

No one gets to the bottom line and talks about money

PAGE 9



Sri Lankan military struggles in rains

Anuj Chopra
ISN Security Watch

DESERTION rates soar in the Sri Lankan army, but as the military closes in on the Tigers, its new tactic of amnestying deserters seems to be working to some extent.

Just five months ago, a 29-year-old infantry soldier in the Sri Lankan army's 12 Gajaba Regiment exchanged fire with fighters from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in

their stronghold in the island's northern Vanni region.

"The ground was shaking and shrapnel flew everywhere," he recalls, speaking to ISN Security Watch in Kurunegala District.

"Corpses lay everywhere. It was a bloody, bloody scene."

A bullet ricocheted off the back of his skull and got lodged in his upper shoulder.

Now as fighting intensifies in

Vanni, Mahendran has received marching orders. Barely recuperated, he packs his suitcase in his mud-and-clay hut, preparing to return to the battlefield.

The Sri Lankan army claims it is now within just over a kilometer of Kilinochchi, the LTTE's de-facto capital, and the island's ethnic war is now reaching a decisive showdown.

As its troops push eastward

into the interiors of LTTE-held territory in Vanni, determined to crush the Tigers, the government is leaving no stone unturned to win this war that has simmered for a quarter century.

It is calling back wounded battle-hardened soldiers like Mahendran.

And just this month, the Sri

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NEWS

Sri Lankan military struggles in rains...

Continued from p1

Lankan government announced it was increasing its defense budget by 6 percent from the previous year to SL Rs 177 billion (US\$1.6 billion), a major chunk of which is being used to intensify army recruitment drives across the island, and even re-recruiting deserters by offering them amnesty pardons if they agree to return to the frontlines.

As fighting gets fiercer in the north, the army is whetting a large appetite for fresh recruits.

It launched its fourth recruitment drive in January this year, which will continue until 31 December.

So far, it has reportedly recruited 10,136 soldiers.

According to army spokesperson Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, the army is currently looking to recruit another 24,000 during the next few months.

Already, the strength of the Sri Lankan army has swollen to 140,000 in recent years, which makes it larger than the British army in terms of personnel.

In recent months, the Sri Lankan Defense Ministry has been sending a nationwide text message imploring the country's youth to join the defense forces: "Young Patriots - come join with our armed forces and be a part of a winning team."

Many in an obscure, impoverished village in this district in central Sri Lanka have answered the call.

The soldiers interviewed by ISN Security Watch requested that the name of the village not be published, fearing they could be tracked down and censured for talking to the press.

In this dusty, bucolic village, dirt roads remain pitted with bone-jarring potholes, water shortages are common, the power supply is erratic and the nearest hospital is a good 48 kilometers away.

Seeking a path out of the grinding poverty - and unable to scrape a living from the slivers of paddy farms in this arid region - the entrenched 25-year-old war has become a career for hundreds of this village's youth from over 400 families.

Roughly half the men of fighting age have enlisted in the army, navy, police or other security branches.

Mahendran joined the army in 2002, and with his army salary, he bought a 19-inch color TV and a mobile phone and is planning to build a concrete house with electricity and a hand water pump in his backyard.

Mahendran's elderly father, who goes by the name of Tushara, says he lives in a perpetual state of anxiety when his son is out on the frontlines.

Almost every month a corpse

returns from the Vanni battle field and a pall of gloom envelopes the village.

In the last six months alone, seven bodies were returned.

"If there were any other job opportunities, I wouldn't let my son go to the battle field," he says.

In recent years, the Sri Lankan army has been plagued by a high level of desertions, a problem that has only been exacerbated as fighting intensifies, say military analysts.

But in desperate need for manpower to win this war, the government has also occasionally announced amnesty periods during which times deserters can rejoin the forces without penalty.

In 2007, the army, short of man power, announced an amnesty pardon for soldiers who had gone absent without leave since 2003.

As fighting gets fiercer in the north, the army is whetting a large appetite for fresh recruits but amnestys and recruitment drives are failing to meet the growing demand

This amnesty apparently resulted in the reinstatement of thousands of deserters.

By the government's own admission, during the last 6 months 4,004 army deserters have reported back to their units.

It launched an island-wide operation to track down and arrest its deserters who refused to rejoin the army, and 2,984 soldiers and 21 officers who refused to report back have been arrested for deserting and will be tried in court.

If convicted, they could serve up to three years in prison.

The army refuses to acknowledge that desertion is a serious problem.

The army commander for Jaffna peninsula in northern Sri Lanka, Major General G A Chandrasiri, told ISN Security Watch that "deserters make up a very tiny figure - only 0.5 percent of the army."

"Most of them are soldiers who went absent without leave," he adds, saying a majority of them willingly return to the frontlines once offered an amnesty pardon.

However, the re-recruitment of deserters bewilders a leading Colombo-based military analyst who requested anonymity, fearing reprisals.

"If the army is really winning this war, as it claims it is, why are so many soldiers deserting the

army?" he asks.

"No one would want to desert a victorious army, no?"

The army is creating a dangerous delusion of an imminent victory, he told ISN Security Watch.

Adept at guerrilla tactics, the Tigers won't go down without severely bleeding the army.

Over the past year, the Tigers have suffered a series of reverses on the battlefield.

Now, the Sri Lankan military is at their doorstep in the north, making rapid advances into Tiger-controlled territory.

But even though the Tigers have lost vast swathes of their territory, it is speculated that the Tigers still have thousands of hardened fighters.

As war reaches full-throttle in Vanni - on land, air and sea - the army is bracing itself for a possible chemical attack by the Tigers as it inches toward Kilinochchi.

The war is expected to get even bloodier in the last few kilometers.

There are about 200,000 civilians currently trapped in the Vanni battle zone.

"If the Tigers force the civilians to flee in all directions then the army will not be able to separate 15,000 Tigers from 200,000 civilians," the military analyst says.

"This may lead to a bloodbath and help the LTTE to escape to another part of Sri Lanka. I do not see the army crushing the LTTE without the loss of thousands of civilians and soldiers."

In Mahendran's hamlet, residents shelter at least six deserters.

Every time the military police raids the village looking for them, they sidle out of the hamlet into hiding in the near by paddy fields, residents revealed.

"The Tigers have survived for 25 long years. It's not so easy to crush them," says Priyantha, 28, who has deserted the army twice, the first time in 2000.

He rejoined in 2002, only to leave again in 2006.

He says he abandoned the army for "personal reasons."

His family acknowledged he "couldn't cope with the bloodshed."

Currently living off farming, he leads a precarious life, always fretful of being caught by the police for abandoning the army.

"Prabhakaran is a brutal man," Priyantha says. "If he goes down, he'll take thousands of soldiers with him."

Anuj Chopra is a freelance journalist whose stories have appeared in The Christian Science Monitor and The San Francisco Chronicle, among other publications. Chopra lives just outside Mumbai in India and is the 2005 recipient of the CNN Young Journalist Award in the print category.

NEWS

Return of Sri Lanka's death squads

Basil Fernando

A GROUP calling itself the Mahason Battalion has sent threats to the registrars of Colombo courts and a number of human rights lawyers, saying anyone who represents 'terrorists' or 'suspected terrorists' in court will face death.

If someone in Sri Lanka says, "I will kill you," it should not be taken lightly. Many who have received such threats lie in their graves - and there are thousands. It is easy to make such threats, and it is also easy to carry them out.

Addressed "to those who represent the terrorists today," the document delivered to the courts said, in part: "The innocent people of our motherland have been subject to the killing sprees of terrorists for over three decades ... But there is no one today to speak for the human rights of these innocent people."

"However, we know that there are many traitors who voice their concerns for the human rights of

group found a reason not to assassinate a person on the death list, another group operating independently would carry it out.

Once on the list, a person had little chance of escape.

The mushrooming of death squads meant there was little chance of identifying the assassins.

This virtually prevented investigations. "Unidentified persons" were always blamed for the killings.

Another sinister aspect of the situation was that, once a state agency got involved with death squads, criminal gangs imitated their methods, giving the appearance that their deeds were state-sponsored.

Some carried out the instructions of those seeking personal revenge, some were used to abduct people for ransom, some simply injured or killed business competitors.

Another unique aspect of Sri Lanka's experience with death squads and extrajudicial killings has been that large numbers of innocent persons have been killed in order to ensure that wanted persons did not escape.

For example, the usual estimate of members and associates belonging to the group called the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, or People's Liberation Front, in 1971 was around 2,000.

However, the number killed in a purge of this group is estimated at around 15,000 - 750 percent more than the estimated number of unwanted persons.

In the late 1980s this was exceeded when 30,000 people were forcibly "disappeared." The deputy minister of defense who masterminded the operation later claimed that police officers acted excessively due to over enthusiasm.

A Dutch video journalist who reported on the killings in the late 1980s titled his presentation "Sri Lanka - Murder Land."

There have been no estimates of the number of people killed in this manner in the north and the east in the last 30 years. But the south is now witnessing a return to the period of terror.

As for the north and east, it has always been a period of terror in which the forces of the state, the LTTE and others have made no secret of eliminating their opponents.

The following is an extract from the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Involuntary Removal or Disappearance of Persons in the Western, Southern and Sabaragamuwa Provinces, made

in September 2007.

It reminds us that Sri Lanka has done nothing to change its behavior regarding death squads.

"We are mindful that our recommendations should have relevance and be meaningful to citizens living in all parts of Sri Lanka. Priority must be given at all times to the avoidance of situations of disappearances arising.

"The security forces and the police are necessary adjuncts of a state. They are required for the protection of the state and the protection of the citizens of the state. The average citizen looks to them for protection.

"The tragedy of Sri Lanka lies in the distortion of relationships between the citizens and the security forces, including the police, which has resulted from the acts of both politicians and subversives."

Basil Fernando is director of the Asian Human Rights Commission based in Hong Kong. He is a Sri Lankan lawyer who has also been a senior U.N. human rights officer in Cambodia. He has published several books and written extensively on human rights issues in Asia.



More and more families are left with no news of loved ones as the number of abductions continue to increase across the island

Once on the list, a person had little chance of escape

the evil terrorists and those who assist them in carrying out these indiscriminate killings."

It warned, "In the future, all those who represent the interests of the terrorists will be subject to the same fate that these terrorists mete out to our innocent people."

"Mahasona" is a Sinhala word meaning "the ghost that brings death." The majority of those charged under terrorism laws are Tamils suspected of belonging to or supporting the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

This type of threat was widely delivered, and carried out, in the 1980s, which became known as the "period of terror."

Around 30,000 people disappeared during this time according to official estimates, most of them from the south.

At that time groups associated with the state acted under a variety of names to issue and execute death threats.

One well-known group at the time was the "Black Cats."

Sri Lanka has experienced extremely sophisticated death-squad operations.

During the period of terror, a list of persons to be killed would be circulated to several groups operating in secrecy.

This meant that even if one

Tamils 'being arrested' says minister

BBC Sinhala Service

A MINISTER in the Sri Lankan government has accused the police of arresting "five to 10 Tamil people" every day in the capital, Colombo, and its suburbs.

Deputy Minister of Vocational and Technical Training, P Radhakrishnan, told the BBC Sinhala Service that over 1,000 Tamils are already in detention.

He said that anybody carrying identity cards with addresses from LTTE-held areas is immediately arrested.

The Tamil Tigers are fighting for a separate state in the north and east.

The minister's figures have been corroborated by Sri Lanka's Chief Justice, Sarath Nanda Silva, who told the media last week that nearly 1,400 Tamils are currently in custody.

Mr Radhakrishnan is a leader of the Up Country People's Front (UPF) - which represents Tamils of Indian origin. He said that almost every person currently arrested in Colombo is an ethnic

Tamil.

"Being Tamils is the only reason for these arrests," he said.

Mr Radhakrishnan stressed that he had no objection over suspected criminals being arrested.

The Sri Lankan police recently ordered people arriving in the capital from the north and east to register. They conceded that the majority of these people were Tamils.

The minister said he has received information that the police are using registration details to arrest Tamils in the capital.

His accusation comes as the government is urging Tamils in LTTE-controlled areas in the north to leave the war zone and go to government-controlled areas.

