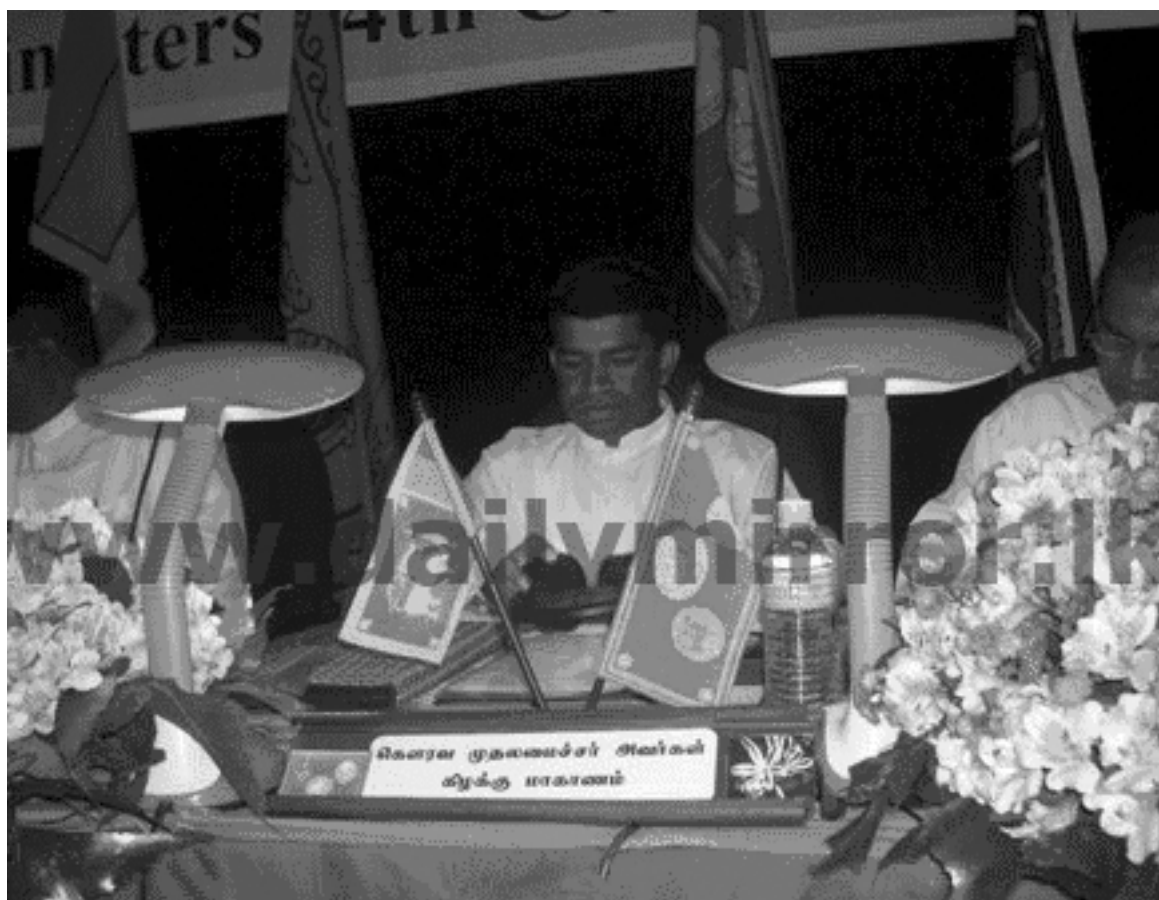
However, as anticipated, the communities, though worked separately to promote their respective candidates, did not enter into any sort of communal clashes.

A sudden outbreak of violence in Kathankudi is now viewed as an attempt by a few unknown elements to destabilise the east and portray the TMVP leader Pillaiyan as a weak leader, according to The Bottom Line.

It was following the killing of Shanthan and his bodyguard that, the TMVP cadres went berserk, spraying bullets at Muslims in Kathankudi. In this incident, three Muslims were killed, one was hacked to death and a Sinhalese sustained injuries.

The police were brought into the scene to bring law and order, to no avail. The Muslim clergy and other leading personalities made several appeals to the police to check on the armed TMVP cadres roaming the streets, but the police had no control.

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Pillaiyan was selected as Chairman of the Chief Minister's Forum Photo courtesy Daily Mirror

Pillaiyan admits TMVP behind abductions in East

THE newly appointed Chief Minister of the Eastern Province has admitted that members of his organisation are responsible for recent kidnappings in Eravur.

Speaking to BBC Tamil Service, Chief Minister Sivanethurai Chandrakanthan, known as Pillaiyan, admitted that the person accused of abducting two Muslims in Eravur is a member of the Tamil Makkal Viduthala Puligal (TMVP).

"The person who was involved in the abduction has been handed over to police," CM Pillaiyan told LR Jegatheesan of BBC Tamil Service.

TMVP leader Pillaiyan insisted the accused is "not directly involved in this incident" quoting reports received by the Chief Minister's office.

"However we will not permit anybody from our organisation to take law into their hands and as such we have handed him over to the police" Chief Minister Pillaiyan said.

Two other Muslims have gone missing in Eravur since 22 May.

The Chief Minister said that he has no information about the two missing Muslims but expressed his hope that they would be found soon.

"So far no confirmed news in this regard has been received" added Chief Minister Pillaiyan.

The National Muslim Council

(NMC) in a statement to media said the TMVP should be disarmed to create normalcy in the east.

The Sri Lanka government has not been taking any concrete steps to stop killings and abduction of Muslims by the 'Pillaiyan group', the NMC accused.

"NMC condemns Pillaiyan group for using arms against Muslim people while saying that they have accepted democracy," they said in a statement.

"It is a coward act to abduct three Muslim traders and later kill them in retaliation to the killing of two cadres of the Pillaiyan group in Muslim dominated Kaathankudy

"Action should be taken immediately to stop another conflict between Tamils and Muslims," the NMC statement said.

Meanwhile, a woman was shot dead by police on 26 May as police and Sri Lanka Army tried to disperse crowds in Eravur who took to the streets to protest as news spread that another person gone missing.

The person reappeared within hours claiming his bicycle needed to be repaired, but the situation in Eravur remained tense, journalists said.

Separately, Pillaiyan, was elected Chairman of the "Chief Minister's Forum" on 31 May in

Badulla.

The forum discusses issues related to devolution of powers to the provinces.

Though the system of provincial government came into vogue in 1988 after the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987, following the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, various provisions have not been fully implemented.

Pillaiyan's election for a period of four months was being projected in the context of the claims by President Mahinda Rajapaksa regime that the polls in the east were a 'triumph of democracy'.

The next meeting of the Chief Minister's Forum is scheduled to be held in Batticaloa.

A conference organised by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) earlier last week maintained that despite the misgivings about the 13th Amendment, the original objectives of establishing the Provincial Councils were the resolution of the ethnic conflict and the creation of a provincial-level tier of government to address regional development.

