

How long will the APRC be tolerated asks Suresh

PAGE 9

Tamil Nadu demands ceasefire



Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through all the district capitals of Tamil Nadu Tuesday demanding that the Indian government immediately begin pressuring the Sri Lankan government to call a ceasefire. Normalcy was disturbed in the 30 district capitals of Tamil Nadu on between 7:00 a.m. and noon as the demonstrators took to the streets, blocking the railway, bus and postal services. The demonstrators were led by the Communist Party of India (CPI), Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Tamil National Movement, Puthiya Thamizhakam, Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam and several other organisations. The organisers said the success of the protest in Tamil Nadu, especially amid heavy rain along the coastal districts, symbolised deep rooted support for the Eelam Tamils' cause. Tamil Nadu police arrested around 50,000 protesters in various cities and registered around 25,000 arrests unable to contain the whole protest. Tamil Nadu State Secretary of the CPI, D. Pandian (pictured surrounded by the media and party flags), led the protest in front of Chennai Railway Station. Pazha Nedumaran and several other leaders led the protest in Mathurai. Joint State Secretary of CPI, C. Mahendran led the protest in Trichy, while Periyar Dravida Kazhakam leader Mani led the protest in Salem.



NEWS

Sri Lanka celebrates capture of Pooneryn

SRI LANKAN national flags flew from buildings and lamp posts and posters covered walls in Colombo and across the south of the island as part of week-long celebrations ordered by the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse to mark the capture of Pooneryn in the north.

"The nation salutes our brave soldiers who once again linked north and south by their victory at Pooneryn," read a poster with silhouetted images of soldiers.

Troops gained control of Pooneryn, a strategic town located on the northern Jaffna peninsula. The capture of Poon-eryn was followed by that of road junction at Maankulam and then, after a bloody battle, of part of the LTTE's northernmost defence line in the Jaffna peninsula, at Muhamalai. The victories have wrapped much of the south in a shroud of euphoria with Radio shows inundated by listeners calling in with congratulatory messages and people lighting fire crackers in the streets.

In a special broadcast President Rajapakse announced on national television that troops had seized the Tiger-held town of Pooneryn for the first time in 15 years.

"Now, we can open a land route to the Jaffna peninsula after many years," the President said referring to the A-32 highway from Manaar to Pooneryn.

Sri Lankan military chiefs tout the capturing of Pooneryn as "turning-point" in the 25-year war bringing the entire western coast under military control and opening up a land route for the transport of troops and supplies to

Jaffna peninsula that for years have been sent by sea or air.

However, analysts point out that Pooneryn is more a symbolic victory than a strategic victory as the A32 is less use as a supply route at present than the government rhetoric suggests. The A-32 running between Manaar and Pooneryn is more a wide muddy track than a 'highway' and needs to be rebuilt before being used as a Main Supply Route (MSR) for military purposes, they say.

Furthermore the causeway connecting Sangupiddy in Vanni to Keratheevu in Jaffna peninsula collapsed many years ago requiring the military to operate a ferry service to transport men and material between Vanni and Jaffna, the analysts further added.

In his televised speech, Mr Rajapakse called on Velupillai Pirapaharan, the Tigers' leader, to "lay down your arms and come to the negotiation table".

Commenting on Rajapakse's call to lay down the arms, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) member of parliamentarian S. Jeyanandamurthi told The Morning Leader newspaper that the security of the Tamils will be under threat if the Tigers disarm. "The LTTE will come for talks. But, it will not lay down its arms before coming to the negotiating table. The security of the Tamil people will be in question if the LTTE does that. We have seen it in the past as well," he said.

"Even during the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord, the LTTE was asked to lay down its weapons. It was very difficult for the Tigers when

Continued on p3



The Sri Lankan military and government are celebrating the capture of Pooneryn on the northwestern coast, but analysts say the main Mannar-Pooneryn road - which is being touted as a supply route to Jaffna - is just a dirt track that needs substantial repairs

Sri Lanka in need of a quick win

EARLIER this month President Mahinda Rajapakse unveiled a budget comprising of tax rises and heavy borrowing to support the government's war efforts against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and declared that offensive operations in the country's north would continue.

Noting that the war and its success appeared to be the lynchpin of the budget, observers point out that a quick victory is crucial.

Neither the island's already frail economy nor the Sinhalese people, who are facing one of highest inflation rates in the world - 23.4% in October, would take the burden of an expensive war for long.

"If they can finish the war soon then people may bear with them, but not forever" the country manager of a leading multinational firm in Colombo told IPS.

Observers feel that Sinhalese

public will only tolerate the economic hardships they are facing provided there are regular success stories from the battle front.

Whilst Sri Lankan military has managed to capture territory from the LTTE, its goal of destroying the outfit continues to be a distant dream.

Sri Lankan military chief has had to revise his timeline for wiping out the LTTE many times over the past two years.

As defence expenditure continue to rise and casualty numbers continue to mount, Sri Lanka is desperately in need of a quick win.

Sri Lankan economists are concerned that the government has got the war euphoria mixed up with economic management.

Whipping up patriotic fervour in expectation of military victory may indeed distract attention from the worsening economic outlook. But that strategy needs

victory to come soon, said the Economist in a recent article published on Sri Lanka's budget.

Economist Muttukrishna Sarvananthan, a Fulbright Visiting Research Scholar at George Washington University, commenting on the budget reflected similar views and said that as long as the military maintains its successes in the northern battles, Rajapakse would be able to muster public support despite the country's economic woes, reported IPS.

"In spite of being the second largest public expenditure [after public debt repayments] and the major contributor to widening budget deficit, as long as the military advances and successes continue on the ground there is very little likelihood of the huge defence budget impacting negatively on the overall economy of Sri Lanka in the short to medium term," Sarvananthan told IPS.

Rs.50m to kill a Tiger

LEADER of New Left Front, Dr Wickramabahu Karunaratne, in a column that appeared last week in Lankadeepa accused the Rajapakse administration of spending 500 billions of national wealth in its military drive to kill Tamil Tigers.

Accordingly, for each Tiger killed, they have spent 50 millions. All this is wealth of the people. How many thousand Sinhala were sacrificed in this war? Today mounts of Sinhala dead bodies are stacked under Palmyra trees," Karunaratne wrote.

Earlier this month UNP parliamentarian Ravi Karunanayake also ridiculed the war expenditure of the Rajapakse administration saying that the government has spent over forty million rupees to kill one member of the Tamil

Tigers since 2004.

According to Sri Lanka Army (SLA) commander, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka at least 13,000 Tamil Tigers have been killed by the security forces since President Rajapakse came to power. Quoting government estimates, Karunanayake said 583 billion rupees were spent for the war since April 2004. If the Sri Lankan military chief's estimates are to be trusted, Karunanayake said, 42 million rupees were spent to kill one Tamil Tiger.

Sri Lankan observers point out that, in reality, the cost Rs.50 million to kill a Tamil Tiger would be many times higher as the LTTE casualty figures published by the Sri Lankan government are highly exaggerated.

NEWS

Heavy Army casualties in Muhamaalai

AT least 130 Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were killed and more than 450 wounded in the space 3 days when they attempted to breakthrough LTTE Forward Defence Lines (FDL) in Kilaali and Muhamaalai fronts, according to a reliable Sri Lankan military source.

29 SLA soldiers lost their lives sustaining sniper fire, the source said and added several soldiers were killed while they were trapped in Tiger minefield.

The SLA soldiers who were sent on offensive mission into the no-go zone in Kilaali and Muhamaalai were trained for a 'do-or-die mission,' the source claimed hinting that the SLA soldiers of divisions 53 and 55 were under tremendous pressure from Jaffna command of the SLA as the Sri Lankan Vanni Security Forces Head Quarters was set ready to link up with the Jaffna peninsula from Pooneryn.

Meanwhile, Mangala Samaraweera, the leader of the SLFP-M wing said Thursday that 200 SLA soldiers were killed on Tuesday alone and more than 700 had sustained wounds in the recent fighting in various fronts in Vanni.

"I know that by last Tuesday, 235 injured soldiers were brought to Colombo National Hospital. It was reported that 85 were brought to Kalubowila, 90 to Jayawarde-

nepura and more than 300 to the military hospital. Also, the bodies of more than 200 brave sons of this country were brought to Jayaratne Funeral Directors," he said.

Samaraweera, who held the portfolio of the Foreign Ministry under Mahinda Rajapaksa soon after the latter assumed power said this was not the first time the SLA captured Pooneryn.

Sri Lankan army on Thursday November 20 claimed that after four days of continuous intense fighting the 55 and 53 Divisions of the Sri Lanka Army based at Muhamaalai and Kilaali managed to capture the first FDL of the LTTE in Muhamaalai.

Military Spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara announced that the military completed capturing the 800 metres long 5 kilometres wide defence line on Thursday evening. The LTTE still maintain two more defense lines.

"They had a lot of casualties and we are going toward the second line of defense," Nanayakkara said.

In April this year the LTTE fighters killed scores of Sri Lankan troops along the Muhamaalai FDL when they feinted an attack on government positions, quickly retreated and then pounded the pursuing soldiers with artillery when they reached the LTTE FDL.



Amidst heavy rains, the fierce battle between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government continues

Tigers prepare to fly in arms

AFP

The Tamil Tigers are likely building up their capacity for receiving weapons shipments with two long airstrips to receive large cargo planes, respected defence analysis group Jane's said on Tuesday, November 18.

Based on analysis of high-resolution, commercially-available satellite imagery, the London-based group said the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had constructed two one-kilome-

tre (0.6-mile) paved runways between 2002 and 2007.

Jane's said that one of those runways was being extended to two kilometres.

"While the imagery does not confirm the airstrips are in use, the investment of significant resources suggests the LTTE has developed facilities that can serve air logistics needs at a critical time in its three-decade war with the Sri Lankan state," said

Christian LeMiere, editor of Jane's Intelligence Review.

"Jane's can also confirm that the LTTE has made at least one attempt to arrange for a consignment of artillery rounds to be flown in."

According to the defence group that particular shipment remained stranded in an unidentified Central Asian country because Russia had intervened to prevent its delivery.

Jane's further added that there was no evidence of the airstrip being used by the Tamil Tigers to launch any attacks.

25,000 SLA soldiers desert

ABOUT twenty-five-thousand soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) have deserted their ranks since the war began under the Mahinda Rajapaksa regime, according to reports in the Sinhala weekly "Ravaya", published from Colombo.

15,000 soldiers have deserted ranks till January this year, an article based on a survey carried by Ravaya states.

SLA has been strictly enforcing checks on buses and transport services from battle front areas to south to nab deserting soldiers, according to the report.

Those who look like soldiers are also taken in for questioning by military police, the report adds.

About 700 soldiers have deserted from the SLA in two months, August and September, the article further states.

Superiors in the war front are said to be monitoring the activities of the soldiers under their

control closely, the article adds.