The UPF has urged President Mahinda Rajapaksa to take immediate steps to rectify the situation.

Mr Radhakrishnan's office says that it has also received information that at least 246

Tamil people have been abducted in and around the capital since January.

He says that 67 of these people had so far returned, but no information was available about the fate of the others.

Relatives of those missing have told the BBC that some of the abductions were carried out by people wearing security service uniforms.

The minister accused "several Tamil armed groups" of also being involved in the abductions but was reluctant to name them.

"We do not accuse the government but it has a duty to stop these abductions and find out what happened to those who were abducted," he said.

Neither Inspector General of Police Jayantha Wickramaratne nor police spokesman Ranjith Gunasekara were available to respond to the allegations.

But the government has repeatedly said that it was necessary to step up security measures after a string of bomb blasts and suicide attacks - targeting public transport and political leaders - in recent months.

NEWS

Letter From Jaffna: War has been hell in Sri Lanka, but peace may fall far short of heaven

Anuj Chopra
Newsweek

IT'S only an hour's airtime from Sri Lanka's capital city, Colombo, to the Jaffna peninsula at the northern tip of the island, but getting there is a miserable ordeal that can kill nearly half a day.

Suitcases in hand, heaving and sweating for hours under the blazing sun, passengers endure a gauntlet of checkpoints, where they are repeatedly stopped, questioned, frisked and hassled.

Most of the travellers are ethnic Tamils, a minority on the island, although they're the overwhelming majority in the battle-scarred north.

Some, without the necessary paperwork, are turned back. No one dares to protest.

The slightest disruption can halt air service at any time.

After five sweltering hours of queuing up, a Tamil passenger elbows me in the ribs and mutters: "This is how you're treated when you're taken to a prison camp."

The people of Jaffna can only hope their isolation will end soon.

For two years they've been cut off from overland access to the rest of the country by fierce combat in the swampy jungles of the Vanni region, just south of the peninsula.

That's where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have dug in as they continue to wage one of the oldest running insurgencies in the world.

Jaffna's old lifeline to the Sinhala-speaking south, the Alpha 9 highway, runs right through the middle of it.

The fighting has strangled Jaffna's economy, causing severe

shortages of food, fuel and electricity.

Now, however, the Sri Lankan army has made sweeping advances along the A9 to within a mile of the insurgents' capital, the town of Kilinochchi.

If that obstacle falls, and the A9 is reopened, life could get at least a little easier for Jaffna's

Many people in Jaffna are worried that without the LTTE, Sinhalese domination will become more entrenched than ever.

civilians.

Their bullet-pocked homes and shrapnel-scarred temples bear witness to how bad their lives have been.

Today, 40,000 government soldiers stand guard over the peninsula's 600,000 Tamil inhabitants.

Crowds in the markets pay little attention to the occasional thud of artillery duels in the distance.

Troops wielding Chinese-made T-56 assault rifles operate checkpoints at practically every street corner.

Although fishing has traditionally been Jaffna's primary occupation, the movements of boats are tightly restricted, for fear that LTTE infiltrators might stage an amphibious assault across the lagoon.

Nights in Jaffna are surreal.



Tamils in Jaffna have surrendered to the Human Rights Commission in record numbers to protect themselves from the Sri Lankan security forces and associated paramilitary groups. But even for the others, long queues are a part of every day life as they have to clear Sri Lankan security checkpoints at very frequent intervals as they travel about the peninsula for work and to obtain food

The streets go empty at sundown, and a curfew is strictly enforced through the night.

In the last two years, a wave of night-time civilian disappearances and killings has gripped the city.

Corpses of the disappeared sometimes turn up on the streets in the mornings, but mostly the victims are never seen again, dead

or alive.

Townpeople say most of the killings and disappearances happen during the curfew hours, cautiously referring to the perpetrators as "armed groups."

People in fear for their lives can seek aid from the Human Rights Commission.

According to the Center for Policy Alternatives, a Colombo-based think tank, "surrendees" are sent to Jaffna's squalid prison to be placed in protective custody, sometimes alongside convicted criminals because the facility is so overcrowded.

Fliers regularly appear on the Jaffna University campus, says a 20-year-old Jaffna student, too scared to give out his name-hit lists of supposed LTTE sympathizers.

He says most of them are young people, between 18 and 35, adding that he has known several people who have suddenly vanished.

"If you are Tamil, you are always under pressure to prove you are not LTTE," he says. "We live in an open prison."

Earlier this year, the international watchdog group Human Rights Watch summarized its findings on Sri Lankan disappearances since 2006: "In the vast majority of the cases we documented, the evidence indicates the involvement of government security forces - army, navy or police."

"The victims are primarily young Tamil men who 'disappeared' in the country's embattled

north and east, but also in the capital Colombo."

Jaffna's army commander, Maj. Gen. G. A. Chandrasiri, blames LTTE infiltrators for the killings, although he doesn't deny the possibility that some of his soldiers might also be involved.

In any case, he confidently predicts the killings in Jaffna will stop once "the war is over."

"We are determined to eradicate terrorists," he says. "There will be no mercy for the LTTE."

Sri Lanka's government has promised to transform the country into a peaceful land of ethnic harmony after the military crushes the LTTE and gains control of all Tiger-controlled areas.

But after 13 years of government control in Jaffna, peace remains an elusive dream.

Many people in Jaffna are worried that without the LTTE, Sinhalese domination will become more entrenched than ever.

An elderly Tamil man, a life-long resident of Jaffna, negotiates a labyrinth of checkpoints on his drive to work.

It seems almost every day, he says, he gets stopped.

A soldier sticks his gun through the car window and barks questions at him in the Sinhala language, not seeming to care that Jaffna's inhabitants are Tamil speakers.

"Will this attitude change, once the fighting ends?" the old man asks. Many people in Jaffna fear that they already know the answer.

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NEWS

'The intolerable noise of shells'

Heavy fighting is continuing around the key LTTE-held town of Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka, according to the army. Last month, the government told foreign aid agencies to leave areas held by the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) because it could not guarantee the security of aid workers. The BBC News website spoke to a doctor in the town who describes the fear as people wait for the war to arrive.

BBC

IN the town, there are less people now. Most of the shops are closed, shop owners are moving their goods to other areas.

The shelling started around two weeks ago.

We underwent several aerial attacks. Slowly, people took their belongings, household items - including the roofs of houses - and moved about 10km away from the town.

They are in the places between Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu [to the east]. But in the villages around, there are still people. They just wait.

They are scared about the situation.

With heavy shelling and aerial attacks they will move from this area and they will go far.

Most of these people have been displaced several times from areas like Mannar and Vavuniya.

As the military forces advance, they displace and scatter.

Once they reach the borders of the town there will be heavy fighting.

If there is heavy fighting, there will be a mass disaster

Most of the people I can tell, hundreds, are psychologically affected.

The degree of mental illness is varied because everyone has the fear of the war and everyone is taking risks.

Shelling is here and there, aerial attacks are here and there. Just one aerial attack can hit many civilians' houses.

One week ago, there was an aerial attack and one teacher and one student died and several others were injured. I attended to them and I had to deal with their relations.

If a family member is killed that leaves sorrow but people have to manage.

They don't really have any

choices. This is a long-term war.

They believe that if they are unfortunate, they will die and if they are fortunate people they will escape death.

On 15 October there were no civilian casualties in Kilinochchi. Last week the war was quite silent but before that many civilians were killed.

Most of the civilian areas have bunkers in case of aerial attack. There is a lot of danger and noise.

The intolerable noise of shells upset people.

It is not just blast noises but Kfir [fighter aircraft] noises that are also intolerable.

At such a time, many children are crying. Women and the elderly become very scared.

Even in my hospital, people go under tables and hide.

People run, going here and there. The sounds are beyond my explanation. Even my heart rate doubles.

Once, after a Kfir, people standing outside rushed inside the hospital. They went right into rooms even where people were working. I saw people sitting and lying on the floor.

I haven't seen any soldiers. The LTTE seem to be around and moving normally. We heard that army soldiers are past Murukandy. Once they reach the borders of the town there will be heavy fighting.

If there is heavy fighting, there will be a mass disaster. Many deaths, LTTE, army soldiers and civilians - it will be a big human disaster.

I don't know if that will bring the end of the war or if a solution will come after that.

Ever since the foreign NGOs were ordered to leave, we have noticed a difference.

Resettlement programmes for internally displaced people, reha-



A health crisis looms in Vanni as the Kilinochchi district's hospital, functioning at Tharmapuram, is daily overloaded with more than 300 inpatients and 800 to 1200 outpatients seeking medical help. Patients regularly lie on the floor in all the corridors of the hospital. The situation has worsened recently as increased shelling forced the hospital to move - taking all its injured patients - to temporary accommodation in two schools. Also, lorries with urgently needed medicines to treat snake-bite and diarrhea have not entered Vanni despite three repeated attempts to cross the entry/exit point at Oamanthai in Vavuniya. Ambulance-transport for patients in need of urgent medical treatment at Vavuniya hospital has become increasingly difficult, exasperating the situation.

bilitation programmes have all been reduced.

Now more than half of the internally displaced population don't have proper healthcare.

And people are scared. When

the foreigners went, people were worried about a really heavy attack on civilian areas.

In the last month, supplies from Vavuniya were restricted. Three times our medicinal lorries

were sent back from the checkpoint. The government agent in Vanni says there is also a food shortage.

"All I can do is carry on with my work."

Displaced Tamils in dire straits

A CONSORTIUM of U.N. agencies and international NGOs operating in Sri Lanka has said the monsoon has put the 200,000-odd internally displaced persons (IDPs) at grave risk due to the lack of transport and fuel.

"Lack of transport and fuel is hampering movement for many IDPs seeking safety along the A35," a report by the consortium said.

"On average, Rs. 12,000 is being charged to rent a tractor to transport IDPs and their belongings from Kilinochchi to Visuvamadu, and as much as Rs. 24,000 from Kilinochchi to PTK in Mullaitivu district. There are reports of people pawning their jewellery and other valuables to pay for transportation."

The report said the security situation in the Jaffna Peninsula remained tense, especially in areas near the forward defence lines (FDLs).

The International Committee for Red Cross separately said as fighting in the north continues, many people continue to flee eastwards, leaving Kilinochchi for Mullaitivu, often leaving their personal belongings behind.

"Food, shelter, clean water, sanitation and, above all, security remain the most urgent concerns for the tens of thousands of displaced civilians living in LTTE-controlled areas in the north," Anthony Dalziel, deputy head of the ICRC's delegation in Sri Lanka, said in a statement.

Sri Lanka last month told aid agencies to quit the northern Wanni region, saying their safety couldn't be guaranteed while fighting is taking place.

The government rejected criticism from Amnesty International that civilians are being ignored and said it is providing assistance for refugees.

The ICRC said, while it isn't directly involved in distributing food in Wanni, it is helping others arrange food convoys to the area.

Meanwhile, with the onset of monsoon rains expected later this month, temporary shelters for displaced civilians in the district have become a most urgent requirement, reported the Sunday Times.

Government officials in the area are struggling to provide IDPs in the area with basic facilities as more than 50% of them are

without proper housing or toilet facilities, the paper said.

Due to heavy fighting between government forces and the LTTE, most residents in the area do not stay at home during the night, with many families returning home during the day to collect goods from homes or gardens and returning to shelters before nightfall, the paper said.

Separately, the British government has said that the number of displaced is estimated to be closer to the 500,000 mark.

Attending a private member's debate in the Westminster parliament, Under Secretary of State on International Development, Michael Foster, MP, said a majority, approximately 220,000 people are repeatedly displaced in the north.

"At least 30,000 people have been displaced on average five times," he said.

The British minister reiterated the government view that there can be no military solution to Sri Lanka's national question.

He was responding to issues raised by members from all major political parties on the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka.

TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu in show of solidarity

AS the fighting escalated in Sri Lanka, the news of innocent Tamils civilians being killed and maimed by indiscriminate aerial and artillery bombardment by Sri Lankan forces and the revelation that Indian radar operators were assisting Sri Lankan military brought the plight of Eelam Tamils to the boil in Tamil Nadu in India, leading to mass agitations by political parties, students, lawyers, trade unions and film makers.