"Why did neither of these objectives come to fruition? The consensus among elected members and officials of Provincial Councils is that there are common issues affecting all provinces as well as other issues that pertain uniquely to some provinces," it said.

NEWS

Claymore attack in Vanni kills 16 civilians, including five children

THE Sri Lankan army carried out a claymore attack inside LTTE administrated Vanni targeting a van returning from Mulangavil on Murukandi - Akkaraayan road killing 16 people including 5 children and 7 women.

A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) targeted the Hiace van returning from Akkaraayan hospital to Kilinochchi on Murukandi - Akkaraayan Road on Friday, June 30 around 2:15 pm.

Community leaders labeled the attack as a 'barbaric' and 'despicable' act and said Sri Lanka's political and military leaders who should bear the responsibility of this crime.

They also added that the SLA used the mourning day observed following the demise of Liberation Tigers Senior Commander Brigadier Balraj to step up DPU attacks against civilians in LTTE controlled Vanni.

16 dead bodies, including females and 6 children were taken to Kilinochchi hospital.

“We were able to identify only two among the badly mangled bodies of the victims. Since the whole village has been affected by this tragic event, we are at a loss as to where to visit to our express our condolence” - Kilinochchi Bharathy Viththiayalam principle

Two children, one of them seriously wounded, were taken to the hospital.

Their father, mother, a sister and two brothers were killed in the attack.

Keerthika Vijayaratham, 13, was seriously injured and her 14-year-old sister was also wounded.

Their parents, Vijayaratham Periyavamy and Logantha Vijayaratham, were killed along with elder sister Sivalaksala Vijayaratham, 18, and brothers Thanushan Vijayaratham, 10 and Vithushan Vijayaratham, 7.

The other victims were identified as:

1. Subramaniam Alakan, 41, male
2. Saraswathy Subramaniam, 40, female
3. Panneerselvam Alakuraani, 45, female
4. Rajendran Kalaavathi, 29,



Civilians continue to be the target of violence, including in this claymore attack by the Sri Lankan Army in the Vanni that claimed 16 lives

- female
5. Samikkannu Karuppiah, 45, male
6. Ungu Karuppiah, female
7. Keerthika Chandrasekaran, 11, female
8. Karthika Chandramohan, 10, female
9. Thanaluxmy Subramaniam, 54, female
10. Kalaathevi Sivakumaran, 34, female
11. Ganesh Thanarajan, 34, male

Five of the killed children were studying in Kilinochchi Baarathy Viththiayalam and two adults were employees at the school.

The victims were residents of Baarathypuram and Malayalapuram, situated 3 km southwest of Kilinochchi town.

The bodies of all 16 victims were laid to rest Saturday afternoon 5:20 p.m. in Baarathypuram General Cemetery.

Prior to the burial, the caskets containing the remains of the victims were taken from their residences to Bharathy Viththiayalam at 12:30 p.m. and an event to pay homage was held at 1:00 p.m. presided over by Mr. Rajendram, the Principal of the school.

LTTE Political Head, B.

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Colombo train blast kills 9, injures 73

NINE people were killed and 73 more wounded last week when a powerful bomb ripped through a packed passenger train in the suburbs of the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo.

The blast, which occurred at about 5 pm near the suburban Dehiwala railway station, was triggered by a parcel bomb kept in the fourth compartment of the Colombo - Panadura train carrying passengers on their way back home after their day's work.

State television said around 200 people were on board the train at the time of the attack.

The island's military spokesman, Brigadier Udaya Nanayakara, blamed the LTTE for the attack and said a pregnant woman was among those killed.

Commuter Ramani Padmalatha, 42, told French news agency

AFP that the train suddenly slowed after a "deafening noise".

"People were shouting 'bomb, bomb!' and scrambling to get out of the windows of the carriage... I managed to jump out from the door. People were stumbling out of that carriage with blood stains on their clothes, some with burns, some looking dazed," she said.

Eyewitness R A Upali told the BBC Sinhala service the explosion took place as the train was pulling out of the station.

"I ran to the place where the explosion happened. I saw people fall on the platform. People with minor injuries ran towards us."

The train compartment's windows were blown out and part of its roof was torn off in the blast, which left bloodstained bags and umbrellas strewn among the debris.

The blast came a day after the government issued emergency warnings to the public to be vigilant about unclaimed parcels and packages.

Nayanakkara said: "The alert had been issued after the police and the military defused two powerful bombs in Colombo district on Saturday. The bombs had been planted in two buses."

On Monday evening, however, the parcel in the train went unnoticed. The train had left the Maradana railway station and was about to enter Dehiwala when the explosion occurred. Following the blast, train services were disrupted for hours on the route.

Monday's blast comes three days after the LTTE blamed government forces for an explosion which killed a group of people in Tiger-controlled territory.

EDITORIAL

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Gone with the Wind

International actions have revealed the hollowness of external assurances.

As Sri Lanka's military struggles to make progress against the Liberation Tigers' determined resistance in the island's north, and the Mahinda Rajapakse government's frantic efforts to defeat the LTTE shreds the already frayed social, economic and political fabric of the island, international disquiet is mounting. It is against the now apparent inevitability of a protracted, bloody and utterly destructive war - despite the best will of the international community, the destruction will not remain confined to the northern battlefields - that international calls for negotiations have reemerged. However, despite murmurings of there not being any military solution to the conflict, the core of present international policy in Sri Lanka turns on precisely that: the military crippling, if not destruction of the LTTE. It is on this basis that the international community first armed and prepared the Sri Lanka armed forces during the Norwegian peace process and, secondly, then pointedly stood aside as Colombo went to war, inflicting widespread suffering on the Tamils.

In an interview with the state-owned Sunday Observer newspaper two weeks ago, the United States' Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Mr. Robert O' Blake, gave voice to the international community's anxieties. "We do not believe," he regretted, "a military solution is going to be possible." 25 years of experience has shown that the LTTE is a rather formidable organization, and it will be very difficult to defeat them militarily, he conceded. *Therefore*, Mr. Blake said, "the way to reach a solution to the conflict is through a political solution." In short, it is only because the Tamil struggle is so difficult to put down militarily that there must be a 'solution'.

To the US and likeminded members of the international community, the problem in Sri Lanka is simply the LTTE i.e. 'terrorism'. There is, despite sixty years of easily accessible history, including three decades of militarised brutality, no acknowledgement of the oppression by the Sinhala state - with which, as Mr. Blake proudly says, the US "has been close friends for more than 50 years now." So much for defending freedom. For the international community, the Sri Lankan state, which they are unashamedly ready and eager to do business with, is in no way racist. It's just bad at governing. This is why Mr. Blake won't make clear why he thinks the Tamils "suffer disproportionately from human rights violations," or why they don't have "a sense of respect and dignity" in Sri Lanka. Consequently, it is not at all clear why he feels the Tamils "should be able to have a very high

degree of self-governance within a united Sri Lanka" - and why they don't have any of this, even after sixty years of ethnic strife.