6,749 SLA deserters were arrested and 1,500 of them had been sent to prison after court martial. Inquiry is being conducted against the remaining, according to Sri Lankan military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, who held a media briefing on Thursday, November 13.

The latest amnesty, of two-weeks, for deserted soldiers of the SLA to return for duty in battle front expired on Saturday November 15.

Those who fail to return to their ranks within the stipulated period would be arrested and imprisoned after court martial, warned the Sri Lankan military spokesman.

Meanwhile, new recruitment drive to the SLA, commenced on October 1, would conclude on 31 December 2008.

The recruitment is being made in all camps of the SLA in the South.

TMVP members flee to LTTE

ACCORDING to Sri Lankan media reports, around 70 cadres of Tamil People's Liberation Tigers (TMVP) have fled the organisation to join the Tamil Tigers in the east during the past few months.

Some of these cadres have killed their colleagues prior to their fleeing to join the Tigers, sources say.

In one incident on Tuesday October 28, LTTE fighters in Batticaloa district attacked a key paramilitary camp of the paramilitary group TMVP in the early hours of Tuesday, killing four operatives and capturing six gunmen from the camp, located at Chengkaladi, 13 km northwest of Batticaloa city.

Some analysts believe that the missing TMVP members could

have joined their attackers or may well have carried out the attack themselves before leaving.

Commenting on the matter, a TMVP spokes person said the Tamil Tigers, in an attempt to infiltrate the east, were trying to connect with TMVP cadres in a bid to carry out attacks in the province.

The spokes person further added that several TMVP cadres had complained to the party hierarchy of being confronted by the Tigers who were persuading them to rejoin the organisation.

There are around 1,200 armed cadres of TMVP in the Eastern Province.

Plans are afoot to recruit 300 of them to Civil Defense Force and to send another number for foreign employment.

Pooneryn

Continued from p2

fighting resumed. That mistake will not be made again," he said.

Jeyanandamurthi who returned from Vanni recently also told the Morning Leader that LTTE leader had informed him that the that though the security forces had advanced into areas near Kilinochchi, they will not be able to capture Kilinochchi and the LTTE will give a devastating blow to the government, militarily within the next three months.

Despite territorial gains in recent weeks, Kilinochchi, the Tigers' administrative headquarters, remains a difficult target. Soldiers have been skirting its fringes for weeks, held back by strong resistance and, at one time, heavy monsoon rains.

The army's spokesman, Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara, admits it has been taking casualties, but insists it is "on target" to take the town.

K & K Stationers & Printers Ltd

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

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

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

SHAUN FOODS & WINE

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

With Compliments

SELVARAJA

GOLD HOUSE

**Retailer & Wholesaler of
Designers Jewelleries**

Specilised in 22CT. Gold Jewellery

**162 B Mitcham Road
London
SW17 9NJ**

Tel: 020 8767 3795

NEWS



Tamils in Canada often turn out in large numbers to express their support for a Tamil homeland in the northeast of Sri Lanka, despite bans by the Canadian government

Tamils in Canada ravaged by war in homeland

AFP

THE picture of a fallen top commander of Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers is neatly plastered on the wall of a shopping center.

Not far away, a food outlet peddles a crispy savory pancake, "dosa," named after Tamil Eelam, the independent state aspired by the Tigers.

No, you are not in the stronghold of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in northern Sri Lanka but in Scarborough, the eastern part of Toronto.

This largest Canadian city is home to about 250,000 ethnic Tamils who left Sri Lanka for Canada to escape the country's 25-year civil war.

They make up the largest diaspora from the South Asian country, with Toronto itself reportedly home to the biggest number of Sri Lankan Tamils in the world.

Though actively involved in the business, academic, political and social fields in their new home, many are still sympathetic to the Tigers' cause for an independent Tamil state in Sri Lanka.

Some display their support openly despite the group being labeled terrorists by the Canadian government, which earlier this

year for the first time charged a man with terrorism financing for soliciting cash for the Tigers.

Many of the Tamils in Canada have families and relatives in the north and east of Sri Lanka, where the Tigers were experiencing one of their worst setbacks since waging an armed struggle in 1972 to carve out a homeland for minority Tamils in the majority-Sinhalese nation.

"We are psychologically devastated and traumatized by the war because it is in our homeland and there is genocide going on there," charged Canadian Tamil Usha Sri-Skanda-Rajah, the owner of a real estate firm in Scarborough. "We want the international community to help bring about a settlement to the conflict so that our statehood is recognized," said Usha, 57, who is among an informal group of "concerned" women attempting to highlight to the Canadian authorities what she called "humanitarian catastrophe" in northern Sri Lanka.

Several members in her group have parents and other family members displaced by the fighting and their whereabouts remain uncertain, she said.

Usha's husband, a retired senior banking executive, went on a six-day fast recently to draw attention to the plight of tens of

thousands of civilians displaced by the fighting in Sri Lanka.

The Canadian Tamils grasp at any opportunity to highlight the bloody ethnic strife in Sri Lanka.

Recently, when Sri Lanka played Pakistan in a cricket match in Toronto, Tamil groups hired a plane carrying a banner "Stop the genocides in Sri Lanka" to circle the cricket grounds in an aerial propaganda blitz.

Sri Lankan Tamils are "one of the largest growing visible minorities" in Canada, said David Poopalapillai, spokesman for the Canadian Tamil Congress, touted as the largest Tamil group in Canada.

Catering to the bustling community, which has a municipal councillor as its first elected representative, are three 24-hour Tamil cable television networks and about half a dozen radio stations, he said.

The Tamils are aspiring for higher elected offices.

"We consider ourselves as part and parcel of the Canadian fabric and always encourage our people to actively perform their civic duty," Poopalapillai said.

For some however their assimilation in Canada will not be at the expense of foregoing the elusive dream of a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka.

NEWS

Yet another war budget

SRI LANKA unveiled its biggest ever war budget as it vowed to defeat Tamil Tigers and announced new taxes additional borrowing to plug the gap spiraling government spending and revenue.

The annual budget which increases spending on the armed forces has drawn mixed reactions. While supporters of the government welcomed it as a budget that breaks away from dependency on foreign loans and grants, opponents say it will exacerbate economic woes.

President Mahinda Rajapakse, who is also the commander-in-chief and finance minister, sought approval for the country's largest-ever defense budget from Parliament on November 6 as government forces continued their military offensive in the North.

Rajapakse proposed to spend 177 billion rupees (\$1.6 billion) on defense for 2009, an increase of 6.4 percent from 166.4 billion rupees allocated this year.

In his speech, Rajapakse said Sri Lankan soldiers had seized several LTTE bases and large swathes of land in the Tamil-dominated north and were close to crushing the organisation.

"It is to eradicate terrorism through this true humanitarian exercise that we spent a substantial amount of money on national security," he said.

Rajapakse also announced a 1 percent tax on most goods and services to "rebuild communities and infrastructure facilities affected by terrorism," and downgraded the country's economic growth.

Despite high inflation, running at 23.4 percent at the end of last month, the government's war against the Tamil Tigers is seen as

highly popular among the majority Sinhalese community.

Rajapakse also announced increased taxes on imported food (from fruit and vegetables to milk powder), electrical and household goods, and raised import and export cargo duty from three percent to five percent.

Official figures showed that overall state expenses for 2009 will increase 15 percent to 15.6 billion dollars, nearly twice the expected government revenue of 7.92 billion dollars. The government hopes to bridge the deficit with local and foreign loans.

Dayasiri Jayasekara, a lawmaker from the main opposition United National Party (UNP) attacked the budget and warned that resorting to external borrowing would lead to 'dire consequences'.

"There is a bleak picture of our economy today. We have identified certain shortcomings in the Appropriation Bill for the 2009 budget as well. The government has been compelled to go for external borrowings at high interest rates. It will have dire consequences on the economy," Jayasekara said.

Rajapakse's supporters disagree with the opposition's view. "This is a budget that breaks away from neo-liberal economic policies... it tries to strengthen the national economy," said Wimal Weerawansa, an ally of President Rajapakse.

Two days prior to Rajapakse unveiling the annual budget, on Tuesday November 4, the UNP presented its 'alternative budget proposals' pledging to increase the salary of public sector workers by Rs. 7500, and a minimum wage of Rs. 40,000 for soldiers.



Economic woes and falling prices for exports have forced Sri Lanka to seek tea buyers among its allies

Sri Lanka wants 'friends' to buy tea

TamilNet

SRI LANKA has appealed to "friendly countries" to buy tea to help the country weather the global financial crisis, AFP quoted officials as saying. Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama and senior officials of the tea board on Friday met ambassadors and envoys of main tea-buying countries to urge their support.

The Sunday Times newspaper reports that the decline in tea prices (which have almost halved in the past two months), and the large volume of unsold tea have caused a cash-flow crisis throughout the supply chain. However, last week demand had improved at last week's Colombo auctions, reports said.

Last year Sri Lanka, one of the world's top black tea producers,

earned a record \$1.02 billion from tea, the third-highest foreign exchange earner after garments and remittances, Reuters reported.

Sri Lanka had enjoyed high demand, earning \$1bn in the first ten months of this year. But the global financial crisis has reduced demand in key export markets.

Russia and former Soviet republics are the largest markets for Sri Lankan tea, accounting for nearly a fifth of the total tea exports, followed by the Middle East and North Africa.

LBO quoted analysts as saying the downward trend in oil prices might reduce the buying power of big buyers like the Middle East and Russia, though the approaching winter could help prop up the tea market.

As part of shoring up the industry against falling demand, earlier this month the Sri Lanka Tea Board purchased almost 1 million kg of tea at a value of Rs.230 million, the Sunday Times reported.

The intervention came after Sri Lankan government told the Tea Board to buy stocks to inject cash into the tea sector and stabilize it after nearly 60% of the tea at the Colombo Auctions remained unsold.

Colombo, which conducts the world's biggest tea auctions, saw prices hit 4.26 dollars a kilogramme in August before sliding to 2.19 dollars a kilogramme by the end of October, tea board figures showed.

However, while the government's intervention helped the industry, traders say plans must now be formulated to dispose of these tea stocks - without putting downward pressure on prices.

"Buyers are carrying stocks of tea at prices well above the current market, on which interest is fast accruing at phenomenal rates," the Colombo Tea Traders' Association (CTTA) said.

Association (CTTA) said.

Meanwhile, the Private Tea Factory Owners Association last week thanked President Mahinda Rajapakse for his government's intervention. "The tea industry which is dominated by the rural tea small holder sector benefitted by the timely state intervention under the direction of President Mahinda Rajapaksa," the chairman of the Private Tea Factory Owners Association, Anil Perera, said in a statement.

On Friday Ambassadors and envoys Egypt, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar were briefed about Sri Lanka's tea woes. A Palestinian representative was also present.