Tamil Nadu political parties including Paataali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Marumalarchchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and Tamil National Movement (TNM), sympathetic to the suffering of Eelam Tamils, have been protesting against the killing of innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka since Rajapakse administration returned the island to full scale war in 2007.

However the Eelam issue came to the forefront of the political scene in Tamil Nadu when a protest fast organised by the Communist Party of India for October 2 received the backing of major political parties including the opposition All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).

Even though AIADMK did not participate in the fast, the General Secretary of the party Jayalalitha Jayaram released a statement recognising the Eelam Tamils right to self determination and Traditional Homeland and demanded the Indian government put an immediate stoppage of all military aid to the neighbouring island.

The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) then organised a mass public meeting on Sunday, October 6. This followed by tens of thousands of telegrams being sent to New Delhi after the DMK leader and Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu urged the people of Tamil Nadu to send telegrams to Indian Premier Manmohan Singh with the message "intervene immediately and stop genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka".

On Tuesday October 14, the Tamil Nadu government convened an All Party Meeting to discuss the plight of the Eelam Tamils. For the first time an official government communiqué in Tamil Nadu used the word 'Eelam'.

Although, Bharathiya Janatha Party (BJP), AIADMK and MDMK boycotted the meeting most parties including the Tamil Nadu chapter of the ruling Congress attended.

In a surprise move the All Party Meeting announced a reso-

lution with four key demands and added that in the event of the Union government not meeting the demands within 14 days, the 40 Members of Parliament (MPs) from Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry would quit the Union government.

The support of the 40 Tamil Nadu MPs is crucial for the survival of the Congress government in New Delhi.

The protests gained further momentum after the All Party Meeting, with political parties blockading roads and railways, students boycotting classes, trade unions observing general shut downs and lawyers boycotting courts across the state.

The movie industry also joined in with over 2000 artists including producers, directors and technicians taking part in a mass rally in Raameswaram, on Sunday October 19, and actor and actresses announcing a protest fast on November 1.

All the while New Delhi restricted itself to making statements expressing concern at the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka and not acting on the key demands.

Finally, in a show of strength, the DMK organised a human chain protest with the backing of many political parties and community organisations, in which tens of thousands of people took part forming a staggering 60 kilometres long queue.

LTTE expresses gratitude

As support poured in from Tamil Nadu, on Wednesday, 08 October, the Liberation Tigers of the head of the political wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), B Nadesan released a statement Expressing gratitude on behalf of the Eelam Tamils for the solidarity shown by the leaders and the masses of south Indian state.

Nadesan, in his statement, said the Eelam Tamils, who are facing an onslaught by the indiscriminate shelling and bombardment by the Sri Lankan forces, are inspired by the expression of solidarity from Tamil Nadu.

He described the plight of thousands of Tamils uprooted from their homes and villages and forced to seek refuge in the open due to the "genocidal war".

"All the Sinhala forces and parties were giving support to the war being waged by the Rajapakse government with a wrong assumption that even Tamil Nadu would not come forward to voice for Eelam Tamils," Nadesan added.



Most of the political parties in Tamil Nadu gathered under the leadership of the Chief Minister to discuss the Eelam Tamil issue, with even parties who boycotted the meeting issuing a position statement

Countries opposed to India were militarily assisting the Sinhala state and some countries

of the world are providing financial support, the LTTE statement charged. "Making use of the inter-state diplomatic relations, the Sinhala state has focused its efforts to crush the just freedom struggle of the Eelam Tamils."

The statement concluded that Eelam Tamils hoped that the solidarity extended by all the leaders of Tamil Nadu would transform into concrete political action.

In addition to the LTTE, Tamil parliamentarians belonging to the Tamil National Alliance, community organisations based in Vanni and numerous Diaspora organizations expressed their gratitude to the Tamil Nadu leaders and people for support.

Reluctant New Delhi

With protests continuing to gain momentum and the political parties in Tamil Nadu deciding to withdraw their MPs from the Union government if their four point demand is not met by October 28, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Congress was under pressure to show it cared about the wellbeing of Eelam Tamils.

The UPA Government was being forced to choose between a coalition partner and a neighbour. 14 DMK MPs including seven Union Ministers submitted their symbolic resignation to DMK chief Karunanidhi in Chennai on October 17.

Quitting of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry MPS from the UPA would precipitate a political crisis in New Delhi leading to the collapse of the central government and fresh elections.

So, when DMK joined in the protests the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called for steps to protect an estimated 220,000 civilians trapped by the fighting in the northern part of the island.

On Saturday October 11, according to an official spokesman in New Delhi, Singh called up Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse and 'expressed his deep concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the north of Sri Lanka, especially on the plight of the civilians caught in the hostilities'.

Foreign Secretary Shiv Shanker Menon also had a tough message for Colombo.

"We see it has a humanitarian crises which effects civilian population and it really needs to be addressed but there is a larger issue of settling the conflicts which requires a political settlement and it cannot be settled militarily," Memon said on October 14.

Whilst the Congress led government in New Delhi released statements and made some noise, it did not act on any of the demands put forward by the Tamil Nadu parties.

Infact the External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, defended India's policy of training Sri Lankan troops and arming the island nation and made it clear that India's geopolitical interests are of more importance in comparison to the well being of Tamils.

Responding to clarifications sought by the members in the Rajya Sabha on India's stand on the current crisis in Sri Lanka, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said security cooperation with Colombo, including training of Lankan forces by India, was "necessary".

"We have a very comprehensive relationship with Sri Lanka. In our anxiety to protect the civilians, we should not forget the strategic importance of this island to India's interests," he said in response to questions raised by a few members over the rationale of India continuing its military cooperation with Colombo in view of the plight of ethnic Tamils in that country and also incidents of firing on Indian fishermen entering Sri Lankan waters by mistake.

Sri Lankan tactics

Sri Lanka tried to subdue the pressure resulting the political upheaval in Tamil Nadu by taking number of steps.

Firstly it brushed off the Tamil Nadu protests as non events and warned Tamil Nadu to mind its own business.

Indirectly targeting Tamil Nadu and interestingly referring to the war effort as 'development activities', Basil Rajapakse, younger brother and senior advisor to President Mahinda

Rajapaksa charged that 'some foreign elements' were trying to disrupt the ongoing development activities in Sri Lanka and added that the island nation has 'got maximum support from India to crush' the Tamil Tigers.

Meanwhile, a leading Sri Lankan daily has advised Indian leaders to keep off the Tamil refugees in Sri Lanka and look after the poor in their own country.

A front page editorial in The Island daily on Monday pointed out that the Global Hunger Index (GHI) had found that 200 million of India's 1.2 billion people went hungry and the food shortage in Madhya Pradesh was comparable with Ethiopia and Chad.

The survey had further said that three-quarters of Indians were living on 30 cents a day. "Charity, Chief Minister Karunanidhi should be told, begins at home!"

"Terrorism thrives on well orchestrated false propaganda if not diabolical lies. The lunatic fringe in Tamil Nadu is accusing Sri Lanka of committing genocide.

Then whilst boasting that it had the maximum support of New Delhi, to put pressure on India it sent a defence delegation to Pakistan.

"The government, which has destroyed the LTTE, is getting adequate support from our foreign friends. Here, the support from our neighbour is very vital. India has been always with us. We got maximum support from India to crush the LTTE," said Basil Rajapakse.

A Sri Lankan defence delegation led by Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa is scheduled to embark on a five-day official visit to Pakistan today.

According to media reports in Pakistan, during its stay in Pakistan the delegation will hold meetings with Defence Secretary Kamran Rasool, Defence Secretary Production Lt. General Shahid Siddiq Tirmizey and other senior Pakistani military and defence officials.

The delegation will also visit Pakistan's Defence Industry with the hope of expanding bilateral cooperation between the two countries, the Pakistan media reported.

Finally, it continued with its genocidal offensive.

TAMIL NADU

Kollywood vows support for Eelam Tamils

BRINGING the entire Tamil film industry in Tamil Nadu state to a standstill, more than two thousand artists converged at the southern tip of Rameswaram, which is situated in the close proximity to the island of Sri Lanka, expressing their support for Eelam Tamils struggle.

The protest demanded that the Sri Lankan military should be pressurised by New Delhi to halt their military offensives.

The move is regarded as a significant step in the public awakening in Tamil Nadu, the most urbanised state with 66 million Tamils after 25 years when cinema industry in Tamil Nadu last converged in support of Eelam Tamils, after the Black July anti-Tamil pogrom in Sri Lanka.

Led by director veteran Director Bharathiraja and Tamil film council producers president Rama Narayanan, they took out a rally from the Agnithiertha Kadarkarai to Kilakadu ground near the bus stand. Members of about 25 associations of the industry took part in the rally that went along the important roads of the island town amid tight security.

Wearing black shirts, black badges, the protesters shouted slogans against the Sri Lankan government for waging a war against the Tamils. Many carried placards and banners highlighting the suffering and agony of Tamils in the island nation. A few placards urged Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to respect "human rights" and international conventions to be followed to protect citizens.

The film personalities had arrived in Rameswaram on Saturday by a special train from Chennai. People lined up along the road to the venue of the demonstration to welcome the film stars.

On Sunday, the rally commenced after prayers were offered at the famous Ramanathaswamy temple in the town for the well being of Sri Lankan Tamils.

Speakers at the rally urged the Centre to take immediate steps to stop the alleged 'massacre' of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Veteran film director Bharathiraja, who led the protest while addressing the artists said while the entire world was set to listen to the voice of the cine artistes of South India, he fervently hoped that their voice would be heard in New Delhi.

Popular poet and lyricist Vairamuthu who addressed the

gathering in Rameswaram, pointing at the direction of Mannaar, said Tamils in Sri Lanka were "indigenous people with all the rights to the island." He referred to ancient Tamil literature which spoke of pre-historic and historic Tsunamis.

"On the 22nd of this month, you [India] are going to launch a rocket to the Moon located 3,85,000 km from the Earth. But, why can't you care for Eezham Tamils who are just 16 km away," Mr. Vairamuthu questioned the Indian establishment in New Delhi.

Director S.A. Chandrasekaran justified the choice of Rameswaram for the protest, saying this was the right place to agitate against the Sri Lankan government as it was very close to the island nation. Reports said there were differences in the film fraternity over holding the place.

Director K.S. Ravi Kumar said the United Nations should intervene in the Sri Lankan affairs to save Tamils, who had become refugees in their own country.

Ravikumar also warned that if the war against Tamils is not brought to an end immediately, it would be the deciding factor of the next parliamentary elections.

Director Amir charged that the Central government was also one of the reasons for the current problem in Sri Lanka. He criticised it for secretly supplying radars to the island nation and providing training to its Army personnel.

Actor Mansoor Ali Khan referring to the reports of a possible visit by Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee to Sri Lanka in the near future said that Mr. Mukherjee need not to travel to Sri Lanka to pass a stern warning to Rajapaksa regime and urged New Delhi to send a Tamil speaking envoy instead.

"All Tamils throughout the globe must unite for the creation of Tamil Eelam," he said.

Actor Livingston staged an emotional prayer service.

Prominent personalities including Directors Balachandran, Seran, Parthibhan, Rama Narayanan, K.S. Ravikumar, President of Tamil Film Producers Union, S.A. Chandrasekar, Amir, T. Rajenthara, President of All India Ilatchiya Diravida Munetra Kazhagam, actors Pandiyarajan, Livingston and presidents of various unions of Tamil Nadu film industry participated in the protest rally and spoke.

Bharathiraja, who spoke to



The popular sentiment in Tamil Nadu, in support of Eelam Tamils, drew hundreds of thousands to the streets, including many from the film industry, which has popular support and political muscle

reporters later, said the rally was an opportunity for the film fraternity to express their solidarity with the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The coming together of the industry would attract everyone's attention, he said, adding that they were confident that a solution

would soon be found.

"Those who have sympathy for the Tamils have gathered for the rally," he said.

Actors are also expected to hold a fast to express their solidarity with the civilians who suffer due to the military offensive

by the Sri Lankan forces.

Actor Sarath Kumar, who is the president of the South Indian Film Artistes Association, said that top actors and actresses would stage a fast at Chennai on November 1 on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue.