The contradictions in Mr. Blake's statements are reflective of international hypocrisy vis-à-vis the oppression of the Tamils. Despite the solemn moralising on human rights, on 'grievances', on dignity and so on, the international community in fact has very little commitment to these things. In short, if the Tamils can be militarily disciplined and their demands silenced, then that'll do just fine; international interests can proceed undisturbed.

A little reflection on recent history is in order to put things in perspective. To begin with, the US-led international community approached the Norwegian peace process with cynicism and insincerity. Rather than seizing the moment and making the restoration of the Tamils' dignity and self-rule their focus, the international community made the weakening and marginalizing of the LTTE their preoccupation. Why is why, despite everyone agreeing it was a military 'stalemate' that forced negotiations, the US took the lead in rearming and reconstituting the Sri Lankan military. According to Brian Blodgett, an American military scholar, within the first year of the talks, 2002, the Navy and Air Force doubled in size, the Army's artillery firepower was doubled and tank strength tripled. Mr. Blake's predecessor, Jeffrey Lunstead, boasted of this as the US's contribution to peace.

Quite apart from this, whilst maintaining the suffering of the Tamils in the Northeast, the international community worked to restore the war-damaged economy and strengthened Colombo's hand as much as possible. In short, the international community made it possible for the Sri Lankan state to confidently resume its war against the Tamil rebellion to Sinhala rule. And before Colombo resumed its onslaught, the international community moved to hamper the LTTE's ability to resist: this is essentially what the bans by the EU and Canada were about. As any fool knows, without the LTTE, there is no question of the Sinhala state making any 'concessions' to the Tamils. So much for 'a very high degree of self-governance', let alone 'a sense of respect and dignity.'

The problem, as is also blatantly clear, is Colombo still can't do it. Despite being given as much firepower as it can deploy, unlimited logistical support and, above all, the political space to inflict the suffering and terror necessary to compel the Tamils to give up their demands, the Sinhala state has failed to

crush the Tamil rebellion. Of course, the military question is still unresolved and there is still hope in Colombo and in many other capitals of the world that the Sinhalese can do their part, but there is no longer the confidence that engendered the arrogance with which Tamil suffering has been repeatedly dismissed over the past two years. By giving Sri Lanka the means and, thereby, the encouragement to smash the Tamil struggle - and its demands for justice - militarily, the international community is responsible for the unfolding catastrophe.

However, even when it comes to seeking a negotiated solution to Sri Lanka's crisis, the international community prefers to somehow make the LTTE the problem. Mr. Blake wants the LTTE to give up its demand for Tamil Eelam and accept a united Sri Lanka - as if it is the Tamils' demand for independence which is the fundamental problem, rather than the racism of the Sri Lankan state which has, over sixty years, pursued a project of Sinhala supremacy in constitutional and military terms.

Thus, not only is the international community not committed to a negotiated solution in principle, it is also not committed to defending the Tamils' rights vis-à-vis state oppression or racism. Indeed, it was Ambassador Lunstead's predecessor, Mr. Ashley Wills, who grandly suggested in 2003, during the peace process, that it was time for the LTTE to disarm because "now that the world is paying attention to Sri Lanka as never before, the international community will be watching closely to see that no one's rights gets abused systematically." Well, history - and that includes the track record of the international community as well as the Sri Lankan state - have revealed the hollowness of such external assurances.

The point is this: as much as the Tamils may want it, genuine prospects for a lasting negotiated peace in Sri Lanka are nowhere in sight, irrespective of the noises international actors make. They will only improve when the Sri Lankan state's sword is blunted in the battlefields of the north and it turns - as in 2001- to the international community to rescue it from a predicament of its own making. Even, then, rather than assurances, it is only when the international community takes concrete steps to discipline the Sri Lankan state that the Tamils can take international claims of wanting peace seriously. At present, whilst an imposed solution is in the interests of everyone except the Tamils, a just solution is, conversely, only in the interests of the Tamils.

OPINION

The blind spot in genocide theory

The first of a three part series on genocide, politicide and international failure in Sri Lanka.

J. T. Janani
Tamil Guardian

GENOCIDE is the systematic attempt to annihilate a racial group or nation. Closely linked is politicide: the annihilation of a group with a given political belief: such as the Tamil belief in a separate state of Eelam.

In the UN definition, acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group constitute 'genocide'. These acts include (1) killing members of the group (2) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group (3) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; 'Politicide' covers groups that share a political belief (such as Eelam) but not a distinct ethnic identity.

The Tamils, a distinct ethnic group with a contiguous millenia-old history, allege genocide. But genocide may pretend to be politicide, a "lesser" crime, not covered by the UN.

Social scientists have developed a *general theory of genocide* by identifying the central elements in a 'genocidal conjuncture' - almost like trying to define a mathematical equation. One objective of this effort is to predict or prevent future genocides.

As Dr. Helen Fein explains: "*Genocide is viewed theoretically...* as a strategy that ruling elites use to resolve real solidarity and legitimacy conflicts or challenges to their interests against victims decreed outside their universe of obligation in situations in which a crisis or opportunity is caused by or blamed on the victim (or victim impedes taking advantage of an opportunity) and the perpetrators believe that they can get away with it"

But even in this narrow theoretical approach, Sri Lanka's treatment of its Tamil community constitutes *genocide*.

Firstly, the politics of race have dominated Sri Lankan elections since independence; governments that have come to power are invariably those that have espoused the anti-Tamil card.

The organised Buddhist clergy are a "ruling elite". They have modernised but retained their historical role as "king makers and advisors" in the ancient Sinhalese kingdoms.

This militant clergy helped formulate the supremacist policies from the stripping of citizenship of 1 million minority Tamils

in 1949, the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, and, from the background of politics, to the 'Mahinda Chintana' ('Mahinda's Way') of today.

In this way they sealed the Sinhala-Buddhist hold on power. The citizenship act of 1949 neutralised Tamil political power in parliament by reducing the numbers of Tamils eligible to vote by a full 33%. The Sinhala Only Act ensured that by the 1970s, Tamils there were very few Tamils in government, especially the civil service and administrative ranks that provided the infrastructure of a state. Tamils, like the Tutsi in Rwanda, had been the majority of government civil servants before the Act.

By a process of recruiting Sinhalese only since 1962, Dr. Brian Blodgett describes how the Sri Lankan military was also rendered ethnically pure.

And so an ethnically pure ruling elite increased its power base by cleansing lower level government ranks and the military of those who might oppose it in coming years.