"Sri Lanka is seeking the support of friendly countries who are principal buyers of Ceylon tea to remain active in the tea market to promote tea exports and to maintain price stability," the foreign ministry said Saturday.

Russia and former Soviet republics are the largest markets for Sri Lankan tea, accounting for nearly a fifth of the total tea exports, followed by the Middle East and North Africa.

LBO quoted analysts as saying the downward trend in oil prices might reduce the buying power of big buyers like the Middle East and Russia, though the approaching winter could help prop up the tea market.

The Sri Lankan government has spoken of trying to arrange some kind of barter deal with major buying countries but the CTTA warned that it was an outdated concept.

"The avenue of barter trade between friendly countries is not available any more," the CTTA said, in reference to the liberalization of the market in keeping with 'free trade' principles, which ended such arrangements.

Sri Lanka's tea pickers, who are iconic symbols for the island's tourist trade, earn less than \$2 a day and live in desperately impoverished conditions. They are mainly Upcountry Tamils.

WITH BEST COMPLIMENTS FROM

CHETTY & CO.
S O L I C I T O R S

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

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

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

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

NEWS

Sri Lanka's economic woes continue

AT a time of global financial crisis, Sri Lanka's reliance on borrowing combined with plunging foreign exchange reserves, spiralling inflation and poor fiscal policies are making Sri Lanka the most vulnerable in the region, according to international monetary experts.

In its annual report, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) directors expressed their concern on the risks of public debt distress arising from the increasing reliance on dollar-denominated, short-term commercial debt.

That risk has grown more acute since the dollar has strengthened against other currencies in the last month.

IMF said the global financial crisis, which has drastically cut the availability of credit, had made "Sri Lanka's external accounts ...vulnerable to a reduction in international investor risk appetite."

Since October 2007, Sri Lanka has increasingly sought high-interest foreign commercial borrowings via syndicated loans and a sovereign bond issues to avoid local commercial loans that attract a rate of over 20 percent.

Rupee depreciation

IMF also said the real exchange rate of the rupee has been overvalued and the central bank's protection of it could create the risk of attracting short-term speculation and volatility.

Since mid-September, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka exhausted \$ 600 million, 25 percent of its foreign reserve, to protect the local currency before it decided to allow 'limited depreciation' of the rupee.

After withdrawal of the 6-week long policy of defending the currency at 108 per dollar costing 100 million US dollars per week, the currency fell to 110 per dollar by the end of the week, its lowest level since late last year.

Bankers and currency dealers said they saw more rupee weakness and a foreign banker in Colombo said on condition of anonymity said: "I expect we can see some more of the same, with depreciation of the rupee."

FX reserves

In addition to the Central Bank's attempt to peg the Sri Lankan rupees against US Dollars, Citigroup Global Markets Asia in a market commentary attributed foreigners exiting Sri Lanka T-bill and bond market for driving the decline in FX reserves.

Citigroup estimated foreign holdings to have fallen from \$670 million in early October to around \$380 million in bonds and bills

combined by end of October.

"We also expect the FX reserves to continue to come under pressure - we think there is still more near-term pressure of foreigners liquidating their LKR bonds and bills, especially if LKR is at increased risk, thus, presenting possibly another \$380m possible outflow (assuming foreign holdings could go to zero).

"How externally vulnerable is Sri Lanka? We think they are very vulnerable though how close is a bit unclear. We have repeatedly argued that Sri Lanka is the most extremely vulnerable country in the region, as highlighted in our recent report" added Citigroup.

External borrowing

Analysts estimate the government will need external financing of between \$4-\$6 billion in 2009 to cover the budget deficit, short-term debt, and debt amortisation but point out the depreciating Rupee, record inflation and the global financial downturn make it hard to raise debt.

James McCormack, Fitch Ratings' head for Asia-Pacific sovereign ratings raised concerns about the instability of the exchange rate and said any sizeable depreciation of the rupee would impact the government's repayment capacity.

In addition Sri Lanka's high inflation also had a negative impact on its capacity to borrow.

Eurasia Group analyst Maria Kuusisto in a report issued earlier this month said, with the inflation hitting 23.4 percent in October Sri Lanka would have to offer "painfully high interest rates" to raise debt. "This would add expensive debt to Sri Lanka's already sizable foreign borrowing," she wrote.

Rating agencies blame increased government expenditure as the main reason for high inflation.

Sri Lanka sold its first sovereign bond for \$500 million in October last year and on October 7 this year announced plans for two syndicated loans this year for up to \$300 million each.

IMF is of the view that the global crisis had drastically cut credit availability, making Sri Lanka's external account "vulnerable to a reduction in international investor risk appetite."

Citigroup also shared this view in its commentary saying "the recent announcement seeking proposals for a \$ 300m syndicated loan looks very difficult under the current environment".

Economic growth

In addition to increase in cost of borrowing Sri Lanka is also faced with a steep drop in rev-



Sri Lanka's new clothing export market is among those threatened by the country's economic woes

enues with its key revenue making industries facing the impact of global credit crisis.

With much of the developed world considered by economists to be in recession, analysts said

Sri Lanka's exports growth will weaken this year, such as in its garment and tea sectors, the country's biggest and third-biggest export earners. Sri Lanka's \$27 billion economy only grew 6.8%

last year, slowing down from a two-decade high of 7.7 percent in 2006, and the IMF said it expects economic growth to slow to 6.1 percent in 2008 and drop even further to 5.8 percent in 2009.

100,000 jobs if GSP+ lost

INDUSTRY experts predicted the loss of European Union (EU) trade concessions for Sri Lankan textile exports would lead to massive closure of apparel manufacturing units and loss of at least 100,000 jobs in the Indian Ocean Island.

The loss of trade concession enjoyed by the Sri Lankan textile industry through Europe's GSP Plus (Generalised System of Preferences) combined with the downturn in global economic conditions would bring a lot of harm to the country's economy and exports of apparel in particular, according to industry experts.

The EU recently warned it may not renew the GSP Plus trade

scheme after it expires in December because of continuing human rights abuses stemming from Sri Lanka's civil war and asked to send an investigating team to ensure Sri Lanka was complying with human rights standards.

Sri Lanka refused to allow an EU investigation into rights abuses calling it an "infringement of Sri Lanka's sovereignty, self respect and dignity", and announced plans to support the garment industry financially if existing trade concessions are not renewed by EU.

Unveiling his latest budget proposals, President Mahinda Rajapakse reiterated his government's stand on the issue and said

he was not ready to bow to foreign financial pressure.

"The European Union has adopted a new trend, wherein conditions are being attached to concessions granted by them such as GSP plus. It is unfair to engage in international trade and investment within a framework through which political objectives are tried to be achieved," the President said, referring to a concessionary garment export programme from the EU.

According to industry experts, the government move would put the women working in garment units at a big disadvantage as they would be the first to feel the heat of a drop in garment exports.

ADB gives USD630m

DESPITE a poor human rights record and even as Sri Lanka spurned advice from international monetary agencies and continued with its policy borrowing heavily to fund a dragging military offensive, Asian Development Bank announced USD 630 million to the island over the next 3 years.

ADB is to provide USD 630 million to Sri Lanka for commercial projects and supplemented by some direct support to the private sector for the period from 2009 to 2011 with USD 210 million per year, the state newspaper Daily News reported.

The package was announced

by ADB Country Director Richard Vokes at the 18th Business for Peace Forum held at JAIC Hilton Colombo on November 20.

According to Daily News, Vokes told his audience that the ADB's partnership approach with Sri Lanka is based on President Mahinda Rajapakse's Mahinda Chintana, which rejects existence of a traditional Tamil Homeland in the island.

According to ADB's Strength Weaknesses Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) analysis of Sri Lanka, its proximity to India and major shipping routes were identified as strengths whilst, high fis-

cal deficit, large infrastructure deficit, high regional inequality in growth of gross domestic production, relatively weak structure of public finance management, inefficient traditional agricultural systems, and complicated government structure were identified as weaknesses.

Some of the threats to the country included the conflict, difficulties in developing consensus for political reforms due to the complex political economy and vested intentions, pressure from high and volatile commodity prices and inflation, according to ADB.

NEWS

Tamils arrested for failing to 'justify presence'

HUNDREDS of Tamils across Sri Lanka have been arrested in recent months, as the government gets increasingly mired in the ongoing war with the Liberation Tigers.

Across the country, Tamils are picked up on the grounds of security concerns, mainly for 'failing to prove their identity.'

In the last two weeks alone, nearly 150 Tamils were arrested across the country, mainly on questionable charges of failing to prove their identity or failing to provide a 'satisfactory' reason for their presence in a particular area.

While some of them are released soon after, many disappear into Sri Lanka's moribund legal system, while some just disappear all together.

In Eravur, 12 Tamils were arrested after a Sri Lankan Army intelligence officer was shot dead in Punnakkuda, Eravur, last Saturday. M Ibrahim was shot dead while he was riding his motorbike by armed men who followed him on another motorbike.

Twenty Tamil civilians were arrested by the paramilitary Special Task Force (STF) in a cordon and search operation in Eechch-antheevu, Vavunatheevu, Batticaloa last Tuesday (18 November). Every house in the area was searched, and contents were subjected to close check. The national identity cards of the residents were checked. The search operation was conducted following the killing of a Sinhalese medical officer in Navatkudaa.

Twenty five Tamils between 16 and 30 were arrested in a cordon and search operation by the STF in Vinayakapuram, Thirukoayil, Amparai, last Monday (17 November). Students among the arrested were not released though they proved their identity.

Three Tamil civilians were arrested in a cordon and search operation by the Sri Lanka Navy and police in Puthalam on November 12. While several were taken into custody and later released, these three were detained for further interrogation by the police intelligence unit.

In the southern part of the country, five Tamil youth, originally from Jaffna but working in commercial establishments in Chilaw, were taken into custody last Sunday on charges of failing to prove their identity and of being suspicious.

Twenty four Tamils, including two women, who were all previously from the northeast or upcountry, were taken into custody when the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and police cordoned off a prawn farm in Marawila-Lung-sima in Chilaw last Wednesday (November 19). The victims were subjected to severe interrogation during the search. Police said they were taken in for questioning and later detained in the police station as they failed to produce their residential certificates. The owner of the prawn farm was also taken into custody later for employing persons without valid residential certificate.



The Sri Lankan military regularly engages in cordon and search operations that result in the arrest of a disproportionately large number of Tamils. Often only Tamils are taken in for further questioning

The SLA and police took fourteen Tamil civilians into custody in a lightning cordon and search operation last Saturday on charges that they failed to prove their identity or justify their presence in that location. The search, covering Obeyasekara in Rajagiriya, Colombo, targeted mainly Tamils from the northeast and upcountry who had all been working at several business establishments and staying lodges.