Position of the various Tamil Nadu political parties on the Tamil national question

Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK)

MDMK and its leader Vaiko support the creation of independent Tamil Eelam and see this as the only solution to long drawn civil war in Sri Lanka.

In his latest speech Vaiko declared he was willing to take up arms and fight for the Eelam Tamils.

Paataali Makkal Katchi (PMK)

PMK and its founder S. Ramadoss are of the view that formation of an independent Tamil Eelam in the island of Sri Lanka with the support of India is the only solution to the over five decade old conflict.

Ramadoss in a recent interview said: "This will definitely happen in the near future and Tamil Eelam will come into existence."

Viduthalai Chiruththakal Katchi (VCK)

VCK supports the formation of an independent Tamil Eelam.

Following a visit to Jaffna, the leader of VCK, Thol. Thirumaa-

lavan said: "I want a Tamil Government... I want a Tamil country... That country I dream of is coming up in Sri Lanka's Jaffna. I went there to salute that land.."

Communist Party of India (CPI)

CPI is of the view that the Indian federal model is insufficient to Sri Lanka.

It should be higher than that, perhaps a confederation having constitutional guarantees, preventing one unit militarily interfering with the other.

All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK)

AIADMK, headed by former Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram recently released a statement defining the party position on Eelam issue. The statement specified AIADMK's policy on Eelam Tamils in four points:

■ Not Secondary Citizens: Eelam Tamils have equal rights as all other citizens of Sri Lanka. They are not secondary to anybody.

■ Equal Rights: We completely

support the prolonged struggle of the Sri Lankan Tamils seeking equality before law and equal opportunities in education and employment.

■ Right to Self-Determination: We totally recognize their righteous struggle seeking the Right of Self-Determination.

■ Self-Governance within United Sri Lanka: We understand and accept the demand of the Tamils that they shall create a Tamil Homeland where they have the power of self-governance, under the framework of a Sri Lankan Constitution.

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)

Tamil Nadu's ruling party has not stated an official position on whether it is for or against either the LTTE or Tamil Eelam, but Chief Minister Karunanidhi has led the call to protect Eelam Tamil civilians from the continuing Sri Lankan military effort, including threatening to resign from the Indian central government coalition where the party has 40 seats..

EDITORIAL

TAMIL GUARDIAN

TG NEWS, P.O.BOX. 2308, Watford, WD18 1LS, UK

editor@tamilguardian.com www.tamilguardian.com

Tel 0845 0949873

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 29, 2008 No. 384

Wrong Premise

The International Community thinks there's still a single Sri Lanka

Despite the Sri Lankan government's insistence it will soon destroy the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), its military onslaught has become mired in a war of attrition in the muddy fields of Vanni. Amid the tub-thumping, the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) has launched another recruitment drive, is arresting and press-ganging military deserters back into service and has stopped issuing even the sanitised casualty figures it has been issuing. Tabled spending on the war next year is set to outstrip 2008 by a significant margin. Despite its assurances of imminent victory, Colombo is girding for protracted war.

Little wonder then that even the staunchest backers of Colombo's brutal war in the Tamil homeland are wavering. This week the United States' Ambassador, Robert O' Blake, insisted that a military solution was not possible. This does not mean, contrary to Mr. Blake's suggestions, that the US and other allies of the Sinhala supremacist regime would not prefer a military solution. This week the Ambassador, speaking in the now simmering Indian state of Tamil Nadu, urged President Mahinda Rajapakse - yet again - to put forward a 'political solution'.

That "there is no military solution, only a political solution" is a mantra long chanted by the West, even as it armed, financed and trained the Sinhala state to militarily crush Tamil aspirations for self-rule. The duplicity was apparent in Mr. Blake's elaboration of this position last week. Colombo should put forward a political solution, he said, because this would help defeat the LTTE. Thus a 'solution' need not be offered because this is the right and proper thing to do by the long-suffering and persecuted Tamils, but because it would contribute to military victory over the Tigers.

Of course this logic comes straight out of the 'hearts and minds' section of Western counter-insurgency theory. What is incredible is that despite the evidence all around him of stark ethnic polarisation, of Sinhala hubris and racism, of the impossibility now of a single 'people' on the island, the US thinks this is a viable approach, that somehow the latest bunch of Sinhala supremacists running the Sri Lankan state are going to win the support of the Tamil people.

The point, as we argued recently, is that the US et al think that as an under-developed and unsophisticated community, what the Tamils actually want, despite using language like 'national liberation' and 'self-rule', is just economic opportunity and the possibility of using their own language. Which is why we often hear Colombo governments being

urged to implement 'language rights' and undertake 'development' in the Northeast as if these have any bearing on the fundamental contradictions in the island's politics.

The theories of 'internal conflict' in the 'developing' world - including 'poverty causes conflict', 'greed over grievance', and so on - are incapable of taking seriously the Tamils' long-asserted argument that we are an oppressed people seeking self-rule. But these bankrupt theories have underpinned Western policy towards places like Sri Lanka. Colombo has - without much difficulty - exploited this contempt for 'Third World' peoples to secure Western involvement in its onslaught against the Tamils. In the post Cold War era, Sinhala governments have exploited the logics of 'fighting terrorism', 'defending democracy', 'promoting pluralism', and so on whilst at the same time continuing a slow genocide, starving, bombing, abducting and murdering the island's Tamils.

Does the International Community expect the Tamils to live as interlopers who may remain provided they know their subordinate place

In the past two years, amid growing confidence that the LTTE was being defeated, both the Sinhalese and the international community have dropped their pretence. For example, the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) served as a figleaf for both the Sinhalese and the international community to pretend a political solution was valuable while the murderous military campaign against the Tamils was pressed home, but when the offensive on Vanni began this time last year, even this was dropped.

Ironically, it is precisely the West's undisguised contempt for Tamils, their political aspirations and their suffering under the Sinhala jackboot that has done most to consolidate Tamil support for the LTTE and fuelled the demands for Eelam. On what basis, by the way, do the US et al expect the Tamils to live in Sri Lanka? On the terms set out by the Army chief and Sinhala ideologues - i.e. as interlopers who may remain provided they know their subordinate place? In the past three years the Tamils have been both

internationally isolated and targeted by the full might of the Sinhala state as never before. It is as a consequence of these dynamics that Tamils are uniting behind their liberation struggle as never before. The present conflict is thus turning into an orthodox race war. On the one side is the Sinhala state, deploying a Sinhala Army and supported by the Sinhala people. On the other are the Tamils and the LTTE.

It is this grim reality that has resulted in such vigorous agitation in Tamil Nadu. Various analyses have sought to explain the events in South India in terms of pre-election strategies and a lack of serious local issues for political contestation, for example, or even as 'resurgence' in India of buried Tamil ethno-nationalism (as those fluent in the conceptual terminology of Western liberalism have rushed to term it). What is clear is that a huge number of people in Tamil Nadu are genuinely moved by the suffering the Eelam Tamils are enduring at the hands of the Sinhala state and its international allies. The more colourful of Tamil Nadu's politicians are even suggesting that the Eelam issue is revealing a contradiction between 'Tamil' and 'Indian' identities, given Delhi's support for the Sinhalese.

The point here is that even as our enemies step up their efforts to annihilate us, the Eelam Tamils' liberation struggle is drawing new support, both moral and tangible, from Tamils around the world (India is not the only country where the Eelam cause is vigorously being taken up). The 'with us or against us' gauntlet of the Global War on Terror has fed neatly into the Sinhala hegemonic project, but now has produced a specific irrevocable dynamic of racial polarisation in Sri Lanka. Tamils and Sinhalese can no more be expected to live peaceably together than the various peoples of the Balkans. This is not about ancient hatreds - despite the rhetoric of the supremacists running Sri Lanka (and the present lot are no different to those in 1956, 1972, 1978, 1983 and 1995) - but the clear and present danger to the wellbeing and safety of the Tamil people posed by the Sinhalese.

Mr. Blake's call last week for the Rajapakse regime to come up with a solution is so disconnected from the island's lived reality that it says less about Colombo's intransigence than the international community's apathy in the face of the humanitarian crisis that has impelled the Diaspora and Tamil Nadu to such outrage. As such, Mr. Blake's comments couldn't have come at a better time for the LTTE.

OPINION

It's the Tamil Economy, Stupid

This is part 1 of a 2 part series looking at the economic drivers behind the Sri Lankan state's genocide of the Tamils

J T Janani
Tamil Guardian

FOLLOWING World War II, economic competition is increasingly viewed as the preferred alternative to war. For example, Japan and Germany sought military dominance in the mid-forties, but a demilitarised post-war Japan and Germany achieved global dominance through trade.

Today, India and China are aggressive, current contenders for global dominance. They expect to achieve this through trade, not war.

The debate on economic competition between nations focuses centres on fair and unfair competition. It is unfair competition to protect local markets from foreign manufactured goods. But it is "fair competition" for governments to subsidise local industries that have "strategic significance": defence or nuclear energy for example.

Genocide is the ultimate form of unfair competition: as Black July 1983 illustrates. In fact, each stage of the slow genocide of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka has also been an economic project.

Eliminating the Tamil industrial base

The Economist of August 6th 2003 summarised the genocide of Black July 1983 thus: "Two weeks ago Tamils owned 80% of the retail trade and 60% of the wholesale trade in the capital Colombo. Today that trade is gone. Food shortages and inflated prices are one result. The Tamil industrial base, built up over generations, is no more."

To start with, the 6th, 20th August 1983 editions of the Economist are worth reading in full for the paper's comprehensive grasp of the economic motivation of the Black July Pogrom of 1983.

In an article entitled "The wages of envy", the Economist said: "[Cambridge-educated finance minister] Mr Ronnie de Mel is too sophisticated to use the term on the tip of many Sinhalese tongues these days - the need for a 'final solution' to the Tamil problem. But, even for him, the 'only solution' is to 'restore the rights of the Singalese majority'. Restoring Singalese rights is a code phrase for dislodging the Tamils from their disproportionate influence over large sectors of the Sri Lankan economy. This is what the Singalese mobs set out to do when they put their torches to thousands of carefully targeted Tamil factories and shops.

"Now the government is about to advance this process by expropriating all damaged properties. Many Tamils will assist them by leaving the country. The result will be decisive shift in the balance of economic power in Sri Lanka from Tamils to Singalese.

"The stated aim of the government's takeover of riot-ravaged homes and businesses is to prevent distress sales and to promote an orderly reconstruction programme. ...In theory, former owners will be free to buy back government shares in time. But ministers do not disguise their redistributive intentions. Many are talking about following Malaysia's example of writing preferences for the majority community into commercial law.

"The trade minister has already reorganized rice wholesaling to break the Tamil grip. 'It is no longer in my interest to allow one community to dominate the wholesale trade in any commodity', insists Mr Lalith Athulathmudali, who doubles as a government spokesman on Tamil questions...

"The state stake in Sri Lanka's injured industries is meant to be temporary. But, if the alternative is returning economic control to the Tamils, the government may decide to hold on. ...

"The losses are still being added up in the statistical department of the central bank, which has sent out teams of accountants and surveyors to do an on-site census of destruction. The preliminary estimate of \$150m worth of damage to commercial and residential property - equivalent to about 4% of Sri Lanka's GNP - is almost certainly too low, because it is based on book value; replacement costs might be five to 10 times higher. It also excludes the value of lost stocks, lost output and lost export orders..." There is considerable evidence that the genocide of 1983 was committed with the specific intent of acquiring Tamil businesses and private property: often by murdering the owners and their families.

It is now widely accepted that the 1983 pogrom was state orchestrated and government ministers were complicit.

The parallels to the Jewish Holocaust are unmistakable: it was firstly Jewish economic success that provoked Nazi envy in pre-war Germany.

Nazi documents and memos following Kristallnacht - the Nazi pogrom where almost 7,500 Jewish businesses were destroyed - evidence the economic nature of



Black July also had an economic focus - destroying businesses Tamils had spent generations building

the issue.

Robert Conot, Justice at Nuremberg, provides a transcript of Goering addressing a high-level Nazi meeting the days immediately following Kristallnacht.