Sri Lanka's political parties are dynastic as are the ruling elites. They include firstly, the Bandaranaike Family that first swept to power on the race card of the "Sinhala Only Act". Secondly the Uncle-Nephew couple of the late Junius Jayawardene and Ranil Wickeremesinghe that dominated the opposition UNP party. Jayawardene proved his race credentials by presiding over the largest anti-Tamil race pogrom, Black July, in 1983. Thirdly, the three brothers of the Rajapakse family who now dominate the SLFP-led far right alliance which is the UPFA.

All these families are, of course, Sinhalese-Buddhist.

Because the ruling elites came to power through a racist electoral strategy, the Tamils are "victims decreed outside their universe of obligation" to use Helen Fein's words. Precisely because these governments are obligated to an entirely different group: the majoritarian Sinhala-Buddhist electorate which brought them to power.

Much of the behaviour and attitudes of the Sinhala ruling elites, including the present day Rajapakse family, towards the Tamils is incomprehensible outside of genocide theory.

For example, it is only in this framework of genocide theory that we can begin to make sense of President Jayawardene's radio

broadcast during the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, which saw the gruesome mass murder of thousands of Tamils.

As Tamil families were being hacked to death or burnt alive on the streets, in their homes, their workplaces and temples, President Jayawardene came on radio for the first time on the 28th July to give his now infamous broadcast.

Instead of either apologising or promising protection to the Tamil people during the pogrom, he chose instead to talk about the "suspicion between the Sinhala and the Tamil people" which, he said, began in 1956 and to blame the pogroms on the desire of the Tamil people for separation which he said began in 1976.

He concluded his broadcast by promising to the (Sinhala-Buddhist) nation that "We will also see that those ... who advocate the separation of the country lose their civic rights and cannot hold office, cannot practice professions, cannot join movements or organisations in this country. We are very sorry that this step should be taken. But I cannot see, and my Government cannot see, any other way by which *we can appease the natural desire and request of the Sinhala people to prevent the country being divided, and to see that those who speak for division are not able to do so legally.*"

President Jayawardene's speech makes no rational sense outside of genocide theory. But within the framework above as articulated by Helen Fein it makes perfect sense.

The victims, the Tamil people, had well prior to 1983 been decreed "outside the universe of obligation" of the President; hence there was no need to apol-

ogise or offer protection.

The President was a member of the ruling elite. The genocidal anti Tamil pogrom of 1983 was the strategy this elite used to "resolve real solidarity and legitimacy conflicts or challenges to their interests against victims" to use Ms Fein's words.

There had always been legitimacy issues in Sri Lanka, a country formed by Colonial powers by artificially uniting different historical Tamil and Sinhala governances. After the British left, the exclusion of Tamils via racist legislation exacerbated the government's crisis of legitimacy.

It is now widely accepted that the 1983 pogrom was state orchestrated and government ministers were complicit; for example, the mobs had been provided with electoral registers to help identify Tamils and the ruling party's officials and their affiliates owned many of the vehicles used to transport the mobs (the military provided the rest).

Another Presidential speech two weeks prior to 23 July 1983 had paved the way for the pogrom: "I have tried to be effective for sometime but cannot. I am not worried about the opinion of the Jaffna (Tamil) people now... Now, we cannot think of them. Not about their lives or of their opinion about us... The more you put pressure in the north, the happier the Sinhala people will be here... really, if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhala people will be happy."

Again, outside of the theory in which the victims were decreed "outside the universe of obligation" of the President, this statement that "if I starve the Tamils out the Sinhala people will be happy" makes no sense.

The pogrom was an example where "a crisis or opportunity is caused by or blamed on the victim and the perpetrators believe that they can get away with it".

In any other context, it would be astonishing that the President could try to put the blame for mass murder of the Tamils on the victims themselves. And that he could conceivably mention the year 1956 as the beginning of "distrust" that led to this slaughter.

Because 1956 was the year of the "Sinhala Only Act" - legislation designed to ensure that Tamils did not hold government office or jobs of any note, unless they passed the significant hurdle of fluency in Sinhalese.

As with the 1949 citizenship act that former U.S. Attorney General Bruce Fein, has compared to Hitler's Nuremberg laws (1935), the intent of this legislation was to exclude the Tamil minority from participation in important areas of society: the civil service, the military, and jobs in state-owned industries, which in Sri Lanka would even include most of the media.

As James Smith said "Genocide is not extreme war or conflict; it is extreme exclusion. Exclusion may start with name-calling, but may end with a group of people being excluded from a society to the point where they are destroyed"

But given that genocide necessarily means the victim must be blamed the President's broadcast during the pogrom makes perfect sense.

While the 1983 pogrom led to some immediate international protest, there was no recognition of genocide outside of a few

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BALRAJ FUNERAL



Brigadier Balraj's body laid to rest

THE remains of Brigadier Balaraj, a senior commander Liberation Tigers, who passed away due to a sudden heart attack on 20 May 2008, was laid to rest 6.30 pm on Friday, 23 May, with full military honours in Mulliyavalai Heroes Cemetery the presence of thousands of public and hundreds of LTTE cadres.

After the homage ceremony held Thursday in Kilinochchi, the casket containing the remains of Brigadier Balraj was kept at Puthukkudiyiruppu Central College from 8:00a.m till 11:00a.m to enable the public to pay their last respects.

After an eulogy by Poddu Ammaan, head of the LTTE Intelligence Wing, the casket preceded by percussion band and accompanied by thousands of people was taken in procession to the

church of Infant Jesus in Mullaitheevu. The cortege arrived at the church around 12:30 p.m.

Poorani, head of LTTE Naval wing's women's division, lit the common flame at the event held in the main hall of Millaiththeevu Maha Vidyalayam to pay homage to Brigadier Balraj.

Vinayagam, deputy commander of the Sea Tigers, presided the event.

After that Chandrasegaram and Gnanasekaram, siblings of late Brigadier Balraj, lit the flame of sacrifice, and garlanded the remains.

Colonel Soosai, special commander of Sea Tigers garlanded the remains of Brigadier Balraj and paid special tribute to Brigadier Balraj.

Thousands of people gathered in the school premises paid their

last respects at the event which continued till 2:10 p.m.

The casket was then taken in procession from Mulliyavalai junction to Mulliyavalai Vidyana-nda College where another event to pay homage to Brigadier Balraj was held at 4:00p.m presided by Umainesan, political head of Mulliyavalai zone.

A number of LTTE representatives including head of the LTTE political wing B. Nadesan, commander of the Northern Front Colonel Theepan, Colonel Jeyam, LTTE military advisor Dinesh, head of the Education unit of Tamil Eelam Ilankumaran, Head of LTTE justice department Para, Thamilethi, Mannar division commander Laxman and LTTE secretariat administrator Neethan garlanded the remains of Brigadier Balraj.

Earlier, several thousand members of the public had had an opportunity to pay their last respects to Brigadier Balraj when the casket was kept at Mallaawi, Vanni.

Colonel Ramesh, one of Senior LTTE commanders, eulogized Brig. Balraj at the event in Mallaawi.