The Sri Lankan police assisted by home guards began a dusk to dawn cordon and search operation in Gampaha last Wednesday (19 November), arresting 37 persons, of whom eleven were Tamils working in commercial establishments and other institutions. About ten thousand persons were

subjected to interrogation and about one thousand vehicles were also searched during the operation. While the Tamils were detained for 'failing to justify their stay in the location', most of the others were picked up on outstanding court warrants in criminal cases.

Twenty seven Tamil civilians, including upcountry and north and east residents, majority of them employed in business establishments and other institutions, were taken into custody in a cordon and search operation by the SLA and police in Gampaha last Monday (17 November). 41 people were taken in for questioning during the operation, - the remaining 14 were Sinhala absconders who were avoiding arrest in traffic and illicit liquor cases, and

all were produced in court. The Tamils continue to be held for 'further inquiry'.

Four Tamil youths were arrested on 15 November while they were waiting for a bus at the Gampola bus stand. The men, who were waiting to travel back to their estate in Pupuressa were questioned on the basis of their 'suspicious movements' at the bus stand and were arrested for failing to provide a satisfactory reason for their presence at the bus stand.

Four Tamil civilians were taken into custody during a cordon and search operation by the SLA and police in Badulla on 9 November. They were among 16 people arrested on the day, but all the others were released straight away.

Abductions continue across Sri Lanka

WHILE the Sri Lankan government focuses on arresting Tamils on 'security grounds' other forces - mainly the paramilitary cadres working with the military - have been active in ensuring the disappearances of Tamils across the country. While these abductions are often attributed to 'unknown gunmen', the locations - usually near Sri Lanka Army sentry posts or police stations - point to the abductors being well connected to the government's security forces. At least 27 people have been abducted in the last two weeks alone.

Last Saturday (22 November) Kanapathipillai Thevendrarajah, 53, was taken from his residence at gunpoint by armed men who said he was needed for an inquiry. The owner of a temporary lodge in Vavuniya was abducted by men in a white van.

Men in a white van also abducted Rex Ganeshalingam, the Vavuniya district organizer of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), from his house on

20 November. The men claimed to be policemen and took him away at gunpoint.

Armed men in a white van abducted Tamil youth from his house in Neriyaikulam, in Vavuniya. The youth was not identified but residents said he had been earlier working in the Vavuniya Divisional Secretariat.

Armed men on motor cycles abducted three persons including two school students on November 14 and 15 in three different places in Jaffna. Armed men arrived on motorcycle Kanesamoorthy Nisanthan's house in Kaddaipiray in Koappaay, and abducted the 19-year-old student on November 14. Navaratnam Jeevan, 17, from Arasadi Veethi, Nalloor, was abducted by the armed men from his relative's house on November 15. On the same day, Kanthiah Ranganathan, 37, from Kaddaipiray, was abducted by armed men on a motorcycle.

Kathiravelu Rajasekaram, 25, the father of a child and a driver,

has been reported missing from his house in Jaffna since November 12. The Varani native left home and has not been seen since.

A woman abducted on 9 November was identified by her husband after her body was found in Nallur, Jaffna. Srirangan Sumathi, 27, a mother of two, had left home on her bicycle to Point Pedro first and travelled to Jaffna for treatment in Jaffna Teaching Hospital. She had parked her bicycle in Point Pedro and travelled to Jaffna by bus, her husband, Sri Rangan, said. Her identification documents and valuables had been stolen.

Two cadres of the paramilitary Karuna group killed two Tamil youths in Akkaraipattu, Amparai, last Thursday (20 November) and abducted another. The police claimed the two men killed - Balakrishnan Vijayaraj alias Arjun, 30, and R. Anpumani, 22 - were LTTE members and arrested Vijayaraj's wife Visithira.

A 25-year-old Tamil woman

worker of a non-government organization in Trincomalee was abducted on 19 November by armed persons in a white van near Serunuwara, south of Trincomalee district. The victim was on her way to Muttur when the abduction took place. Neither the victim's name, nor that of the organization she worked for were revealed.

Armed men of a faction of the Karuna group abducted 9 members of two families at Pankduaveli on November 14 following an attack on the Pankduaveli camp of the paramilitary organization the previous night. The victims were said to be family members of two of seven paramilitary operatives who disappeared from the mini-camp. Tension prevails in the area following the abductions. At least three children were among the abductees. The abductions come following a joint search by the Sri Lankan Special Task Force (STF) and the TMVP paramilitary.

Armed men in a white van

abducted an ex-member of Kalpidi Pradeshiya Sabah at Naa-vatkaadu in Kalpidi, Puthalam on November 12. J. Clarence, a 45-year-old father of four, was taken from his house by armed men amid cries by the family members at the house. A police sentry is located to one side of the house, neighbours noted.

A 36-year-old mother of three, Rasa Maheswaran, of Poththuvil Eaththam, Amparai was abducted by armed men on 10 November.

A 28-year-old Tamil youth was abducted in Vazhaiththoaddam, Colombo on November 19 by armed members of a gang clad in military uniform.

A 23-year-old Tamil, a resident of Jaffna, was abducted on 17 November along Peoples Park in Colombo by a gang of six men clad in army uniform.

Armed men in a white van abducted a 55-year-old Muslim businessman, Mathar Mohideen, on 11 November from his shop along Katkuzhi in Dehiwala.

EDITORIAL AND OPINION

TAMIL GUARDIAN

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

editor@tamilguardian.com www.tamilguardian.com

Tel 0845 0949873

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 26, 2007 No. 386

Familiar History

For three decades the Tiger has gone from strength to strength.

This week LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan will deliver his annual Heroes' Day address, in which he will set out the organisation's future strategy for the Tamil liberation struggle. Mr. Pirapaharan's speech comes this year during a period of intense war. It has been suggested by some analysts - and by the euphoric Sinhalese - that things have never been so difficult for the LTTE. Such calculations stem from poor memory and a simplistic logic. We note that, like now, the end of the LTTE has been confidently promised by Colombo many times before, not least in 1995, 1997 and 1998. And on each occasion the overwhelming numerical and firepower superiority of the Sinhala military was self-evident.

In 1995 Mr. Pirapaharan's speech was delivered soon after the LTTE had escaped from Jaffna, having ferociously resisted the encircling Sinhala army which vastly outnumbered and outgunned its fighters. The annihilation of the LTTE in Jaffna that President Chandrika Kumaratunga promised (and was universally considered a certainty) failed to materialise - and not for want of humanitarian restraint on the military's part. In 1997 Mr. Pirapaharan's speech was delivered with the Sinhala army's Operation 'Jaya Sikirui' (Victory Assured) boring steadily into the Vanni from Vavuniya and Mullaitivu. At the time, lest it be forgotten, the SLA was already holding Kilinochchi, Paranthan, Elephant Pass and the entire Jaffna peninsula while the LTTE was 'confined' to the lower eastern Vanni. The end of the LTTE was again declared inevitable and the state even began lavish preparations to celebrate the 50th anniversary of independence (then, as now, Sinhala hubris couldn't be contained: the main site of celebration was supposed to be Kandy, the ancient seat of Sinhala power. The infamous attack on the venue near the Temple of the Tooth instead compelled a low-key event in Colombo on Feb 4, 1998). In 1998, the Heroes Day speech was delivered with the LTTE having recaptured Kilinochchi town (and not Paranthan) but having had to give up Mankulam instead. Although President Kumaratunga had given up on Jaya Sikirui (i.e. linking Jaffna to Vavuniya), the military now pressed towards Mullaitivu. Indeed, when the LTTE unleashed its massive counter attack, Operation Unceasing Waves 3, a few weeks before Heroes Day 1999, the

SLA was only four miles from its main bases there.

In short, over the past two decades, whilst territory has been won and lost, the LTTE has gone steadily from strength to strength and the Tamil struggle has gathered further momentum. For much of its history, despite a reputation for delivering sudden hammer blows, the Tiger has generally fought with its back to the wall. It is on the logic of attrition that the protracted war of liberation has turned. Nothing has changed today. Yes, the Sinhala military has never been this powerful. But neither has the Tiger.

What is qualitatively different between the late nineties and now is the clarity of the ethnic faultline in Sri Lanka. Since independence the island's core problem has been Sinhala domination and first discrimination, then also persecution, of the Tamils. In the global liberal bubble of the nineties, this fundamental truth was subsumed amidst the logics of underdevelopment ('poverty causes conflict'), resource wars and so on. A fiction was propagated that Tamils can live with dignity in a country where Sinhala majoritarianism is institutionalised. That fiction has been laid bare by the developments of the past three years, in which Sri Lanka has moved further along the path to naked ethnocracy. It is the return of this clarity that has underpinned the agitation in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

It is also why Tamils and Sinhalese are polarised as never before. Indeed, it is as the Sinhalese have become more and more confident of winning the war against the Tigers that the overt racism against Tamils (and even the perplexed Muslims) has become blatant. If President Mahinda Rajapakse holds an election now, he will sweep the Sinhala vote and not just because of the military 'news' from the north. Ethnic hierarchy is, for many of those celebrating in the south, the right order of things in the island. That is why, despite the self-deluding optimism of some international actors, there will be no meaningful political solution proposed, no peace process pursued. Not unless, that is, the LTTE blunts the Sinhala sword - again. The international community is hoping the Sinhalese win this war. Much international assistance is pending this outcome. Nonetheless, Mr. Pirapaharan's Heroes' Day address is, as ever, much anticipated by them also this week.

Political implications of a military stalemate

Prof. Kumar David
Lakbima

THE 2 km to Kilinochchi is proving a hard slog, unless one is marching there the other way round the globe; but jokes and the success at Pooneryn apart, what are the implications of a military stalemate for the Rajapaksa regime?

Even if the army takes the town by year's end one thing is now sure; the war will be far from over, not even half over. Reckless declarations of victory are foolish and the regime and the military knew this well, so why do it? Perhaps it was hubris, perhaps the regime deluded itself; but more likely this was the only road it could travel, it had nothing else to offer.

With corruption out of control, the economy in the doldrums, abuse of power by politicians rampant and its international reputation in tatters, the regime had but one thing to hold before the nation. Victory! Pirapaharan's broken body dumped underfoot Rajapaksa's upraised sandal, the Tiger cornered and vanquished, the nation liberated.

The inability to take Kilinochchi, implying that the war will continue into next year, and the grim economic outlook will lead to a crisis in the south

It was a necessity, born of political bankruptcy that drove the regime to the risky step of promising the Sinhala public a quick and final triumph. Disappoint them now and will the government's grip precipitately unravel? Promise victory in six or twelve months and will their patience hold?

What if the war is prolonged? Until recently I too reckoned that the LTTE would suffer a substantial defeat soon. I took my cue from pundits who write weekly defence columns here and in the Hindu, or pontificate on Al Jazeera, and I reckoned defence ministry press releases were worth at least a scrap. All turned out to be vapid and a sensible revised asse-

ssment should read: The Tiger is wounded but has plenty of fight left, conventional war is far from over, and next year will witness more battles on land, sea and air.