Goering concludes "I implore competent agencies to take all measures for the elimination of the Jew from the German economy."

As to the elimination of the Tamils from Sri Lankan economy, the 1983 pogrom, spectacularly achieved its objective. The observations of the Economist in 1983 remain true today: "The Tamil industrial base, built over generations, is no more", having never recovered from 1983.

Impact of 'The Open Economy'

In a previous article we cited Michael Mann's hypothesis that "murderous ethnic cleansing, which in extreme forms can become genocidal, is the 'dark side of democracy'".

Similarly, an open, egalitarian competitive economy leads to genocide when a minority ethnic group is disproportionately economically successful and when the state is fundamentally racist.

In a seminal article in 1984, Newton Gunesinghe argued that the open economy was a key factor in the July 1983 genocide.

Gunesinghe argued that in the period before 1977, the socialist Sri Lankan government had favoured heavy state regulation and intervention: licenses were needed for most activities, including exports and imports. Government-owned cooperative stores displaced small retailers.

The economy was fuelled by Government infrastructure spending.

Tamil entrepreneurs found it impossible to compete since licenses and supply contracts to large government monopolies were awarded via political patronage to affiliates of the major Sinhala Parties. Small Tamil business owners lost out to their Sinhala counterparts.

But with the introduction of Jeyawardene's open economic policies in 1977 and globalisation, an (unintended) consequence was a levelling out of the ethnic playing field. Sinhala businesses built on political patronage could no longer compete effectively. Middle level businesses were adversely impacted by economies of scale and markets open to international competition.

In contrast to many Sinhalese businesses, Tamil entrepreneurs were better equipped for open economic conditions having faced an adverse state for many years. The larger industrial groups - where Tamil ownership was disproportionately well-represented - were quick to form foreign joint ventures and to compete internationally on price and quality.

Both Gunesinghe and Richardson attempt to explain why anti-Tamil violence spiked many-fold in the golden period of Sri Lanka's market economy, during the markedly pro-globalisation, capitalist, market-driven government of President Jeyawardene.

The short reason was the ethnic backlash against Tamil prosperity: the Economist's "wages of envy". The 1983 Genocide was the ultimate form of unfair competition.

Reparation to Tamils unaffordable

It follows that the prosperity of the present Sri Lankan economy is built on the proceeds of genocide.

Successive Sinhala governments have entrenched the reversal of relative Sinhala-Tamil economic power on the island. And they have used military force to achieve this.

For while Sri Lanka was in recent years South Asia's wealthiest country on a per capita basis, there are enormous regional differences. The Sinhala Western province near the capital Colombo has almost four times the per capita annual income (\$2118) of the Tamil North (\$610) according to the World.

Over 50% of people live below the poverty level in the Northern region.

Over a third of all Tamils in Sri Lanka have no sustainable livelihood, living in camps as internal refugees, many having held this status for decades.

Sinhala human rights activists in the capital Colombo claim that Sri Lanka has moved beyond the racism of 1983. They cite that 21 years later the government of Sri Lanka had apologised to the Tamil victims of 1983 - and offered 937 victims 600 pounds (sterling) in compensation.

It follows that not even one Sinhala human rights activist in Sri Lanka has acknowledged the requirement for just reparation in line with commercial law. Instead they paper over the cracks to claim their country has "moved on". It hasn't.

Continued on p13

TAMIL NADU ERUPTS



Tamil Nadu chronolgy

Tuesday 30, September

Thousands of Paataali Makkal Katchi (PMK) supporters wearing black uniform led by Dr. Ramadoss protest in front of the Deputy High Commission office in Chennai in support of Sri Lankan Tamils and demand the DMK Party leader, and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu come out of the silence and support the Sri Lankan Tamils and urge Indian government to intervene on behalf of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Thursday, 02 October

CPI organizes fasting campaign in Tamil Nadu's capital city Chennai and other district capitals in the southern state demanding New Delhi to withdraw military assistance to Sri Lanka.

Several Tamil leaders take part, including CPI National Secretary D. Raja, Tamil Nadu CPI Joint Secretary C. Mahendran, Communist Party of India (Marxist) State Secretary N. Varadarajan, Chairman of Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam led by Actor Vijayakanth, Panruti S.Ramachandran, MDMK General-Secretary Vaiko, Tamil National Movement Leader Pala Nedumaran, Viduthala Chiruththaikal Kadchi (VCK, Liberation Panthers Party) President Thol. Thirumavalavan, Puthiya Thamizhakam Leader Dr. Krishnasamy, World Tamils Organization President, Ira. Janarthanan, former Congress leader Thindivanam Ramamorthy and Latchiya Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (LDMK) Leader Vijaya T Rajendhar.

Friday, 04 October

Jayalalitha Jayaram, General Secretary of Tamil Nadu, main opposition party All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) issues statement castigating the central government for collaborating with Sri Lanka in the alleged genocide of minority Tamils in the island nation and calls for immediate stoppage of all military aid to it - especially in the view of its navy allegedly carrying out attacks against Indian fishermen.

Sunday, 06 October

Tens of thousands of people rally in support of Eelam Tamils and urge Indian intervention on behalf of Eelam Tamils, in Mylapore Chennai, which was organized by the Tamil Nadu ruling party led by the veteran politician and leader of the DMK and the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi. Karunanidhi addresses the meeting and declares DMK would have to think whether the government at the Centre should continue if its warning to Sri Lankan government to stop the attacks on Tamils there went unheeded.

Monday 07, October

Karunanidhi issues an official communiqué urging Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to condemn Sri Lanka's 'genocide' of the island's Tamil minority.

In the communiqué he demands that the Sri Lankan high commissioner be summoned by New Delhi and told that India condemns the genocide of the Tamil minority.

National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan summons the Sri Lankan deputy high commissioner in New Delhi and raises India's concerns on the killing of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Wednesday 08, October

The Political Division of the LTTE releases a statement expressing gratitude to the leaders and the masses of Tamil Nadu on behalf of the Eelam Tamils for the solidarity shown from Tamil Nadu.

The statement says Eelam Tamils hoped that the solidarity extended by all the leaders of Tamil Nadu would transform into concrete political action.

Thursday 09, October

AIADMK general secretary Jayalalitha issues statement declaring her party's support for Eelam Tamils right to self determination and traditional Tamil Homeland, two of four Thimbu principles.

The statement says: "We recognise their dem-and for equality before law, equality in educational institutions and equality in employment. We recognise the-ir just struggle for self determination. We also recognise their struggle for an autonomous Tamil homeland wit-hin the federal set-up of Sri Lanka."

Jayalalitha also urges the Union government to mobilise relief materials for Sri Lankan Tamils who were suffering without food, clothing, shelter or medicines.

Friday 10, October

Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) stages massive rally in Chennai in support of Eelam tamils and to condemn Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan military.

Vaiko, General Secretary of the MDMK and a staunch supporter of the cause of Eelam Tamils, courts arrest along with thousands of his cadres

Vaiko addressing thousands of MDMK supporters warns: "In the name of safe-guarding Sri Lanka's sovereignty, don't lose India's sovereignty and national integration,"

Tuesday 14, October

The Tamil Nadu Government organizes an All Party Meeting at the State Secretariat in Chennai. The parties pass a resolution that demanded that New Delhi should withdraw military assistance to the Sri Lankan government and demand Colombo to announce a ceasefire to enable the affected civilians to receive humanitarian assistance. India should take measures to ensure that there is no war in Sri Lanka and that peace prevails in Tamil homeland.

DMK warns the Union Government of India that all forty members of the Indian parliament representing Tamils would resign en masse if New Delhi failed to take up the right steps to protect Eelam Tamils.

AIADMK, MDMK and BJP boycotted the All Party Meeting but gave an external pressure to the central and state government on the Eelam Tamils issue.

Wednesday 15, October

DMK Rajya Sabha member Kanimozhi submits her resignation from the Upper House to party chief and her father Karunanidhi in line with the decision of an all-party meeting to put pressure on the Centre to call for a ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

MDMK General Secretary Vaiko issues a statement demanding India withdraw all assistance and compel Colombo to stop the war.

Failing, India should warn Sri Lanka of severed diplomatic ties and

imposition of economic sanctions, Vaiko says in the statement.

Thursday 16, October

17 DMK members of parliaments including 2 Central ministers hands their resignation letters Friday to Chief Minister Karunanidhi in Chennai.

Minister of External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee demands Colombo respect the rights of the civilians and offers to do all in India's power to improve the humanitarian conditions in Sri Lanka. He also says the harassment and killing of Indian fishermen must "cease forthwith" with a caveat that India will "take steps to ensure this".

Friday 17, October

Karunanidhi says that India could certainly intervene in Sri Lanka to alleviate the sufferings of Tamil minorities there, in the same way it did in then East Pakistan in 1971. 'Did India not intervene in Bangladesh when needed?', the DMK chief tells reporters when asked how India could intervene in the affairs of a foreign nation.

Tamil film industry shuts down for three days starting Friday 17, October 2008, to show solidarity with the Eelam Tamils. Lawyers boycott High Courts and District Courts across the state in support of Eelam Tamils. The Tamil Nadu Advocates Association president S Prabakaran calls for the immediate intervention of the United Nations to stop atrocities against the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Saturday 18, October

Karunanidhi writing in party organ "Murasoli" expresses anguish over the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils, and says: "The future of Tamil race has become a question mark. I am unable to sleep, whenever I think of it. Let us save the Tamil race and its honour. Let us avoid the racial genocide in Sri Lanka at whatever price."

Hundreds of fishermen from Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram lay siege on the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission in Tamil Nadu protesting against the continuous firing on Tamil fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy and expressing their solidarity with the Eelam Tamils.

Thousands lawyers across hold a fast to condemn Sri Lanka for killings of Tamils in Eelam and Sri Lanka's military operations against them in Eelam.

The fast in Chennai took place at N.S.C Bose ground from 10:30 to 5:00 p.m. under the leadership of Lawyers Association.

The fast by the lawyers in Madurai was attended by Vaiko who urged everyone to fight to Save Eelam Tamils.

Sunday 19, October

More than two thousand artists from the Tamil Movie industry converge at the southern tip of Rameswaram (Raameasvaram), which is situated in the close proximity to the island of Sri Lanka, expressing their support for Eelam Tamils struggle.

Tamil Film Producer's Council, Tamil Film Director's Association, Film Employees Federation of South India and South India Film Artists Association participates in the campaign.

Prominent personalities including Directors Balachandrar, Seran , Parthiban, Rama Narayanan, K.S.Rav-

ikumar, Popular poet and lyricist Vairamuthu , President of Tamil Film Producers Union, S.A.Chandrasekar, Amir, T.Rajenthara, President of All India Ilatchiya Diravida Munetra Kazhagam, actors Pandiyarajan, Livingston, Mansoor Ali Khan, Vadivel and presidents of various unions of Tamil Nadu film industry participate in the protest rally.

Cinemas across the state Tamil Nadu cancel showing in support of Eelam Tamils.

Monday 20, October

Karnataka Thamizhar Makkal Iyakkam (KTMI) holds a sit in (Dharna) agitation in Bangalore demanding the Indian government stop the war, withdraw military assistance, recognise Eelam Tamils right to self determination and extend recognition to Tamil Eelam as India recognised the right to self determination of Bengalees in East Pakistan.

Wednesday 22, October

Rajya Sabha from Tamil Nadu (MPs) express concern over the 'miserable plight' of Tamils in Sri Lanka and demanded that the Indian government stop all military assistance to Sri Lanka in Parliament.

Raising the issue during the zero hour in the Upper House, AIADMK member Dr V Maitreyan alleged that innocent Tamil civilians of Sri Lanka "were being butchered by the Sri Lankan armed forces under the pretext of a civil war."

Protesting Sri Lanka's military offensive against the Eelam Tamils, college students across Chennai stage road blockades and lay siege to the Sri Lankan High Commission.

Thursday 23, October

VCK stages a state-wide railway blockade of a scale that has not been witnessed in recent years in Tamil Nadu.

VCK President Thol. Thirumavalavan courts arrest with thousands of his cadres urging the Indian Government to stop the genocidal war against the Tamils within the next twenty-four hours.