Col. Theepan and several LTTE military commanders for the Northern Front including Colonel Mugunthan and Colonel Kumunan laid garlands over the remains of late Brigadier Balraj. C. Navaratnarajah, President of Kilinochchi Traders Association, presided over the event.

Press reports said a number of Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) Kfir jet fighters flew over the skies in a provocative act to intimidate the public during the event.



Pirapaharan felicitates Commander Balraj

VELUPILLAI Pirapaharan, the leader of the Liberation Tigers, in his condolence message following the demise of Brigadier Balraj, elaborated on the characteristics that he admired in Brigadier Balraj as an exceptional military leader.

Balraj was at the center of many of LTTE's Himalayan victories, he said and remembered him as the "heroic military leader, who trained, guided and fought with our fighting formations and conventional brigades."

Full text of LTTE leader's

message follows:

Head Quarters
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
Tamil Eelam
21 May 2008

My beloved Tamil people,
Our movement, in its long journey towards freedom, has made many admirable sacrifices; its history is filled with so many celebrated brave deeds; it has reached numerous achievements; and it has won great military victories. The man, who was at the center of many of our Himalayan

victories, the heroic military leader, who trained, guided and fought with our fighting formations and conventional brigades, is with us no more. Our nation is in profound grief at his loss.

I loved him deeply as an exceptional military leader. I recognized in him, from the very beginning, the rare martial nature and martial characteristics that were natural to him. I saw him develop as an idealistic fighter with great skill and leadership.

His ability to move the fighting units, his focused actions, and

his martial characteristics struck fear in the hearts of the enemy. These same characteristics strengthened the conviction and morale of our fighters. They brought us victories.

Brigadier Balraj has not left us. As the energy that seeks our nation's freedom, as the fiery force that moves us on, he will always be within us.

Signed
V Pirapaharan
Leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

FEATURES

Reserved hero: Brigadier Balraj

TamilNet

IN over two decades of service with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Brig. Balraj, who passed away May 20 after a heart attack, had been a courageous and skilled fighter and commander whose last years were spent institutionalizing the training of a new generation of LTTE field officers. Although he joined the LTTE later than many of the other top commanders, Brig. Balraj had risen rapidly through the ranks on the strength of his shrewdness on the battlefield and courage under fire, fighters who served with him said this week.

Brig. Balraj had been ailing for some time and had been hospitalised for two weeks three months ago. 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 the LTTE commanders most feared by the Sri Lankan military, had always preferred to lead his troops from the front.

LTTE fighters who served with him say he preferred to direct his battles from amidst the exploding shells and flying bullets of the frontline - a few hundred metres from the enemy positions - rather than the confines of a command-centre.

He had been seriously wounded many times in his two decades of service, the healing often compounded by his diabetes.

Brig. Balraj had twice commanded the LTTE's crack Charles Anthony Regiment. He was its first commander for two years from when the unit, designed for conventional war fighting, was established in 1991 and had led it again for another two years from 1995.

Brig. Balraj came to particular public prominence for his command of a daring operation in 2000 in which he led 1,200 LTTE fighters 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 LTTE strike force slipped into the heavily fortified peninsula by sea and trekked inland from Thalaiyadi 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 for very long.

However, holding what became called the 'Vaththirayan Box', a perimeter of a few kilometres deep inside the Jaffna High Security Zones, with no hope of resupply unless the Elephant Pass base fell to the LTTE, Brig. Balraj and his troops battled the Sri Lankan forces for 34 days with only the weapons they had carried with them.

When the LTTE assault on the Elephant Pass base complex began, the SLA garrison there was unable to receive supplies from Jaffna due to Balraj's 'cut out'.

The SLA therefore launched repeated onslaughts against Brig. Balraj's position to clear the A9 and save the Elephant Pass base. As the situation 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 a major LTTE offensive. At least 4 Sri Lankan commanders were put in charge, one by one, against the Tiger forces led by Balraj.

Brig. Balraj's raid gave lie to the assumption that no rear defence in depth of a state's conventional army could only be seriously threatened by an armed force supported by strategic air power.

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

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

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 program in Tamil Nadu.

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 in the ensuing clash. Balraj was wounded.

When Balraj came back to Vanni from training in 1986, he



served with Major Pasilan.

Colonel Theepan, the present 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.

Balraj later took part in several ambushes on SLA forces in Vanni during that year, demonstrating considerable courage and battlefield acumen, Col. Theepan said in his tribute on May 22.

However, Balraj's defining moment as a field commander came later during the India - LTTE war. He fought side by side with Major Pasilan and Major Maran in Jaffna 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 Koapaay, destroying battle tanks.

Later, as the LTTE shifted its base to Vanni moved and switched from urban- to jungle-warfare, Balraj was moved into the deep jungles of Manalaaru, 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, once deploying the elite Gurkha regiment.

In one critical battlefield, Balraj launched a surprise frontal assault on the Gurkhas located in open terrain. The ferocity of the LTTE attack forced the elite soldiers to scatter into booby-trapped jungles where they suffered heavy casualties. This battlefield defined Balraj as a fearless commander.

When the conflict between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE resumed after the withdrawal of the IPKF, in what became known as Eelam War II, Balraj led key fronts in several battles and sweeping operations against the SLA.

In 1990 he was involved in the LTTE's assault on SLA-held Maangkulam - in the centre of the now LTTE-held Vanni region.

Balraj also participated in the LTTE's first assault on the Elephant Pass base in 1991. Although the LTTE operation failed to capture base, it defined the movement's forces evolution into a conventional war-fighting force.

Balraj commanded one of the four fronts in that battle, the only front in which the LTTE forces succeeded in capturing their

assigned objective, in this case the barracks part of the base.

Subsequently, the SLA expanded the EP base into a complex which was the largest SLA installation in the island. Ten years later, it was Balraj's raid which ensured its fall to the LTTE.

In 1993, the SLA launched a major offensive, Yarl Devi, against LTTE, under the command of Col. Sarath Fonseka, now a Lt. Gen. and overall commander of the SLA.

LTTE forces, under the command of Balraj, with Theepan as deputy commander, led a counter-offensive against the advancing SLA forces.

Taking up entrenched positions in unfavourable, open terrain at Puloappalai, the LTTE forces launched a surprise attack on the SLA, inflicting heavy casualties and destroying tanks and armoured vehicles.

The SLA offensive was routed in six days. Col. Fonseka was amongst the wounded. Balraj was also badly wounded in his leg.

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

"A measure of Balraj's

FEATURES

Admired female LTTE leader killed in battle

LT COL SELVY, deputy leader of the Sothiya Regiment, was killed on 25 May 2008 at the age of 38 in a frontline battle at the Mannar forward defence line (FDL).

Lt Col Selvy hailed from Jaffna and joined the LTTE in 1995 prior to the mass displacement from Jaffna in that year. She was following an undergraduate course at Jaffna University when she joined the LTTE.