We are not on the brink of a transition from positional warfare to guerrilla combat. Whether Kilinochchi falls sooner or later has become irrelevant; rather, the inability to take the town thus far implies that positional warfare will continue into next year. The blood-lust of racists from Temple Trees to Geneva will have to forego satiation and the regime will be running on a short fuse as public anger accumulates.

How much longer can the regime sell gains like Pooneryn and Mankulam to camouflage perpetual war? If it has nothing to show on the economic and governance spheres and the war is only limited successes - anything less than complete destruction of LTTE's conventional warfare capability must count as a disappointment - the regime cannot stem public anger by clever tricks alone.

True the Rajapaksas have been wily in political fiddling - con artists supreme - but they cannot survive indefinitely on wits alone.

Furthermore, a Tamil Nadu agitated by the plight of Lanka's Tamils, even if depicted as support for Tamils not Tigers, cannot but discomfit Colombo. Delhi has bent over to shield Colombo, but as the TN backlash mounts against the background of a looming Congress election defeat, this can no longer be taken for granted.

The economic outlook is grim. Is there reason to hope that as if by magic economic achievements will come to the government's rescue?

The big targets are all infrastructural; the Southern and Katunayake expressways, Hambantota harbour and airport developments, power and refinery expansion projects, and of course the showpiece reconstruction of the East.

Some of these initiatives will produce respectable deliverables, some will not. The more politically useful ones seem to be the more doubtful - the two road pro-

Continued on p16

OPINION

How long will you tolerate the farce - Suresh to India, West

TamilNet

THE All Party Representatives Committee (APRC) is a farce of the Sri Lanka government. It was always used to impress upon India and the International Community. The basic premise of the APRC not to go beyond unitary constitution of Sri Lanka, will not bring in any meaningful result. India and the IC know it well. Yet, if they continue to tolerate the farce, they will only be abetting the genocidal programme of Colombo, says Suresh Premachandran of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA).

In a wide-ranging interview with TamilNet, Premachandran explained his views on the deliberations by the All Party Representatives Committee (APRC) on devolution proposals, he said the committee was used by the Sri Lankan government to fool India and the International Community.

TamilNet: What is your overall assessment of the discourse of the All Party Representatives Committee?

Premachandran: In the beginning there was an Experts Panel formed to support the APRC, which comprised several retired public officers, senior lawyers and academics. Even as the APRC kept delaying its deliberations, 11 members (6 Sinhalese, 4 Tamils and 1 Muslim)-a majority of the 17-member Experts Panel-came out with a document that was presented to the Sri Lankan President.

This document spoke of some sort of federal system, devolution of powers and various other things. However, even before it was officially submitted to the President, this proposal was leaked to foreign media like The Hindu, published from Chennai. The infuriated President immediately scrapped the proposals and asked the APRC to come up with its own report.

The APRC's deliberations never came to an end. Finally, the APRC became a farce as it was used to suit President Mahinda Rajapaksa's convenience. Every time he had to go to India, or he had to meet the Indian Prime Minister or prior to any visit by an Indian minister, Mr. Rajapaksa made it a point to refer to the APRC. Especially with respect to India, the APRC became an easy excuse to cite - the co-mmittee was always supposed to come up with a solution within two or four months time and so on.

Even when it seemed as though the APRC was ready to finalise its work before the Eastern Provincial Elections, Mr. Rajapaksa gave the 13th Amendment to the APRC and asked

them to endorse it.

TamilNet: Was there any deliberation on the 13th Amendment in the APRC?

Premachandran: The parties, including the Muslim and Up-Country Tamils parties who were in the ruling UPFA fold, were asked to endorse the 13th Amendment only as a "first step". They were told by the President that 13th Amendment could be implemented as an immediate remedy and the deliberations would continue towards a better solution. With this promise, they were asked to extend their support and they did so. But, it became a trap. Now, this endorsement is cited out of context, as an endorsement by the parties, to be a basis for the solution. In fact, the APRC never deliberated on the 13th Amendment either as a basis for an interim or permanent solution. Mr. Rajapaksa had only asked the APRC that he wanted to implement the Amendment and asked signatures from these parties as an endorsement for his goodwill.

In reality, the APRC was used for Indian and International consumption. It was used to showcase that there was a discussion on the proposals, that there was progress towards a political solution and so on.

TamilNet: How do you view the composition of the APRC?

Premachandran: If you look at who constituted the APRC in the beginning, it was the partners of the government: JVP, JHU, SLMC and the CWC. Of course, the UNP was brought in later. But the UNP left when it became evident that the whole APRC exercise was viewed as a delaying tactic. The JVP and the JHU too left the APRC protesting the discussions on devolution. The TNA was not invited by the President.

Now, there is no point in referring to it as an All Party Representatives Committee as there is no participation by the main opposition UNP, and the TNA, not to mention the JVP. In fact, only last week in Parliament, the Chairman of the APRC, Professor Tissa Vitarana requested the UNP, JVP and the TNA to participate. Only the SLFP and its minority alliance partners are in the APRC. They only represent a minor portion of the views.

TamilNet: Does the International Community continue to place hope on the APRC?

Premachandran: There have been statements from the U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake that they were expecting the APRC to



The Tamil parliamentarian is dismissive of the suggestion that the APRC can deliver anything

put forward proposals. There was a recent newspaper article where he expressed hope that the committee would come up with a solution on the basis of the Indo-Lanka accord. This clearly shows that the Sri Lankan Government has created a myth that this APRC would deliver a "substantial solution." Moreover, hardliner parties like the JVP and the JHU will oppose any proposal based on the 13th Amendment. Also, the APRC has been instructed by the Sri Lankan President to work out a solution within the framework of the Unitary Constitution. He has categorically told them not to go beyond that. The point I want to make is: there is no devolution possible at all within the Sri Lankan Unitary Constitution.

TamilNet: Do you view that devolution is possible within the Unitary Constitution of Sri Lanka?

Premachandran: Devolution is not possible if you can't go beyond the Unitary Constitution. Even the 13th Amendment was passed only after obtaining consent from a majority of Supreme Court judges who guaranteed that it would not affect the Unitary Constitution.

There can't be devolution within the Sri Lankan Unitary Constitution. There can only be a decentralisation of power. If we talk about decentralisation, the Central Government can, at any point of time and with a simple majority, take back whatever powers were decentralised.

A recent example to this is how the Government passed a Bill on the 21st of October claiming that all the roads now belong to the Central Government. Earlier, the National Highways belonged to the Central Government

and the rest of the roads belonged to the provincial and local governments. This was simply taken back. In a similar manner, the agrarian services and the transport were taken back earlier. Even in future, they can take back any powers if they want to.

But, if you are having a devolution, that is some sort of a sovereignty over the de-centralisation. You can make laws and implement it in a proper manner. This is not possible in decentralisation within the unitary constitution.

Further, Article 76 of the Sri Lankan Constitution clearly states that the Parliament is the only Legislative Assembly and that it cannot devolve legislative power even to a subordinate body. This means that any provincial council does not have the power to make any statutes, they don't have any power to make laws. Even if they have to make any statutes or laws, they have to be ratified by the Central Government. It is therefore not possible to have any meaningful devolution of power, whether it is based on the 13th Amendment or anything else contained in the Unitary Constitution of Sri Lanka.

At one time, former President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prof. G. L. Peiris have also gone on record saying that devolution is not possible within the Unitary Constitution.

Therefore, it is clear that the APRC is only for "International consumption" and nothing else. Or, it is a tactic to buy time to continue waging the war.

They say that the APRC had met 82 times. For more than six months, Prof. Vitarana is saying that they have completed 90% of the deliberations. Now, he is saying that proposal would be tabled

only after the war is concluded. What we can deduce from the discourse is that the APRC is a farce to buy time and to hoodwink the International Community with a myth based on wrong information. They will never come up with a meaningful solution.

TamilNet: Don't you think that the diplomats are not aware of the Sri Lankan Government's alleged hidden motive behind the APRC?

Premachandran: Of course, in the real sense they know it very well. The EU and various Ambassadors and the concerned diplomats here in Sri Lanka know all too well that this APRC will not deliver anything. But, somehow they are made to feel that this is something they can use to keep up pressure on the Sri Lankan Government by expressing such hopes [of a solution]. Again, there is clear-cut framework given by the Sri Lankan President to the APRC: "Look, you have to come up with a proposal within a Unitary Constitution." How is this possible? There is no difference between the 13th Amendment and this stand. The International Community knows very well that they [the Sri Lankan state] will not go beyond the Unitary Constitution. The IC therefore attempts to create something like the 13th Amendment, with a different name, and push it on to the people in a bid to satisfy them. As I view it, this is not a healthy approach for conflict-resolution.

TamilNet: Why do you think the government avoided the TNA's participation in the APRC? Was there any invitation from the President to the TNA to join the deliberations?

Continued on p17

DIASPORA PROTESTS



Mauritius voices against genocide

LEADERS of both the ruling party as well as the opposition of Mauritius, including the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Rama Sithenen and the Leader of the Opposition Mr. Paul Berenger attended an agitation against the genocide of Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka on Thursday, November 20.

The focal event of the protest was the march of hundreds of Mauritian Tamils to the Indian High Commission in Mauritius, demanding the Indian government to prevail upon Sri Lanka to effect immediate ceasefire in the island and to commence talks with the LTTE.

The agitators also presented a memorandum on their demands to the Foreign Minister of Mauri-

tius and conducted a prayer at the Maariyamman Temple.

The Attorney General and Minister for Human Rights of Mauritius, Mr. Jaya Rama Valaden in his speech condemned the Rajapaksa brothers for the genocide committed on Tamils. Mauritius will not stop merely at protesting, he said.

The protest was organized by the Mauritius Tamil Temples Federation (MTTF), an organization running about 150 temples in Mauritius, the Tamil Force an organization of youth for justice and fairness towards Tamils in Mauritius, the Hindu Maha Jana Sangham, the Tamil Union, and the Tamil Eelam Support Committee under the leadership of Gan-

ess Permal.

The MTTF president Mr. Veeran Comaren explained to the Foreign Minister of the need of Mauritius government convincing India to take necessary action.

Former Foreign Minister Mr. Jayan Cuttaree, former leader of the opposition and General Secretary of the MSM party, former Foreign Secretary, Mr. Vijay Mahan and Tamil social activist, Thiruthondar Cheetaen were among the notables who condemned the plight thrust upon the Eelam Tamils.

While the MSM party was in power in 1985, its leader and the then Prime Minister spoke in support of Eelam Tamils at the United Nations.

Today's opposition leader and the party chief of MMM, Mr Paul Berenger has always been supportive to the cause of Eelam Tamils.

Aya Agileshwaren, a native of Jaffna, conducted the prayer at the Maariyamman Temple.

Mauritius, an island nation in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa, has predominantly been populated by people of Indian origin during colonial times. Tamils and people of European, African and Chinese origins are among the minorities.