Thol. Thirumavalavan says that the ongoing war in the island was "clearly a proxy war being waged by the Indian Government through the Sinhalese forces" and he urges upon New Delhi to put an end to it at the earliest.

Friday 24, October

Braving a heavy downpour, people from all walks of life form a 60 km long 'human chain,' called by DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi to prevail upon New Delhi to ensure a ceasefire between the Army and LTTE in Sri Lanka.

Volunteers of the DMK and its allies, including estranged ally PMK and members of the public formed the human chain, from Royapuram in North Chennai upto Chengelpet in Kancheepuram district.

Karunanidhi inaugurated the human chain at Royapuram.

Students across the state of Tamil Nadu boycott classes in an expression of solidarity with Eelam Tamils.

All India Students Federation (AISF), also organized for students to hold black flags in front of their educational institutions and stage awareness campaigns on the plight of Eelam Tamils.



NEWS

West urged not to ignore Sri Lanka

Ethirajan Anbarasan
BBC News

A SENIOR western diplomat has warned that living conditions are deteriorating for tens of thousands of civilians displaced inside Tamil Tiger-held areas in northern Sri Lanka.

It is a humanitarian disaster waiting to happen, he says.

"We have one of the biggest humanitarian problems emerging in the north at the moment. Unfortunately it's not attracting enough international attention," the diplomat, who's familiar with the Sri Lankan situation, told the BBC.

Sri Lankan security forces are carrying out a multi-pronged offensive against Tamil Tigers in the north and some army units are reported to be very close to the town of Kilinochchi, where the Tamil Tigers have their administrative headquarters.

The United Nations says more than 200,000 people have been displaced in the latest round of fighting and they have been moving from place to place inside Tamil Tiger-controlled areas.

With the army capturing more and more territory from the LTTE, the civilians have now been confined to a smaller region.

Sooner or later hostilities are expected to break out in areas not very far from them. Some fear that they might get caught in the crossfire.

The diplomat, who didn't want to be identified, said Western governments had lost interest in Sri Lanka because "they think that there is little value of going back to the peace process because they are not sure whether the rebels will negotiate in good faith".

With the international community showing little interest in the Sri Lankan conflict, the Tamil Tigers now appear to have turned towards their supporters and political parties in neighbouring India to bring about a ceasefire in the island nation.

Pro-LTTE political parties and some fringe groups in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu

have been holding protest rallies against the Sri Lankan army offensive claiming many Tamil civilians are being killed in the conflict.

Sri Lankan officials deny the charges, saying they are only targeting the Tiger fighters.

Tamil Nadu is home to more than 60 million Tamils, who share close linguistic and cultural ties with the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Most of the major political parties from Tamil Nadu have warned that their lawmakers will quit the Indian parliament if Delhi fails to broker a ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

If the threats were carried out they could trigger a political crisis in Delhi.

But these protests are viewed by some as an attempt by the pro-LTTE groups to try to protect the Tamil Tigers, who appear to have been cornered by the Sri Lankan security forces in recent months.

India has been pursuing a hands-off policy in Sri Lanka since the assassination of the former Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, allegedly by a female Tamil Tiger suicide bomber in 1991.

However, it actively backed the Norwegian-led peace process, which was officially called off early this year.

Officially, India wants a negotiated settlement within a united Sri Lanka, knowing that any fragmentation of Sri Lanka could have serious ramifications for its own security.

If Delhi attempts to exert any pressure on Colombo it is bound to trigger an angry reaction from hard line political parties in Sri Lanka.

So the protests in Tamil Nadu may not result in a major shift in India's Sri Lanka policy as Delhi's options appear to be limited.

"The Tigers seemed to have made a miscalculation on when and how India will intervene. I don't see any chance of the conflict ending in the next few weeks," the western diplomat said.



Sri Lanka is pursuing its military project with the often explicit support of Western governments

eks," the western diplomat said.

The Sri Lankan military would also stoutly oppose any move to stop the offensive which seems to be going in their favour.

Analysts say the military's numerical superiority, stronger firepower and better military strategy have helped them to push rapidly deep inside LTTE-held territory in recent months.

But their progress has been slow in recent weeks due to stiff

resistance from the Tigers.

Many military observers agree that if the present trend continues then the army will capture Kilinochchi sooner or later.

If the army achieves its objectives, then the Tigers would be confined mostly to the Mullaitivu region.

Now the fear among the Tamils is if the LTTE are weakened then the government may not show interest in devolving

powers to Tamil areas.

"There is a danger that there will be little pressure on the Sri Lankan government to devolve powers to Tamil regions if the Tigers lose the war," says Sri Lankan analyst DBS Jeyaraj.

However, he argues that the fall of Kilinochchi may not be the end of the LTTE as most of their weapons and cadres are still intact and they may be gearing up for a long, drawn-out guerrilla war.

Time to defeat LTTE: US envoy

TamilNet

"THE U.S. view is that the [Sri Lankan] government could further isolate and weaken the LTTE if it articulates now its vision for a political solution," said U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Robert Blake while addressing an inter-active session at the University of Madras on Friday, The Hindu reported.

While ruling out the military option, Mr. Blake has alluded that the U.S. position was to militarily weaken the LTTE to defeat it politically.

The United States has been a key player of the Co-Chairs for the Sri Lankan process, which has been managed by the facilitation of Norway till Sri Lanka unilaterally withdrew from the ceasefire.

Commenting on the U.S. Ambassador's views, Tamil National Alliance MP and the leader of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) Selvam Adaikkalanathan told TamilNet Saturday that the U.S. policy was "fundamentally flawed" on three aspects.

First, the United States has approached one of the major

national questions of the contemporary world as an 'LTTE-centric problem' to be defeated. Secondly, it has failed to grasp the reality of half a century old post-colonial lessons in Sri Lanka that Colombo would never be prepared to offer a viable solution to a weakened Tamil side, and thirdly, it contributed to weakening the diplomatic balance of power by isolating the LTTE and by hinting Sri Lanka and other countries to adopt a military solution.

"Approaching national questions solely on the basis of geopolitical interests and overlooking crucial ideological and humanitarian quests of peoples is not a healthy approach to powers that seek to guide the world," Mr. Adaikkalanathan said.

"The United States is reaping the economic results of its global policies."

The U.S. Ambassador has observed in Chennai that the U.S. ban on the LTTE, which was followed by several other countries, has cut the flow of money and weapons to the Tigers adding that

the "result of which could be seen in their recent military defeats."

Refusing to comment on the rising voice in Tamil Nadu for Indian pressure on Sri Lanka, the U.S. Ambassador has said India and the United States could use their "strategic partnership to good effect in Sri Lanka," The Hindu reported.

"The greatest failure of the last 25 years has been the failure of the main Sinhalese parties to reach agreement," the paper quoted Mr. Blake as saying.

The Hindu report summarised the U.S. view expressed by Mr. Blake in following words: "Moving forward on a political solution would have three-fold benefits - to reassure 200,000 refugees in the Vanni region that they can move south and aspire to a better future; to disprove the LTTE's claim of being the sole representative of Sri Lanka's Tamils; and to persuade Tamils overseas to stop funding the LTTE."

However, the U.S. Ambassador, who admitted that his government earlier helped the Sri Lankan military, said the United States has recently effected a complete freeze on all military assistance to Sri Lanka.

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OPINION

How India can resolve the Sri Lankan crisis

Dr Anil Athale
Sify.com

THERE is no purely military solution to problems of insurgency. The only known successful 'military' solution to such problems in world history is to be found in the US, namely the genocide of the native Red Indians.

Most civilised nations would balk at such an approach, but short of that, a purely military solution to problems of ethnic minorities will and have always failed.

It is, therefore, a little surprising that many have begun to write the epitaph of LTTE and the cause of Tamil Eelam.

It must be clearly understood that the LTTE or V Pirapakaran are not the reason for the turmoil in Sri Lanka, but products of an ideology and circumstances.

As long as the cause and the conditions that caused the Tamil revolt exist, peace will be elusive, notwithstanding the claims of an imminent military victory.

As someone associated with the Sri Lankan conflict since 1988, I am dismayed at the repeated mistakes on part of all the principal actors in this sordid, blood soaked drama.

On its part the LTTE is being obdurate in sticking to the demand of 'independence' that can never become a reality since India does not support it.

On the Sri Lankan government's part, the notion of national unity and integrity is equated with 'unitary' form of government, and a federal structure is considered an anathema. This has further legitimised the hard line position of the LTTE.

And finally India, a country that has a major stake in peace in Sri Lanka, has been shy of forcing the Lankan government to move in direction of federalism and autonomy for Tamil areas. Thus in this tragedy, there are only villains and no heroes.

The Background:

The Tamil-Sinhala rivalry is 'mother of old conflicts'. The two sides trace their animosities to the battle between Tamil King Ellara (after whom Eelam is named) and the Sinhalese King Duttagamini in 167 (or 145) BC!

Obviously it was not a continuous conflict, and there were many periods of peace. But it must be understood that in the perception of ordinary Tamils and Sinhalese, the conflict is very old.

Since the Buddhist revival of 1956-1957, Sri Lanka has become a 'Buddhist' State, much on the lines of many Islamic states.

But even worse, the law of the

land denies equal opportunities to non-Sinhala citizens.

Many, specially Indian commentators, have flippantly 'advised' Tamils to accept Sri Lankan unity without realising that Sri Lanka is not a secular State like India, or is it a 'fair State' like the UK in terms of rule of law.

Thus there is a fundamental problem in the nature of the Sri Lankan State at the root of this conflict.

Sri Lanka is a plural society and multi-ethnic country. Like other developing countries, including India, the process of economic development and nation building have often led to clashes between various groups.

In the late 19th century, conflicts took place mainly between the Buddhists, Catholics and Muslims. The most serious riots against the Catholics took place in 1883 and 1903. Major anti-Muslim riots took place in 1915. But since 1958, the focus of Sinhala violence has shifted to the Tamils. Major anti-Tamil riots took place in 1958, 1977 and 1981-83.

This antagonism has led to a feeling of insecurity amongst the Tamils and the movement for Tamil Eelam or homeland was born out of this cauldron of hate.

The people of Tamil Nadu have historical and blood relations with the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

They will not remain inactive and watch the genocidal tactics of the Sri Lanka army against their brethren.

The rise of Dravidian parties has ensured a competitive backing for the rights of the Sri Lanka Tamils. The late Tamil Nadu chief minister M G Ramachandran went a step further and linked survival of Sri Lanka Tamils with Indian nationalism.

Having studied insurgencies over last two decades, it is easy to predict that the LTTE will revert to the classic first or second phase of Guerrilla War, that is, melt into jungles and populated areas and indulge in small unit hit and run actions.

Given the difficult terrain in jungles of Sri Lanka, the LTTE can continue this struggle indefinitely. In addition, it may restart its terror attacks in capital Colombo and eliminate the Sri Lankan political and military leaders.

The LTTE is certainly down (as in 1988 when Indians had it down on its knees) but not out.

But must Sri Lanka, a beautiful country with friendly people, continue to bleed?

No. There is a solution, though it might sound simplistic.

Tamil Eelam is no solution.

The new State cannot be in peace with Sri Lanka as the Eastern province claimed by the LTTE has a mixed population; the boundary is not well defined and is 600 km long.

Perpetual bloodshed is pre-terminated in case of that outcome.

On the other hand, most Sri Lankan Tamils would be quite satisfied with an Indian type of federal structure.

The first step in the direction has to be taken by the Sinhalese by recognising that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic State and not a Buddhist one.

The Sinhalese have to give up their insistence on a unitary State and accept federalism, perhaps even a Kashmir-like arrangement, where Article 370 ensures that the Kashmiri identity is preserved.

A three-language formula could solve the language issue.

Sri Lanka also needs to ensure equality before law for all citizens and no Sinhala bias.

There should be open negotiations and a ceasefire. India could guarantee this accord.

Before an ideological dispute can be solved it needs to be converted into a tangible dispute over territory or rights.

The Middle East process only got off the ground once the Palestinians recognised Israel's right to exist and Israel in turn accepted the demand for a Palestinian state.

Once the ideological hurdle is crossed there can be give and take over territory. Till such time this happens, there is very little chance of peace.