Even her seniors within the LTTE feared her for her stringent adherence to rules and the extreme austere life that she led and expected others in the movement to lead.

To her subordinates she was the counsellor who could be approached with any kind of problems. Yet they too feared her for her absolute honesty.

There were rare instances in her life as a leader of a frontline unit where she dared to disobey orders of her seniors that she clearly perceived as unwise.

At her funeral her seniors expressed their respect for her decisions of this type.

Lt Col Selvy loved learning the Tamil language in all its manifestations. Lately, she eagerly grasped an opportunity to learn the oldest text on Tamil grammar, Tholhapiyam.

It was one of her regrets that she could not dedicate herself to this task since her duties at the frontline made this very difficult.

Her ability with the language gave her a valued skill to enthuse



the women fighters. She had the ability to ease the tension and make people laugh with her language skills. She could use her knowledge of ancient Tamil liter-

ature to cite poems war and bravery with relevance to the situation in hand which often made her fighting unit shake out of the pressures they were facing.



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

During Eelam War III, which followed the short-lived peace talks with the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Balraj commanded important defensive battles against the massed formations of the SLA deployed to capture the Jaffna peninsula.

He led LTTE forces deployed as part of Operation 'Tiger Leap', a counter offensive with operations in sea and land and using surface-to-air attack.

After the mass civilian exodus from Jaffna compelled by the massive bombardment and 'broad front' assault by two divisions of

SLA troops, the LTTE again shifted its rear base to Vanni.

Balraj subsequently led, as Coordinating Commander, the LTTE's Operation Unceasing Waves I, the assault on the SLA base at Mullaiththeevu in July 1996. The Tigers seized artillery in Mullaiththeevu for the first time.

Later, in 1997 and 1998, he led several counter-attacks against the SLA's Operation Jaya Sikirui, then the largest over offensive launched by the Sri Lankan forces.

In 1998 Balraj led a lighting assault into the then SLA-controlled town of Kilinochchi, whose residents had fled when the SLA captured it in 1996, soon after the Mullaiththeevu battle. Balraj's assault was part of Operation Unceasing Waves II, in which Kilinochchi was again brought under LTTE control.

Operation Unceasing Waves III, the third in the series, was the massive LTTE counter-offensive in late 1999 and early 2000, which first recaptured in six days the vast territory the SLA had struggled for eighteen months to occupy and then overran the Elephant Pass base complex.

In 2001, Balraj played a key role in crushing the SLA's massive Operation 'Agni Khiela', in

which thousands of soldiers were deployed from the Muhaimalai frontline to capture Elephant Pass from the Tigers.

The abortive offensive was the last major engagement of Eelam War III as nine months later, the Norwegian-facilitated peace process began in earnest with a mutual ceasefire, later formalized into the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) in February 2002.

During the lengthy peace process, the LTTE embarked, as part of its state-building project, to institutionalize the training of field commanders at different levels of responsibility.

Recognizing the unfolding generational shift in one of the world's longest running liberation struggles, the LTTE sought to impart command knowledge and skills to talented and battle experienced soldiers.

Balraj, with more than 20-years of combat experience and skilled in various war-fighting strategies, had the assignment of developing the training programs.

In her book, 'Will to Freedom' Adele Balasingham notes her observations about several of the top LTTE figures, including Balraj.

"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."

In 2003 Balraj suffered a heart attack underwent surgery in Singapore.

In 2004, Balraj was amongst the senior LTTE officers sent to the east. However, Balraj did not participate in the offensive operations and his exact role in the east remains a secret.

He was still there in December 2004, when the Indian Ocean tsunami struck, killing thirty thousand people across the island's northern, eastern and southern coasts.

Balraj, based in Vakara, narrowly escaped the crashing waves and soon after, returned to Vanni, with a number of LTTE fighters. In Vanni he resumed direction of training programs for LTTE officers.

After the SLA launched major operations in the Eastern province in mid-2006, other top LTTE officers, including Col. Sornam, Col.

Banu and Col. Jeyam, who had also been sent to the east, also returned in phases with their fighters.

Whilst the Sri Lankan government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa said the LTTE had been routed in the east, observers now say the LTTE had opted not to fight in strategically unfavourable terrain and had instead gradually relocated its main forces to the Vanni to confront the SLA's massed formations there.

Reports say that even as he was forced to rest in hospital by bouts of illness in the past year, Brig. Balraj had continued to engage himself in the military campaign, often visiting the Mannaar and Manalaaru fronts where LTTE fighters are presently 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 Champoor, in the Eastern Province, 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

Give up Eelam ...

Continued from p4

years now. The US is a strong supporter of Sri Lanka's fight against terrorism. We strongly believe that Sri Lanka like all other countries has an obligation to defend its people against LTTE terrorism.

The US has provided military, law enforcement and other kinds of support to help the government to defend itself while believing that a purely a military solution would not be the correct solution for this conflict.

The US believes that the answer to the conflict lies with a power sharing concept which can respond to the aspirations of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims. We also believe that in this very important stage of the conflict, it is very important for the government to address the human rights issues as well.

The US also has concerns about Tamils who suffer disproportionately due to human rights violations.

It is important to give them a sense of feeling that they could live with respect and dignity here. So improving the human rights performances is also an important aspect of our dialogue with the government.

Q: The US supports developing countries. Sri Lanka has been battered and bruised by LTTE terrorism and how best the US could support in curbing terrorism?

A: I think I have just answered that question. The US is one of the first countries to declare LTTE as a foreign terrorist organisation in 1997. We have also helped to investigate and prosecute people in the US, who were trying to provide arms to the LTTE.

So, the FBI, for an example, has conducted distinct operations that had resulted in the arrest of many people and those investigations are on-going. We also have a central bank, which improves financial investigations to track down the money flow into the LTTE and help to stop those money from flowing in.

Then the most importantly we work with our friends in the military to help them to stop import of arms into this country.

We gave them a maritime surveillance system last year - a radar system - that will give the Sri Lanka Navy a much better picture of LTTE naval activities in their waters and thereby give them the opportunity to detect LTTE shipments of arms. I must say they have enjoyed considerable success last year in sinking many of these ships.

The ban on LTTE is extremely effective in terms of implementing the American law. People understand that we are very strict about forcing our laws which will prosecute anyone who is believed to be illegally assist-

ing the LTTE.

Q: Criticism had mounted when the East was about to be liberated. Now the Mahinda Rajapaksa government has created the right environment to give more power to the people whereby they can look after their own affairs. What is your comment on restoring democracy in the East?

A: I think President Rajapaksa and the Sri Lankan Government made very important progress over the past year. First they have expelled the LTTE from the East. That is a positive development and secondly they have restored government services.