Mauritius ranks first among all countries in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows to India amounting to a total of nearly 11 billion U.S. dollars.



British Tamils demonstrate at parliament square

THOUSANDS of British Tamils demonstrated at the Parliament Square in London on Wednesday, November 19, between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., urging the British Parliament to demand that Sri Lanka to stop the genocide unleashed on Eelam Tamils.

The Diaspora Tamils also carried banners seeking the British Parliament to recognise Tamils' right to self-determination in their homeland. The gathering also expressed gratitude to the people of Tamil Nadu for their solidarity with Eelam Tamils.

Diaspora Tamil activists carried banners that read: Stop the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka, impose economic sanctions and arms embargo against Sri Lanka, recognise Tamils right to Self-Determination and Thank you Tamil Nadu.

Eight British Parliamentarians from different political parties addressed the participants of the demonstration.

The day was chosen as it is the Prime Minister's Question (PMQ) day, to have the attention of the maximum number of Members of Parliament, the organisers of the British Tamils Forum (BTF) said.



Malaysian Tamils show solidarity

HUNDREDS of Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) youth members, community leaders, non governmental organization officials participated in a protest to show their solidarity with the Eelam Tamils and condemn Sri Lanka's continued killing of Tamils.

The protest organized by the

MIC took place in front of the Sri Lankan Embassy on Friday, November 14. The protesters urged the international community to stop the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka and find an acceptable negotiated settlement to the protracted conflict.

The protesters, wearing black

arm bands to mark the suffering of Tamils in Sri Lanka, carried placards explaining the suffering of Eelam Tamils in northern Sri Lanka. At the end of the protest, the organisers submitted a petition to the Sri Lankan embassy officials urging Sri Lanka to stop the war and find a negotiated

solution and allow international aid agencies into the war ravaged areas to assist the needy.

Mr. S. Murugesan, Organising Chairman, Youths for Peace in Sri Lanka, said, "We will soon meet the Foreign Minister and will submit a memorandum. We will ask him to take action."



NEWS

Tamil Nadu assembly demands ceasefire, peace talks

TAMIL NADU Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on Wednesday, November 12, demanding "an immediate halt of military operations, reverting the Sri Lankan military to old positions and a commencement of political negotiations to find a solution to the Tamil problem."

The house of representatives also urged New Delhi to press for talks between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The resolution, which enjoyed the support of every member of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, was moved by Chief Minister Karunanidhi.

Pointing out that the LTTE had offered to effect a ceasefire, the resolution pressed upon the Indian Government to ask Colo-

mbo to agree to an immediate truce in order to alleviate the sufferings of the Eelam Tamils.

It called upon the Indian Government to undertake efforts to guarantee the right to life, property, livelihood, equality and to bring back normalcy to the Eelam Tamils. 'It has been unanimously resolved that the Indian government should use its good offices to get the Sri Lankan regime to agree to an immediate ceasefire to alleviate the sufferings of Tamils (in the northern part of the island) since the other (warring) side has offered to do so. This house demands the immediate halt of military operations and start political, peaceful negotiations to find a solution to the Tamil question,' a statement issued by the state assembly read.



Vaiko's MDMK is among the many Tamil Nadu political party's protesting against the genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka and calling on the Indian government to pressure Sri Lanka into different tactics

At the end of the assembly debate, Chief Minister Karunanidhi said that the Indian Prime Minister and Congress President Ms. Sonia Gandhi should consider that this is not only a demand of the Tamil Nadu Assembly, but also the will of 70 million Tamils of Tamil Nadu and the Tamils who live all over the world.

Karunanidhi also offered the resignation of DMK ministers from the central government over the Sri Lankan issue.

"Neither the DMK nor other parties are heartless enough to ignore the sufferings of Tamils in

the neighbourhood and cling to power. To press for an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka, our ministers in the central cabinet will quit if needed," Karunanidhi told the state assembly.

"The centre should analyse Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's attempts to fool India by the bisection of the Tamils' issue in the island as a terrorist problem to be dealt with militarily (on the one hand) and offer to safeguard minority civilians (on the other). We should demand a road map for a political negotiation and its aftermath," he pointed out.

"Our Prime Minister Manmohan Singh should point out to Rajapaksa that several nations (including) India, Pakistan, the US and Britain do not bomb their citizens despite facing (issues of) terrorism," Karunanidhi added.

Addressing political leaders in the state, Karunanidhi said: "Let us bury our differences, stand united to press for the unanimous wish of Tamils the world over for an immediate ceasefire to end the hardship of their brethren in Sri Lanka." The resolution was passed whilst the Sri Lankan President was in New Delhi.

'We are India's true friends'

Kavitha Muralidharan The Week

WITH the Sri Lankan army closing in on Kilinochchi, the Liberation Tigers headquarters, army officers are confident of decisive victory in the civil war. But LTTE political chief B. Nadesan does not agree. Recently, the Sri Lankan government dismissed Nadesan's statement that the LTTE "had always wanted ceasefire" and was "fighting a defensive war" as a trap and demanded that the Tigers lay down their weapons before coming forward for any talks.

In an email interview with THE WEEK from Kilinochchi, Nadesan says the LTTE is far from being defeated. Excerpts:

How is the situation in the Tamil Eelam?

The Sri Lankan government does not allow journalists-local or international-and human rights activists into our area. As a result, the massacre of Tamils by the Sri Lankan military does not reach the outside world. Aerial bombing and artillery shelling on Tamil

civilians are continually taking place. Our homeland has been subjected to a severe economic blockade for many years. The current military action has displaced Tamils and many are living in forests.

The government is intent on brutally oppressing a group of people who are waging a struggle for their rights. Sadly, the media does not bring this out. I view this as a great human tragedy of the 21st century. The government and military chiefs insist on a military solution while we have been saying that a solution can be reached only through ceasefire and peace talks. The government unilaterally pulled out of the ceasefire. The world must understand this reality and recognise our struggle.

Is the 30-year-old struggle weakening?

This is a view propagated by the Sri Lankan government and military. They have the habit of making such victory declarations. During all these years, every government that came to power claimed that it was going to defeat the LTTE, but ended up facing humiliating defeats at our hands. During their Riviresa operation in

1995 and the Jeyasikuru operation in 1998 they said that 90 per cent of the LTTE strength had been wiped out. In reality, after Riviresa, we defeated the Mullaitivu military camp in a conventional war with the support of our people; and a few days after Jeyasikuru, we won back the land they took 18 months to capture.

Even now, they say that we have been weakened. The Sri Lankan military is facing heavy losses at the forward defence lines. To make up for the losses, they are bringing in men from other districts to areas surrounding Kilinochchi. Many army men are deserting their camps. A new military division, 61st Brigade, is being created with the captured deserters.

Responding to concerns raised by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Sri Lankan government said it was attacking extremists, not innocent Tamils.

This is not true. Children and old people have been killed and injured in large numbers by aerial bombings and artillery shelling. The economic blockade has left

Tamil Nadu protests

POLITICAL parties, community organisations, professional associations, student bodies and movie stars continue to stage protests in Tamil Nadu demanding the Indian government facilitate an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

On November 12, over 2000 students of Tamil Nadu, members of the All India Students Federation (AISF), left Chennai on a special train to march towards the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, demanding end of attacks on Eelam Tamils, stoppage of military aid to Sri Lanka and initiation of peaceful political solution to the crisis.

"Since forceful oratory in Tamil alone is not enough to make those in New Delhi take notice of the Tamils in Sri Lanka," D Pandian, state secretary of CPI told reporters at the send off.

After passing a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in the state assembly, on Sunday November 16, president of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi declared that his party will not be satisfied

till a ceasefire was enforced in the embattled north Sri Lanka.

"We have made our stand clear in the party executive and also through the resolution at the all-party meeting that we want nothing short of a ceasefire and protection for the lives of innocent Tamils there," he told reporters here. The main crux of the resolution at the all-party meeting was that there should be a ceasefire between Sri Lanka and the LTTE, he said.

On November 16, actor Vijay staged an eight-hour fast to express his solidarity for the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils at Chepauk in Chennai. His fans from various parts of the State took part in the fast. The fast was inaugurated by the actor's father and veteran director S A Chandrasekhar, who spoke about Vijay's commitment to Tamil.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) on 17 November convened an all-party meeting attended by 20 political parties, including PMK and MDMK and called for day-long 'hartal' in Tamil Nadu on November 25 to press the Centre for bringing about a ceasefire in Sri Lanka's embattled north.

"We request the educational institutions and other organisa-

Continued on p18

Continued on p18

NEWS

Delhi unmoved by Tamils plight

CALLS from Tamil Nadu for India to intervene in the Sri Lankan conflict to bring about an immediate ceasefire fell in deaf ears as New Delhi continued its inaction and only issued statements repeating its stand on the island's conflict.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly passed an unanimous resolution on Tuesday November 12, a day before Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse visited Delhi to attend a conference, calling on Singh to demand Sri Lanka to negotiate with the LTTE and a halt all military operations.

However, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh ignored the Tamil Nadu assembly resolution and accepted assurances by Rajapakse that Tamil civilians would be protected.

"We assure not only the prime minister but the whole world that we will look after Tamils," he said. "Nothing will happen to Tamils. We are looking after our people, it is my duty." Rajapakse was quoted as saying.

According to media reports, Singh focused on "humanitarian" issues during talks with Rajapakse in New Delhi and stressed the rights of civilians must be protected even when dealing with terrorism, according to India's state-

run broadcaster Doordarshan.

Rajapakse following his meeting with Singh told reporters that there was no question of ordering a cease-fire against the LTTE.

"We must eradicate terrorism first. We can't pass this on to the next generation," Rajapakse said.

Rajapakse's comments imply that either Singh did not request Sri Lanka to work towards a ceasefire or Rajapakse snubbed a request for ceasefire by Singh.

Analysts are of the opinion that Delhi did not broach the subject of ceasefire with Rajapakse.

The Hindu newspaper without quoting sources reported that New Delhi is clear that LTTE is a terrorist organisation which was behind the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and that it is not the representative of ethnic Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The newspaper further said that India saw the Tamils in the island nation as a divided lot, often killing each other.

The Indian government wants Colombo to implement the power devolution package as part of settling the issue politically, the Hindu added.

India believes that implementing the 13th amendment, although rejected by the Tamils, would pave way to peace in the island.



Sri Lanka - India relations remain cordial, with continuing support for the war despite the rhetoric

India aid sends all clear for Sri Lanka war

Bryson Hull
Reuters

INDIA handed over aid for Sri Lanka's war refugees on Thursday in what analysts say is the clearest sign yet New Delhi will not interfere with Colombo's plan to end Asia's oldest insurgency militarily.

India's ambassador to Sri Lanka handed over at a ceremony more than 1,680 tonnes of relief items to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which will deliver it to an estimated 200,000 people displaced by the war in northern Sri Lanka.