The world and major powers like the US and Japan have to convince or coerce the Sri Lankans into abandoning the path of military solution. India has to act and realize that between inaction and military intervention, there are many intermediate tools available to it.

In dealing with insurgencies, Sri Lanka seems to be following the Pakistani model, where they have been using air power, tanks and heavy weapons which cause immense collateral damage.

We have been battling insurgencies for 60 years, but have never resorted to genocidal tactics.

Given the close links and relation between the peoples of the countries, India must intervene as a regional power, which could take shape in the enforcing a no-fly zone and similar restrictions.

India as a power cannot escape this moral responsibility and must use its clout to enforce peace.

Colonel (retd) Dr Anil Athale is a Chhatrapati Shivaji Chair Fellow of the United Services Institute and co-ordinator of INPAD, a Pune based think-tank. These are his personal views.

It's the Tamil Economy, Stupid

Continued from p9

For the Sinhala nation simply cannot afford to make the commercial reparation that is owed.

Let us think about what this means for the Black July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom alone. Commercial reparation would be, for example, include reparation for the 80% of Colombo's retail trade and 60% of its commercial trade destroyed in 1983. One would use well understood business valuation principles - net present value (NPV) in 1983 of all future earnings, which NPV is then projected forward to today using realised growth rates (since we know with hindsight the growth rate between 1983 and today). This would still not account for the fact that had the original owners retained control and developed their already considerable entrepreneurial and management skills, greater growth may have been achieved.

Having engineered the appropriation of enormous quantities of Tamil assets, the difficulty for the Sinhala Nation is how to deal with the consequences.

Even if the Sinhala nation could afford reparation, the truth is they do not wish it. For the Sinhalese do not accept that commercial reparation is required for the genocide in 1983 and since.

Even the most liberal Colombo-based peace activists remain content to deal in the realm of rhetoric on 1983: art exhibitions, letters in state-owned media, inadequately couched phrases of regret by professional human rights spokes people.

No one gets down to the bottom line and talks about money.

Breach of contract with Tamil taxpayers

The modern state is financed by enterprise, by the private sector. In return it provides services for the common good - including policing and security - using the money generated by business, a portion of which is given to the state as taxes.

The state is hence the modern equivalent of the medieval mercenary knight one could hire to guard ones farm or one's home: the Japanese roving Samurai, or the Tamil soldier caste who carried out "Kaval" (guard) duties.

The Tamil businesses that represented 80% of Colombo's retail trade and 60% of its commercial trade in 1983, had, for decades been financing a good proportion of the Sri Lankan state through taxes. They paid a good proportion of the salaries of all those Colombo soldiers and policemen who stood by - or as in many cases participated - while the mobs torched Tamil homes, shops and cars.

Not only did the Tamil busi-

ness owners of 1983 lose the value of the businesses destroyed in the pogrom, they also discovered that they had been paying taxes for decades on a false assumption: that the police, army, judiciary and government bureaucracy that they financed through taxes would protect them in times of crisis.

Even if reparation were made for the loss of the businesses and lives in 1983, can there be reparation for the breach of contract by the state to the people whose taxes had paid for it all those years?

But the breach of contract continues. Every Tamil taxpayer in Sri Lanka today - including all the abducted business persons in Colombo - understands that they are being defrauded of the benefits of their taxes: the State has no intention of providing them with the security they have paid for. The police, army, judiciary do not work for them.

As the pogrom demonstrated, economic assets require defence - both from physical destruction by mobs and from expropriation by hostile governments (and their international allies).

The Tamil people instinctively understand that it is not possible to rebuild that "Tamil industrial base, built over generations" without first hiring a reliable Kaval to protect it.

In modern terms, this translates to a State with a defence and judiciary that is accountable to the Tamil people that finance it. A State that will not turn against its people. In short, the free state of Eelam.

The Federal solution amounts to ignoring all previous breaches of contract and re-hiring the Sinhala State - including its present army - for the Kaval role.

This would require a huge leap of faith by the Tamils, but to date there have been no grounds on which such a leap can be based.

On the contrary, all the actions of the Sinhala state to date suggest that such a leap of faith would be naive in the extreme and stupid at best.

In the Sinhala State the Tamils will always be hostage to the "wages of envy", (to use the terminology of the Economist): as the Jewish people were in Europe in the 1940s, as the Tutsis were in Rwanda, both minorities that had been disproportionately successful in their countries. Envy does not have a sell-by date.

It follows that the separatist project is also an economic project.

If the Tamil industrial base took generations to build before it was destroyed by a 1-week pogrom, then the 25 years or more to be spent building the pre-requisite state, that will lay the foundation for the next generation of industrial base is not unacceptable.

NEWS

Battle roundup

LIBERATION Tigers of Tamil Eelam fighters continued to offer heavy resistance in the Vanni battle fronts inflicting heavy casualty to the Sri Lankan forces and stalling the advancement of troops towards Kilinochchi.

At least 161 soldiers were killed and 367 soldiers were wounded in four separate attempts by the military to breach LTTE defences in Vanni, in October alone.

In the latest attempt to break through LTTE defences south west of Kilinochchi, around Akkaraayankulam, more than 80 Sri Lankan Army (SLA) soldiers were killed and 200 sustained injuries, according to informed sources in Colombo. Sri Lanka admitted to heavy casualties but put its losses at 33 dead and 48 injured.

"During these clashes on the weekend, 33 soldiers were reported killed in action, 48 injured and three others were reported missing," a statement on the ministry's website said.

The multi-pronged Sri Lankan offensive which was launched on October 18 lasted for 4 days. A similar attempt a week earlier, on Sunday October 12, resulted in more than 60 SLA soldiers being wounded. That SLA advance was thwarted after 6 hours of heavy fighting, the LTTE said.

The same day, SLA soldiers attempting to enter into LTTE territory in southern Mullaiththevu district from several points in Thannimurippu and Manalaaru with artillery and Multi-barrel Rocket Launcher fire support were also met with heavy LTTE resistance.

The SLA offensive was beaten back after 12 hour of fierce fighting with at least 19 SLA soldiers killed and more than 35 injured.

The previous week also the military suffered heavy casualties, when on Tuesday October 7, SLA attempted to advance on 3 fronts in southern Kilinochchi.

26 SLA soldiers were killed in Akkaraayan - Murikandi sector, 16 in Vanni Vizhaangkulam and 20 in Vannearikkulam. 49 SLA soldiers were wounded in Akkaraayan and 23 in Vanni Vizhaangkulam. The SLA offensive units were pushed back in all 3 fronts.

Rain, resistance blamed

The increased resistance by LTTE, as evidenced by the high casualties suffered by SLA in recent weeks, is in sharp contrast to an earlier LTTE fallback that enabled troops to move rapidly into LTTE territory. Encouraged by the limited resistance offered by the LTTE in previous months, Sri Lankan forces had banked on a quick fall of Kilinochchi, the LTTE's administrative capital, 330 kilometres north of Colombo.

However, the military is bogged down in the same area for the past 2 months with the LTTE dig-

ging in, army stretching to defend territory already seized, and poor weather hampering military operations.

"Troops operating in the south of Kilinochchi are making progress, though they have not shown a rapid progress within the past few days," said defence analyst Ranil Wijayapala in the state-run Daily News. He blamed adverse weather, with heavy rains currently lashing the north.

"With the rapid advance last month, the military is also forced to tie down a lot of soldiers to protect areas newly captured from the Tigers," a military officer who declined to be named said.

Military sources said increased air attacks have failed to soften up Tiger defences for ground troops to smash through.

When the Sri Lankan forces reached Naachikudah in Mannar district and Akkaraayankulam in Kilinochchi district in early September, they encountered an elaborate trench line running several kilometers from Naachikudah to Akkaraayankulam. Since then repeated offensives by the SLA to break through the LTTE defences have failed.

Casualties censored

Throughout this military campaign the Sri Lankan defence establishment has highly exaggerated LTTE casualties whilst down playing its own. For the past year or so, the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Ratnasiri Wickramanayake has been providing military casualty details to the Sri Lankan parliament on a monthly basis. Figures tabled in parliament so far show 1,099 soldiers were killed in the first nine months of 2008, with September seeing the highest number of fatalities -- 200 killed and 997 wounded.

Almost 7,000 soldiers were wounded in the first nine months of the year and 396 civilians were killed, according to parliamentary records.

However, following heavy casualties the military has suffered in recent weeks, on Friday October 24, the Sri Lankan defence ministry announced its decision to censor casualty figures coming out of the northern battle fields.

The defence ministry said that it decided to "suspend the reporting of all casualty figures in relation to the ongoing counter terrorist operation in Wanni. This is in consideration of the continuing advance of the security forces there and the need for operational security, whereby such reportage may impede the successful accomplishment of the mission."

Informed military sources in Colombo said that the sections of the military viewed the practice as counter-productive since the soldiers on the battlefield have been discouraged by the political censorship on their sacrifices.

The LTTE strategy



Col. R. Hariharan, (Retired)

IN the ongoing battle in Vanni, the LTTE's conventional defence strategy appears to be based upon a series of strong points with bunds and ditches stretching for miles between them. The bunds along the expected axes of advance have been constructed to slow down the advancing troops and attack them at selected points when they try to break through the obstacle.

In modern conventional warfare the technique has morphed into mobile defence based

upon strong points that dominate the gaps between them with hard hitting armour based mobile teams. This technique is useful when a large area is to be defended by smaller number of troops as in the case of the LTTE. This strategy if successfully applied would lead to a lot of bloodletting and discourage advancing forces from launching the main offensive.

The LTTE had perhaps adopted defences based on strong points for this very reason. It was fighting against an

opponent who outnumbered it by at least ten to one. On hindsight, last year the LTTE probably allowed a comparatively free run to the security forces to occupy areas south of road Vavuniya-Mannar along the Mannar coast so that the troops would be drawn into fighting the strong points further north. After that starting with Adampan in May 2008 there had been a series of LTTE strong points - big and small - forming layers of defences - Adampan-Nedunkandal-Andankulam, Madhu-Palamipiddi-Periyamadu, and so on.

Sea Tigers sink Sri Lankan military supply ship

SEA TIGERS, the sea faring arm of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked two supply ships belonging to Sri Lanka inside high security zone, near a naval harbour in northern Jaffna peninsula, sinking one ship and heavily damaging the other.

Sri Lankan ships MV Nimalawa and MV Ruhunuwa which transport military and other supplies from south to Jaffna came under a predawn Black Tiger attack on Wednesday, October 22, in the seas off Kankeasanthurai harbour.

The Sea Tiger mission was led by Black Sea Tiger Lt. Col. Ilakkiyaa, the deputy commander of the Sea Tigers' female wing, who sacrificed her life with Black Sea Tiger Commando Lt. Col. Kupe-ran, LTTE officials told TamilNet.

The Sea Tigers also fought a sea battle with naval units defending the port of Kankesanthurai.

Shells launched from the seas off Vadamaraadchi during the clashes following the attack on ships, exploded near a civilian

dwelling in Mallaakam seriously injuring a couple, according to the same sources.

"One of the merchant vessels - MV Nimalawa -- is sinking and the other vessel was damaged," a defence official who declined to be named told AFP following the attack.

According to Sri Lankan newspaper, Sunday times, the intelligence authorities concerned with how the Sea Tigers managed to infiltrate the naval cordon to reach Kankesanthurai, a key point in the high security zone in the sea.

"The fact that they succeeded in infiltrating a high security zone in the seas, moving freely for a long distance to carry out an attack, is very worrying. It only underscores the need for further measures to make the HSZ (High Security Zone) foolproof," the paper said quoting an intelligence source.

Jaffna is controlled by government forces, but cut off from the rest of the island by LTTE-held territory and supplied entirely by

sea or air.

The defence ministry painted the attack as "another cowardly attempt by the terrorists to deny essential supplies to the civilians living in war-affected areas."

However, observers pointed out Sri Lanka's practice of using civilian cargo ships to supply arms to the 40,000 military personnel occupying Jaffna.

Activities of Kaangkeasanthurai harbour came to a halt on Wednesday following the early morning Sea Tiger attack, sources in Vadamaraadchi said.

Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) jointly searched villages east and west of Kaangkeasanthurai harbour, and fishing boats in the seas off the same coastline, sources added.

Harbour workers were not permitted to go the harbour at the SLA entry check post at Thellippalai. Lorries that transport goods from the harbour also were not allowed access to the harbour.

NEWS

The spectre of Stalingrad

Is one seeing a mini version of Stalingrad in the battle for Kilinochchi, the current headquarters of the LTTE? Could "Gen.Monsoon" and "Gen.Recession" put an end to the pipedreams of the Sri Lankan Army of a definitive victory over the LTTE?

B. Raman
Outlook India

THE Battle of Stalingrad is considered the bloodiest battle with the largest battlefield casualties in the history of conventional warfare. Under a carefully worked out plan, the Soviet Army inveigled an advancing and over-confident Nazi Army into Stalingrad and then inflicted severe casualties on the Nazi Army. Many of those Nazi soldiers whom the Soviet Army could not kill were killed by "Gen.Winter". The entire Sixth Army of the Nazis was trapped by the Soviet troops with the help of "Gen.Winter" and destroyed.

As the battle began on July 17, 1942, the Nazi Disinformation machine worked overtime to tell an unsuspecting German people that the fall of Stalingrad and the collapse of the Soviet Army were imminent. The German people waited with bated breath for the news of the fall. "Within two days", they were told. Two days became two weeks. Two weeks became two months. Two months became seven months. The battle ended disastrously for the Nazis on February 2, 1943. This marked the beginning of the end of the Nazi dreams in the Second World War.

Is one seeing a mini version of Stalingrad in the battle for Kilinochchi, the current headquarters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)? It is difficult to say on the basis of the scanty information available from the battle front. From even this scanty information, two things are clear: Firstly, the Sri Lankan Army, which senses victory against the LTTE, has been doing well, but not as well as it claims to be. Secondly, the LTTE has been doing badly, but not as badly as projected to be by the disinformation machine of the Sri Lankan Army. The LTTE has shown that there is still a lot of fight left in it - and a lot of intelligence and innovative thinking.

But intelligence and innovative thinking alone cannot win wars without resources and the wherewithal. The LTTE is deficient on both counts. But it has

shown itself to be as resilient as the Taliban in Afghanistan and as fiercely-motivated. In 2003, the Americans thought and claimed that they had finished the Taliban once and for all. Their facile assumptions proved to be wrong. The Taliban came back--as if it has risen from its much-proclaimed grave--and has been moving forward relentlessly. Neither air strikes by the most powerful Air Force in the world nor heavy artillery strikes by the most powerful Army in the world have been able to stop its advance. Reluctantly, senior NATO military commanders in Afghanistan have started admitting that the war against the Taliban is unwinnable and that

The LTTE has shown that there is still a lot of fight left in it - and a lot of intelligence and innovative thinking.

one has to search for a political solution with neither victory nor defeat for either side. It has not only become unwinnable unless the Taliban commits some serious tactical mistakes, but is also likely to become increasingly unaffordable thanks to the financial and economic melt-down in the US and the rest of the world.

The LTTE is calculating that if it can keep fighting against the Sri Lankan Army for some more months, a prolonged war against the LTTE could become as unwinnable and as unaffordable for the rulers of Sri Lanka as a prolonged war against the Taliban for the NATO powers. The rulers of Sri Lanka are living in a fool's paradise if they think that China and Pakistan would come to their rescue if the government of India stops assisting them under pressure from public opinion in Tamil Nadu. The Pakistani economy is on the verge of a collapse. Even



The Battle of Stalingrad was the bloodiest battle in human history, with 1.5 million casualties.

the Chinese were reluctant to help out their time-tested friend as they call Pakistan, as President Asif Ali Zardari found to his dismay when he visited China recently. The Pakistan Army is reeling under one set-back after another inflicted on it by the Taliban. To think that the Pakistan Army would rush to Sri Lanka to spite India would be the height of stupidity.

The Chinese, who are increasingly worried over the impact of the recession in the US on their manufacturing industries, which are heavily dependent on the US market, are hugging tight their foreign exchange holdings. They were reluctant to make any defin-

itive commitment of help to Zardari. They are even showing a decline of interest in further developing the Gwadar port project. In a world beset with the most serious economic crisis it has known since the Great Depression of the 1930s, everybody, including China, is interested in saving every dollar and cent he can. Nobody wants a foreign adventure, which might drain off their depleting resources. If the Sri Lankan Army thinks that China would try to rush in if India stops helping, it is in for a disappointment.

The LTTE is calculating that if it can keep fighting against the Sri Lankan Army for some more

weeks, "Gen.Monsoon" and "Gen.Recession" could put an end to the pipedreams of the Sri Lankan Army of a definitive victory over the LTTE.

Will its calculations prove right or will they be belied? Whatever happens, one thing seems likely-- there is going to be no definitive victory or no definitive defeat for either side in the on-going war.

B. Raman is Additional Secretary (retired), Cabinet Secretariat, Govt. of India, New Delhi. and, presently, Director, Institute For Topical Studies, Chennai. He is also associated with the Chennai Centre for China Studies

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NEWS

War budget as key industries decline

SRI LANKA'S military campaign in Vanni will not be slowed by global credit crisis or the deteriorating condition of the island's economy, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister told reporters during a visit to Australia earlier this month.

Rohitha Bogollagama, speaking to reporters in Australia, where he was urged to seek a political end to the long drawn conflict, said Sri Lanka's military would continue to press its latest bloody offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"We are coming to the final stages of taking on the LTTE. We are quite confident our financial resources can sustain the current engagement," Bogollagama told reporters.

The minister's comments comes after Sri Lanka unveiling a 2009 budget that proposes a 6.4 percent rise in defence spending and a 20 percent rise in government borrowing, despite the current freeze in global credit markets.

Defense ministry outlays are forecast to rise to 177.1 billion rupees (\$1.6 billion) in 2009 from 166.4 billion this year, according to government plans indicating its intention of continuing the high intensity war in 2009.

Whilst the Sri Lankan government remains bullish about its capability to withstand the economic burden of a high intensity war and ability to borrow in the

Global Markets, World Bank in a report said the country 'had little or no room to take on new debt'.

The World Bank report named Sri Lanka as one of 28 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East facing financial strains due to high food and fuel costs and now from a cascading credit crisis.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick said the world should not forget the "human rescue" needed in developing countries as it focused on the spreading market crisis.

Sri Lanka was labelled "financially vulnerable" along with Jordan, Cambodia, Lebanon, Jamaica, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Tajikistan, Madagascar, Nepal, Rwanda, Malawi, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Fiji, Haiti, Seychelles and Mauritania.

The report, published ahead of weekend International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings of finance and development ministers, said Sri Lanka had little or no room to take on new debt to afford the higher prices.

The bank has been warning that the "double jeopardy" of higher food and fuel prices could push 100 million people deeper into poverty. It also said higher prices will increase the number of malnourished people around the world in 2008 by 44 million to over 960 million.

In addition to the escalating war and uncertainty putting off overseas investment in the island,



Sri Lanka's Tea industry is feeling the impact of Global Credit Crunch.

its key foreign exchange earning industries are facing a tough times.

Textile Exports

The garment industry, Sri Lanka's top foreign exchange earner, is facing the prospect of losing a EU trade concession which gives 10% margin advantage in global markets, due to the poor human rights record of Sri Lanka's government.

Estimates show that the GSP Plus, the trade concessions offered by the European Union is worth approximately \$150 million per year to the garment industry.

Without the EU concessions, the industry faces the bleak prospect of losing out to countries like China and India in the global markets, leading to tens of thousands of job losses.

Tea Exports

A tea export, Sri Lanka's second biggest foreign exchange

earner, is also in trouble with sharp price drops and low production due to bad weather.

The Global Credit Crisis slowly taking effect, prices for low grown tea in particular, destined for the Middle East and Russia fell steeply in October.

In Sri Lanka, most low grown teas are made at independent factories, which buy leaf from small tea farmers, known as smallholders mostly in the deep south of the island.

Chaminda Bandarigoda, a small holders in the southern Galle district said he received 51 rupees for a kilogram of green leaf last month.

"I was told that the dalu padi (literally leaf salary) will fall by 15 to 20 rupees a kilo," he said.

The industry has asked for a six billion rupees credit guarantee from the government and a six month moratorium on loan repayments - as they have on earlier downturns.

Adding further pressure to an already ailing industry, the Sri Lanka Tea Board announced that bad weather forced Sri Lankan tea production down by 1.8% to 25.08 million kg in August from a year earlier.

Tourism

Tourism, another key foreign exchange earner for the island, along with tea, and textile is also facing tough times.

Sri Lanka's tourist arrivals fell 20.4 per cent in September from a year ago, as the conflict between Sri Lankan government and LTTE kept visitors away, according to a recent statement by the Sri Lankan Tourism Board.

The latest drop in arrival follows a 31.4 percent drop in August and 25 percent drop in July percent compared to last year.

The slide in the industry has been continuing since 2007. The Department of Census and Statistics said in its economic performance report for 2007 that arrivals had fallen by 11.7 percent in 2007 to 494,000 (from 559,000 in 2006). The conflict escalated in late 2006.

In August, the Tourism Authority's chairman said the

country would miss its targets of 600,000 visitors this year, owing to fighting and travel warnings from foreign embassies.

Central bank data showed tourism brought the island US\$224.65 million in revenue in the first eight months of the year falling far short of the target US\$550 million in revenue for 2008 and 8.1 per cent less than last year's US\$244.67 million in the same period.

Government and industry officials have renewed promotional campaigns marketing a varied assortment of attractions, including safaris tracking wild elephants, eco-tourism, nature tours and visits to archeological sites.

Although most popular tourist destinations are far from the conflict zone, sporadic bomb blasts in and around the capital Colombo have dampened arrivals.

"Until the security situation of the country improves, we will not have positive tourist arrivals into Sri Lanka," the state tourism body's director-General, S. Kalaiselvam, told Reuters.

Hotel operators warn that the downturn in the industry will not be limited to the number of falling arrivals or occupation rates.

"Entire village economies can depend on a single hotel," Dayal Fernando, the general manager at Amaya Reef Hotel, a beach front hotel at Hikkaduwa on the scenic southern coast, 100km south of Colombo, told IRIN.

"When the hotels lose business, the suppliers in turn feel the pinch and it will impact their employees and those in the transport sector or on the farms that provide food for the tourist trade," Fernando said. "Most of the hotels also employ a lot of people from the area and if retrenchments start, the local economies will be the first to feel the heat."

The Census and Statistics Department's survey found that over 100,000 people were employed in the restaurant and hotel sector and of that 56 percent were employed as informal employees.

A recent World Bank report said the Sri Lankan tourism industry had lagged behind regional growth levels for over two decades.

Melamine in biscuits, chocolate

TamilNet

SRI LANKA'S largest biscuit company, Ceylon Biscuits Limited, has ordered a recall of a popular biscuit, the Munchie Lemon Puff, after Swiss authorities found melamine traces in the product.

The move comes amid an international health scare after milk tainted melamine, a poisonous substance used in the manufacture of plastic, led to the deaths of four children in China and made 53,000 thousand others sick.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka has ordered a ban on the sale of Edna chocolate products, the BBC Sinhala service reported.

Ceylon Biscuits said its decision to take its Munchie LemonPuff biscuits off shelves came "in the light of certain adverse news reports coming from overseas."



Swiss authorities said that they had found high concentrations of melamine in the cookies and have called on other European countries to withdraw the products from the market.

Officials in the canton (state) of Geneva said tests also showed high melamine levels in Thai biscuits Milk Cookies S&P.

Ceylon Biscuits says it does not use milk from China and its biscuits only contain milk products from Australia, Holland and Canada, the ABC radio in Australia reported.

In Sri Lanka, melamine has been found in another product: the judiciary has issued an interim order against the distribution and selling of Edna chocolate products, the BBC Sinhala service, Sandeshaya, reported this week.

The court order was issued after considering a petition by the Consumer Affairs Authority which said it is suspicious whether the company has used milk tainted with the toxic chemical.

Colombo Additional Magistrate ordered the CAA to produce a report on its investigations on 28 October, Sandeshaya reported.