In the East they have reopened schools, hospitals and government institutions. Now there is a greater sense of normalcy in many towns in the East. People are out late at nights, going for movies and for shopping which is a big achievement after 20 years. There is stability now, in that part of the country.

With regard to the election we always support the principle of free elections. It is important to allow the local inhabitants to represent their views. There have been some controversies which were highlighted in the media.

The Opposition parties have alleged that there were many irregularities. The US is not in a position to judge since we did not have observers on the ground. But we think that it is important for the government and the new Provincial Council to look into those charges seriously and act on them.

In the long run it is really important to consider what the people of the East believe. If they believe that it was largely a free and fair election and they support the new council, then the international community should also be prepared to accept their decision in toto.

In terms of what happens after, I think that the new Chief Minister has an important challenge on his hand. First of all, he has to assure security, because on one hand he is the chosen Chief Minister of the Eastern Province and on the other hand he is the head of the TMVP which still has armed cadres.

So, he is in a difficult position where he has to enforce state law as the Chief Minister and on the other hand a fairly large number of armed cadres. I think something must be done and they can not continue to do illegal activities in the East.

Otherwise they would undermine the leadership of Pillaiyan and the transition that the TMVP is trying to make while being a para-military group and a political party. So, we support the idea of them of being a political party. But that transition must be completed and certainly they can not be in both.

Beyond the challenge of secu-

rity, I think that the new Chief Minister in order to secure the support of the people of the East, it is very important to show that he has been given opportunities to serve all other communities in the East and pursuing development in a neutral way.

And I think that way he can ensure that there is harmony among these communities and also stability in the East, which will automatically reach to a greater development and priority for the people of the East.

Q: Will the US continue with its support to develop the East?

A: Yes, we have quite a number of projects with the assistance of the private sector, for example the vocational training. We have just announced a major project in Batticaloa to develop dairy industry and another to grow vegetables for exports.

We strongly believe that we need to help the people of the East and give them economic opportunities. We believe that there is a big role for the private sector to play. We have proposed to give more assistance for the East and the US government is considering it now.

Q: You have always advocated a credible political package to meet the aspirations of the Tamils. How do you see the APRC proposal to implement the 13th Amendment?

A: The East is a fine laboratory to show that powers within the 13th Amendment be devolved within the Eastern Provincial Council. But I think the government needs to go beyond the 13th Amendment.

The way they develop must be a significant power sharing proposals through the APRC using some other mechanisms. But I do believe that the APRC has made lots of progress.

According to Prof. Vitharana over 90 percent of their work has been done and I think the APRC has been a useful mechanism to get the Southern consensus to move forward. The most important thing is to come up with an idea which is really welcomed by the Tamils.

I think that it is important for the government to consult a wide range of Tamils. We are not calling for negotiations with the LTTE. That is something that the government has to decide.

It is important to recognize more than half of the Tamils are living outside the Wann. I think their interests also should be respected as well. So, people like Anandasangaree and other elected representatives in the government controlled areas are needed to be brought into this process and consulted.

Q: You mentioned the solution should be something beyond the

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Bruce Fein challenged Ambassador Blake to support a referendum

Referendum ...

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guage.

3. The revocation of constitutional safeguards for the Tamil minority in the new 1972 Republican Constitution imposed without popular ratification.

4. The statement of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front, after winning the by-election in 1974 where he sought a mandate for Tamil Eelam: "The National Convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front meeting at Pannakam...on the 14th day of May 1976, hereby declares that the Tamils of Ceylon, by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history of independent existence as a separate state over a distinct territory for several centuries till they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders, and above all by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese and this Convention announced to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Sinhalese, who are using the power they have wrongly usurped to deprive the Tamil nation of its territory, language, citizenship, economic life, opportunities of employment and education, thereby destroying all attributes of nationhood of the Tamil people, and therefore...This convention resolves that the restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self determination inherent in every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in this country."

5. The statement of President J.R. Jayawardene to the Daily Telegraph on July 11, 1983 while state organized race riots were slaughtering Tamils by the thousands and displacing more than 100,000: "I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people...now we cannot think of them, not about their lives or their opinion...the more you put pressure in the north, the happier the Sinhala people will be here...Really if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhalese people will be happy."

Ambassador Blake, however, should be praised for tacitly acknowledging that the political fate of the Tamil people should pivot on what the majority cherishes.

The Tamil majority should not be dictated to by Prabhakaran or anyone else - including the Ambassador who has never attracted a single Tamil vote.

The time-honored method for determining whether a group of people desire independent statehood under international law is by conducting a fair and free referendum. East Timor, Eritrea, and Montenegro are recent examples. (Kosovo declared its independence by parliamentary vote).

In Canada, Quebec has twice voted on independence, and rejected the option twice.

And the United States permits Puerto Rico an independence vote, which has never attracted more than a tiny 4%.

Ambassador Blake should pursue the logic of his own exhortation to Prabhakaran. He should expose his 95% figure to the test of a Tamil statehood referendum conducted under United Nations auspices.

If statehood prevails, the Ambassador should be the first to concede Prabhakaran's superiority in discerning the political aspirations of the Tamil people.

NEWS

Rights groups decry killing of another Tamil Journalist

A TAMIL television journalist working in a Sri Lanka army-held area in the northern Jaffna peninsula was hacked to death along with his friend on Wednesday evening when he was returning home from work, officials from the TV station said.

"Our Jaffna correspondent Paranerupasinghem Devakumar was hacked to death in the army-controlled area in Jaffna yesterday evening," said Susil Kindelpitiya, news director of the Maharaja Television and Radio, said on Thursday May 28.

The friend accompanying him, 24-year-old computer technician Mahendran Varadan, died later in hospital from the injuries he sustained in the attack.

A media rights groups condemned the killing and said the government's vociferous condemnations and promises of inquiries were meaningless without the will to push investigations forward.

Free Media Movement (FMM) an influential media rights group in a statement said, Devakumar is the ninth media worker to have been killed in Jaffna since 2006.

"It is with sickeningly increasing frequency that we are compelled to ask the government to take concrete measures to halt the killing, assault and intimidation of journalists in Sri Lanka," FMM statement said.

The FMM said none of the disappearances, abductions or murders of media workers have been probed and the perpetrators brought to justice.

Stressing that Devakumar's murder was just the latest in a series of killings of journalists in the troubled Jaffna region, the Free Media Movement said condemnations and promises of investigations had no meaning "without the political will" to complete the investigations. "The repugnant impunity that aids and abets violence against journalists and media personnel must come to an end," the FMM said.



Journalists carried posters bearing the disfigured face of Keith Noyhar, who was abducted, badly beaten and then dropped off outside his residence, allegedly because of his criticism of the government's war efforts. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi / AFP / Getty Images

According to Amnesty International, at least 10 Sri Lankan media workers have been killed over the past two years, while others have been abducted, tortured or illegally detained.