It is a far cry from a 1987 air-drop of aid by the Indian air force which signaled the start of India's 3-year direct intervention in a war that has always roiled politics there and kept Sri Lankan leaders mindful of their giant neighbour.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government has made the most battlefield progress against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of any since the war began in 1983.

That has fuelled talk he will call an early election to capitalise on the military success to consolidate his power, especially with the economy under pressure from the cost of the war, expensive debt and declining prices for major exports.

Facing an election at home before May and pressure from Tamil political partners in his coalition over the war, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

last month criticised the escalation of the war and urged a political solution to Tamil grievances.

That set off a flurry of shuttle diplomacy resulting in the aid shipment and a statement in which India agreed the LTTE must be dealt with militarily, and Sri Lanka promised to push political negotiations.

The aid shipment shows how India's dual policy of wanting the Tigers destroyed as a military threat while ensuring innocent Tamils are treated fairly is still on track, said Reva Bhalla, an analyst with U.S. private intelligence firm Stratfor.

"They have been managing this rather adroitly by emphasising the fact they support a campaign against terrorism while focusing on the humanitarian nature of the conflict with public appeals to Colombo to avoid innocent civilian deaths," she said.

No Deadlines

And she said Singh's Congress party can argue the terrorism case well at home because it is led by the wife of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, killed by a Tiger suicide bomber in 1991 after India's peacekeeping intervention ended disastrously.

"India has backed the military campaign. That was implicit in their joint statement," defence analyst Iqbal Athas said.

Although Tamil parties allied with Singh backed off a threat to resign from parliament, they have continued to speak out against the war and supported an LTTE offer of a ceasefire last week that Sri Lanka flatly refused as a ruse.

"They surely understand our commitment and concern about the Tamil people and know that the government is doing all it can to protect them by providing relief and regularly talking to the government of Sri Lanka," Veerappa Moily, a senior Congress Party leader and adviser, said of Tamil political allies.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said on Wednesday that India had not given Sri Lanka a deadline to finish the war before May elections in India.

"The timeframe is in terms of what we are trying to do. Defeat of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation will create a better environment to restore normalcy and bring about far-reaching political development," he said.

Bhalla said although the political process to address longstanding Tamil complaints of marginalisation by governments led by the Sinhalese ethnic majority has not really taken off, it should soon.

"Now that Colombo has the upper hand militarily, we can start taking the rhetoric of political integration much more seriously, and that fits nicely into India's own campaign to push for Tamil rights and condemn the terrorists," she said.

(Additional reporting by Bappa Majumdar in New Delhi and Ranga Sirilal in Colombo)

'LTTE still lethal'

The Hindu

THE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continue to be an extremely potent, most lethal and well-organised terrorist force in Sri Lanka and has strong connections in Tamil Nadu and certain pockets of southern India, a tribunal said.

The court agreed that the LTTE 'continues to use Tamil Nadu as a base from which to smuggle goods'

The tribunal, set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, was upholding the ban imposed on the outfit by the central Indian government on May 14, 2008.

Justice Vikramajit Sen of the Delhi High Court, who was on the tribunal, agreed with the Centre's submissions that "the LTTE continues to use Tamil Nadu as the

base for carrying out smuggling of essential items like petrol and diesel, besides drugs, to Sri Lanka."

The Centre was represented by Additional Solicitor-General P.P. Malhotra, and Tamil Nadu by counsel S. Thananjayan.

The LTTE was not represented by counsel.

It was submitted that Kalpakam and Kudankulam, where nuclear plants are in existence, were proximate to LTTE bases in Sri Lanka.

"The Government of India is apprehensive that unless the ban on the LTTE continues, acts of aggression on Indian soil are likely to occur."

The judge also noted that the LTTE leaders had been cynical of India's policy on their organisation and action of the state machinery in curbing its activities.

Further, according to the sub-

Continued on p17

NEWS

Civilians in Vanni protest Colombo's use of essentials as tool of war

TamilNet

PEOPLE in Vanni marched in thousands towards two Government Agents' offices and two Divisional Secretariat offices in four locations last Friday protesting against Sri Lanka Government's restrictions on food and essential supplies, blaming Colombo for using humanitarian supplies as a tool of war to force civilians to flee against their will into the hands of Sri Lanka Army (SLA).

K. Mahathevan, a representative of Vanni Peoples Welfare Organisation (VPWO), addressing more than 5,000 protesters in front of Kilinochchi Government Agent's office at Tharmapuram described how the supplies were reduced from 600 lorries per month in 2007 to 250 lorries per month in 2008, but only 54 have allowed to cross into Vanni in the recent days.

The VPWO, a civil society forum with representatives of various organisations throughout the Vanni, held protests in front of Government Agent's offices at Tharmapuram and Mullaiththeevu and in front of AGA (Divisional Secretary) offices at Puthukudiyiruppu and Oddichuddaan in Mullaiththeevu district, urging global community's awareness on the humanitarian plight of the civilians in Vanni.

VPWO's General Secretary Vethavanam, who expressed gratitude to the solidarity shown by the people of Tamil Nadu towards Eelam Tamils, said the ICRC, which was expected by the people of Tamil Nadu and also by their Chief Minister, as a neutral agency to facilitate the supplies itself is now getting restricted itself by the government of Sri Lanka even to operate the Omanthai crossing.

"The Sri Lankan government is using food as a tool of war against civilians to force them to act against their will," said S. Thuraisingam, the president of the organisation, while addressing the participants at Tharmapuram.

"But, we have a democratic right to urge the global community and also Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa at the same time, to allow unhindered access to humanitarian supplies," he said reminding the participants that the demand is a universally recognised fundamental right.

"While the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa tells India and the world that he was allowing humanitarian supplies to civilians in Vanni, he has instructed his army at Omanthai to continue an un-announced embargo and block additional lorries. They block essential supplies from petrol and diesel to medicines needed to cure snakebite," Mr.



Mahathevan said in his address.

When 80 lorries are forced to wait for 10 days with supplies at the crossing, what would happen to food items that need immediate preservation, he asked.

"In October 2007, 600 lorries were allowed to pass through the crossing, in November it was reduced to 30 lorries, in April 2008 only 400 lorries were allowed, and in June the number became 370. Now it is reduced to 254 lorries, but only 54 lorries have crossed over so far," he said.

"Now there are many more civilians displaced. The Sri Lankan military occupies the entire district of Mannar and vast areas of agricultural lands of the other districts, depriving our people to produce their own food. 'Every day, a new item is added to their un-announced list of banned items at Omanthai,' he said.

"The message is you can't eat enough as free people. Even when you eat, you can't add spice," he said with a remark: "Everybody knows you [Colombo government] are fighting puli (Tiger), but are you also fighting puli [Tamarind fruit pulp, a spice]."

"Now they don't want to allow trouser-cloth. Do they want us not to wear cloth?" he asked.

The World Food Program (WFP) had decided on 200 grams of rice per person earlier, which means 1.4 kg rice per week per person. But, only 600 grams are provided due to the limited supplies, he noted.

Protestors in the Vanni have objected to the Sri Lankan government's continuing use of humanitarian aid as a weapon of war, with trucks carrying urgently needed supplies often turned back or delayed at checkpoints into the region. As the war moves north, more civilians are fleeing further into LTTE controlled territory, thereby increasing the need for food and other essential supplies

Controversy over Indian aid

INDIA Thursday formally handed over to the international Red Cross nearly 1,700 tonnes of relief material meant for civilians displaced by war in Sri Lanka's north, but a top government official insisted that Colombo alone would distribute the aid.

Indian High Commissioner Alok Prasad handed over the gift certificate to Paul Castella, head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Sri Lanka, at what the envoy said was "a simple but solemn occasion" reported IANS.

Prasad said it was for distribution among the war-hit population and hoped that the goods "would help meet the humanitarian needs of the people".

"This (Indian) consignment consists of food, clothing and personnel hygiene items, which have been packed individually into 80,000 family packs for easy distribution and to ensure that the assistance reaches directly to the intended recipients," he was quoted as saying.



Indian aid was received, but who will distribute it is still in dispute

Addressing reporters at the venue, Sri Lanka's Commissioner General of Essential Service (CGES) S.B. Divaratne and ICRC's Castella thanked India for its goodwill gesture, but openly contradicted each other on the issue of who will distribute the relief supply to the needy.

Claiming that "food, shelter as

well as access to water, sanitation and health care are the most pressing needs that our staff in the Vanni could observe at present", the ICRC official said his organisation intended to take the Indian donation "to the Vanni in the coming weeks".

Continued on p17

NEWS

SLA artillery kills Paranthan civilian

TamilNet

THE Sri Lanka Army (SLA) launched an intensive artillery barrage targeting all the roads from Paranthan junction last Monday, killing a 24-year-old youth in front of Paranthan St. Antony's Church and causing injuries to six, including two elderly men, in the town.

Two sisters were severely wounded and were admitted at the Intensive Care Unit of the Tharmapuram hospital.

The narrow streets of the town were full of people while the SLA barrage hit the town.

More than 750 civilians including school children, government employees, cooperative workers, traders and customers sought refuge during the attack.

A mother who fled the artillery attack with her family narrated the scene to TamilNet correspondent.

Arumugam Chandra, a mother with her husband, a 9-year-old boy and her elder sister, fled from her house located 200m from St. Antony's Church in Paranthan.

She described in detail how they faced the artillery attack, sought security and managed to flee with a small bag with her identification papers, leaving behind everything else at their

house.

"The whole family of mine and an aunt from a nearby house with her child were sitting in front of our house. Then we heard the explosion near ourselves. We throw ourselves on the ground. Shrapnel was screaming overhead as shells were bursting in our backyard. We thought it was the final moment of our life," she said.

"Then, we tried to get up and run, but there was fire on the road; a vehicle was burning. We paused for a moment and at that time we were frightened to imagine how we could manage to flee away through the smoke and the exploding shells."

"My elder sister, who has blood pressure, was screaming that she wouldn't make it. My husband was focused on saving our child. I told my sister: look, we may die if we choose to stay here. Do you want to die here or give it a chance to escape? Then, I somehow managed to run away with her. Unable to breathe through the smoke, I almost fainted, but managed to reach a Canter vehicle of the TRO [Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation] that took us away from Paranthan."

"I only managed to flee with a bag with my identification documents. Somebody was saying that a nun at the church was wounded, that there was a bowser burning, I



Arumugam Chandra with her elder sister [behind], 9-year-old son, a boy from her neighbourhood and her husband, says she doesn't have any place to go.

don't know."

Medical authorities at Tharmapuram hospital said they identified the youth killed as M. Sathiyathevan, 24, from Udaiyaarkaddu in Mullaiththeevu.