Most are Tamil journalists working in the ethnic Tamil majority areas of the north and east. Sinhalese journalists working in the south also face intimidation, particularly when reporting cases of graft, Amnesty said.

Reporters Without Borders expressed its outrage at the latest

killing and said: "The government in Colombo must do everything possible to establish the circumstances of this murder and identify those responsible, so that it does not go unpunished as so many others have."

Reporters Without Borders added: "Although no suspect has yet been found, the security forces should explain how this attack took place in an area of the peninsula that is supposed to be under close military control. The government is exposing both its

inability and its lack of political will to protect journalists."

The government has reportedly assigned three police teams to probe the incident. Priority could not be given to any hypothesis for the time being as Devakumar was known for covering both sides of the war between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). He had not been criticised or threatened in the past and a personal motive cannot be ruled out.

Media rights watchdogs

describe Sri Lanka as one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists after Iraq.

On May 22, Keith Noyahr, a deputy editor of The Nation weekly, was abducted and severely beaten after criticising Colombo's war against LTTE.

Sri Lanka's defence secretary branded as "traitors" any journalists who wrote reports that could damage the security forces.

Journalists are barred from visiting front lines or areas held by the LTTE.

Gotabhaya 'warns' state employed journalists

SRI LANKA'S Defence Secretary and the brother of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on May 26 invited two journalists - Poddala Jayantha of Working Journalists' Association and Sanath Balasooriya, secretary of the organization, both employed in the state-owned Lake House - and cautioned them that their activities are bringing disrepute to State armed forces, and that the Government will not bear respon-

sibility if any harm befalls on them from 'patriotic citizens' who support the military.

On Wednesday, SL Minister Keheliya Rambukwella confirmed the meeting and reiterated that state employees should abide by rules of their employer organization. Although Lake House Director Bandula Pathmakumara, and Director of the Media Center for National Security Lakshman Hulugalla participated in the

meeting with the Defence Secretary, no details of their attendance were made public, TamilNet reported. When Pathmakumara mentioned that both Balasooriya and Jayantha had worked for the election victory of Mahinda Rajapakse, Gotabhaya Rajapakse had allegedly dismissed the fact as irrelevant to current matters.

In the press briefing, Hulugalla mentioned that the Defence Ministry has in its possession

video footage of Balasooriya criticizing the government, and that the two journalists were called in for a meeting for clarification and not for reprimanding. He said, at a media protest campaign held last week to condemn the brutal assault on The Nation Associate Editor Keith Noyahr, Balasuriya had criticised government policies on conducting the war.

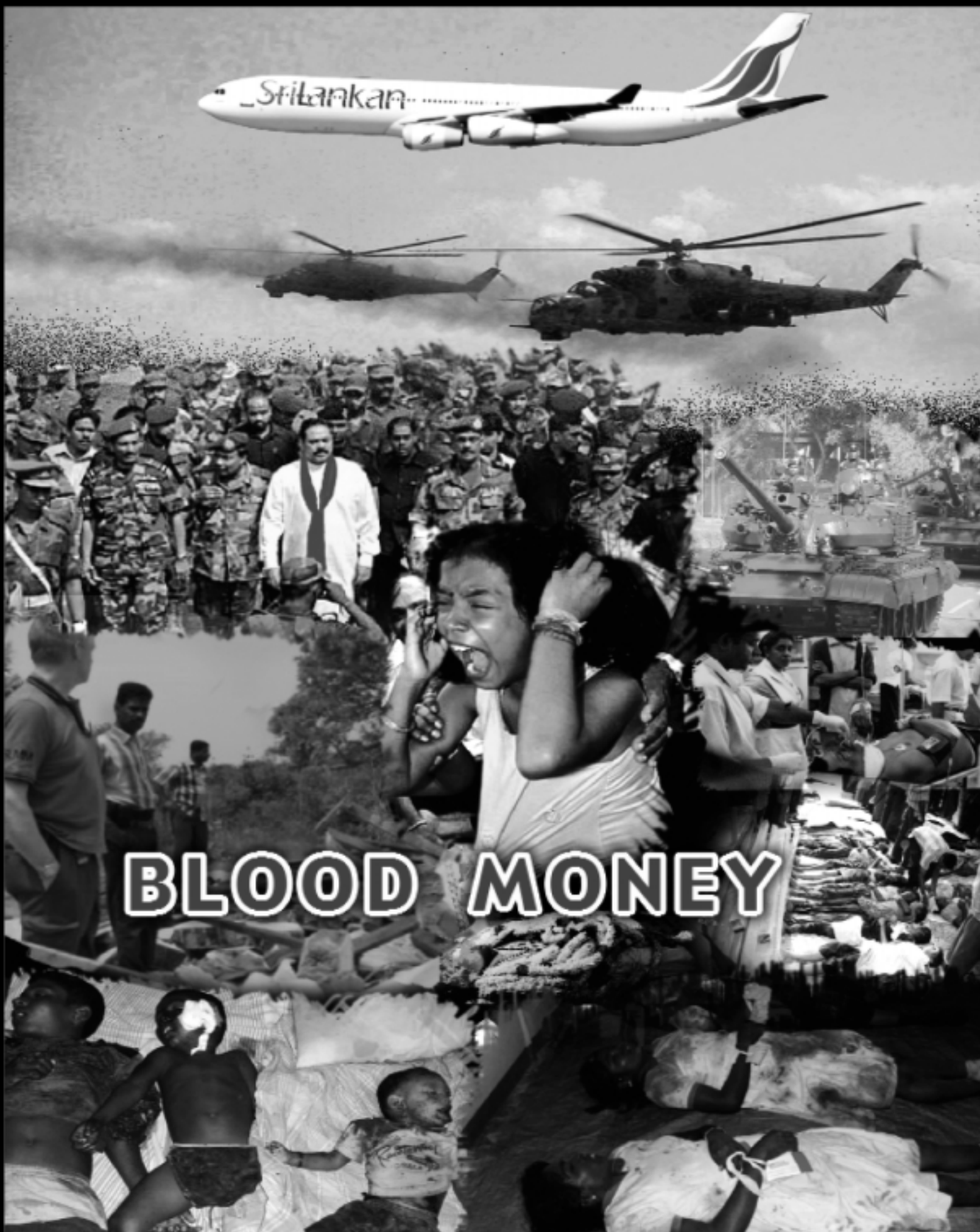
Hulugalle charged that government employees, including

Lake House journalists, cannot criticise government policies no matter what their position is and it could be considered as a grave crime to do so.

He said that though fundamental rights are enjoyed by any other citizen, government servants cannot criticise the policies adopted by the government as it is clearly stated so in the Establishment Code, reported the Daily Mirror.

BOYCOTT SRI LANKA

AND SRI LANKAN AIRLINES



BLOOD MONEY

60 YEARS OF STATE SPONSORED GENOCIDE OF TAMILS IN
SRI LANKA. GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

BRITISH TAMILS FORUM