The seriously wounded sisters were identified as Thushiyanthi Puvanasankaralingam, 28, Thusiyanthaveni Puvanasankaralingam, 20. The other wounded were: M. Kandiah, 64, P. Gnanam, 62, Selvarajah, 31, and another elderly man who was on Paranthan Kilinochchi road. All the wounded were rushed to Kilinochchi hospital in ambulances and later transferred to Tharmapuram.

Many houses and shops were destroyed in the barrage that also hit the grounds of the Paranthan

Hindu College. Many civilians were seen moving from the town in the evening.

Student attendance was below 15% in the school, according to the teachers who were present at the school earlier in the day. All of them were forced to flee the college premises following the barrage in the evening.

The SLA has intensified artillery attacks on the suburbs of Paranthan town. Paranthan - Mullaiththeevu Road, Paranthan - Elephant Pass Road, Paranthan - Kilinochchi Road and Paranthan - Poonakari Road were targeted by the artillery and Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) fire by the SLA. Civilians were seen fleeing Kumarapuram, which has

been subjected to several air attacks, following the artillery barrage.

On the previous Sunday, November 16, Kugnchup-Paranthan and Kumarapuram settlements were targeted by artillery fire for more than 12 hours, following hours of shelling on the Saturday. At least 7 huts were destroyed and several houses sustained damage in the barrage.

Many civilians who had displaced to Paranthan from Poonakari, Valaippaadu and Vearavil narrowly escaped from the shelling as they sought refuge inside the bunkers. The intense shelling killed livestock, which was unprotected during the attack.

60% of Vanni IDPs without shelter - TRO

NEARLY two fifths of the food needs of displaced people in Sri Lanka's northern Vanni region have to be met through local production due to the restrictions the government has placed on getting aid into the region, a local aid organisation said last week.

The embargo by the Sri Lankan government has also left 60% of the refugees without adequate shelter, the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) said in a report.

The TRO is a local Tamil NGO attending to the relief needs of the more than 320,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Mullaiththeevu and Kilinochchi districts.

This number includes over 90,000 who were displaced by either earlier phases of the war or by the 2004 tsunami, who have yet to be settled.

Food supply, and distribution are major critical problems facing the IDPs, the report said.

It pointed to the delays and restrictions imposed by the Sri Lankan government and the Ministry of Defense.

Lack of maintenance of inter-

nal roadways, added to the damage caused by monsoonal rains, have further aggravated the distribution difficulties, the report added.

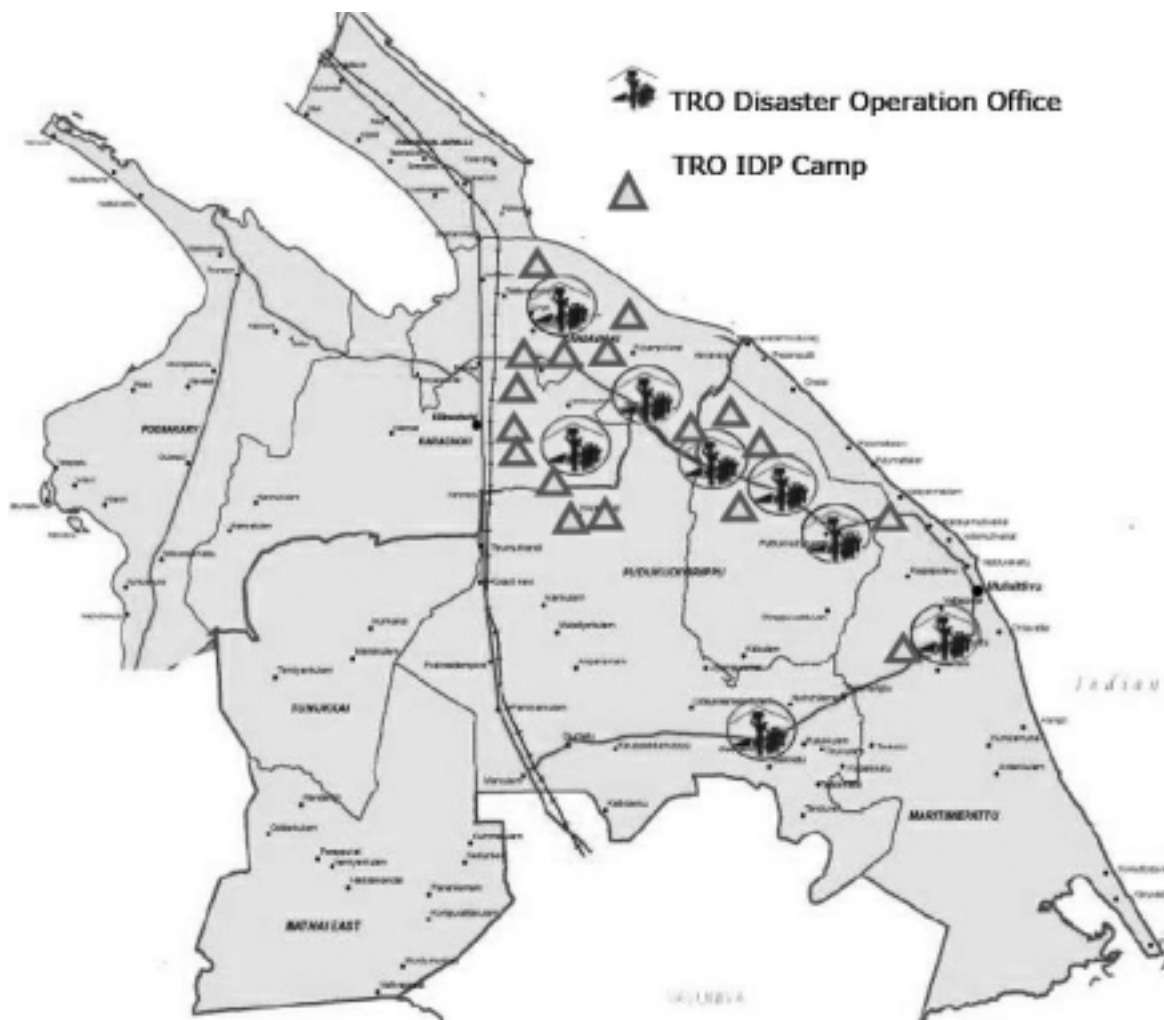
"Food and medicine approved by the Commissioner General of Essential Services (CGES) and the relevant ministry are also often blocked or delayed," the report said.

Local community leaders are brought to the forefront in attending to identifying and managing local communities, the TRO report said.

A community, religious leader is appointed as head of a group of 300 families, which are then co-ordinated by Community Based Organizations (CBOs), that cover several local government divisions.

Each CBO has a co-ordinator and a Rescue and Emergency Operation team to attend to the emergency needs of the area, the report said.

The organisation is also conducting volunteer training to equip residents to deal with at least some of the exigencies of the war.



TRO has camps and offices across the northeast to meet the needs of over 300,000 displaced

NEWS

Will Obama abolish politics of terrorism?

TamilNet

THE historic victory of Barack Obama in the presidential elections of the United States of America, bestowed on to him by the people of America, heralds a paradigm shift in world affairs.

"The new hope is that the International Community will recover from the psychological sickness of the 'pa-ranoia of terror,' which will in turn induce recovery of economy, human rights and peace in the world," said Selvam Adaikkalanathan, Tamil National Alliance parliamentarian from Vanni, welcoming the victory of Mr. Obama.

After winning the elections, Mr. Obama said: "This is our time, to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth, that, out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope. And where we are met with cynicism and doubts and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can."

One of the significant features of the American election was that it attracted record high turn out of voters. Michael McDonald of George Mason University told Associated Press that the voter turn out beat the old post World War II

high of 63.8 percent of 1960 John F. Kennedy versus Richard Nixon election. He projected the turn out figure of 2008 at 64.1 percent.

The phenomenal victory of a Black as the president of the United States is 'civilisational,' said Mr. Adaikkalanathan.

When the Blacks, kidnapped or purchased, brought to America as chained-slaves from the African coasts, their initial fear was that the cannibals (slave traders) were going to eat them. A couple of centuries of changes have now culminated in the becoming of a person of African ancestry at the helm of the affairs of the World, endorsing the beginnings of a new 'world human civilisation'.

Another encouraging element of sociological significance seen in the American elections was the enthusiastic interest shown by the youth in bringing out the change. 'Young voters helped Obama put over the top,' read a title of a report filed by the Associated Press.

Commenting further on Obama's victory, Mr. Adaikkalanathan said: "The moment of the time seems to be for wind of changes everywhere. Already, three of the countries in South Asia, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives have been benefited by it. Bangladesh is facing democratic elections shortly. We hope that the victory of Obama will signal the wind of change in Sri Lanka too."



Indian ship INS Tabar has been active off the coast of Africa as the Navy expands its range

India 'sinks Somali pirate ship'

AN Indian navy warship destroyed a suspected Somali pirate vessel after it came under attack in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday, November 19.

INS Tabar sank the pirate "mother ship" after it failed to stop for investigation and opened fire instead, an Indian navy statement said.

Commander Nirad Kumar Sinha, a spokesman for the Indian Navy, said the "whole operation lasted four to five hours" and was "the first such incident in which the Indian Navy sank the pirate's mother ship."

There has been a surge in piracy incidents off the coast of Somalia.

The latest attack came days after the Saudi-owned Sirius Star supertanker and its 25 crew were seized by pirates and anchored off the Somali coast.

The biggest tanker ever hijacked, Sirius Star is carrying a cargo of two million barrels of oil - a quarter of Saudi Arabia's daily output - worth more than \$100m.

Analysts say the pattern of other hijackings suggests a ransom request is likely to follow. Given the value of the tanker and its cargo, that is expected to be a sizeable demand.

"The problem of piracy

around Somalia is a grave danger to the stability in the region," he told the BBC.

Somalia has not had a functioning national government since 1991 and has suffered continuing civil strife.

India is among several countries patrolling the Gulf of Aden, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes which connects the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Clinton to be Secretary of State

US PRESIDENT-ELECT Barack Obama has offered Hillary Rodham Clinton the position of Secretary of State and the New York Senator has decided to accept the post, according to media reports.

"She is a beloved figure around the world. She has visited over 80 countries, as first lady and senator together," an aide told media.

Noting the fact that Clinton learned as first lady how to be effective as a "backdoor diplomat," the former White House assistant said Clinton mastered "a lot of the intricacies of these issues before ever joining the Senate's Armed Services committee. She's tough; she had meetings with some Prime Ministers and Presidents where she had to deliver some blunt messages for us."

Last year Clinton urged a more nuanced approach to armed non-state actors, arguing "the bottom line is, you can't lump all terrorists together. ... what the Tamil Tigers are fighting for in Sri Lanka, or the Basque separatists in Spain, or the insurgents in al-Anbar province may only be connected by tactics."

Clinton made her comments to 'The Guardian' newspaper in an interview which covered Iraq, the

legacy of the Cold War and ceding executive powers.

When asked "do you think that the terrorists hate us for our freedoms, or do you think they have specific geopolitical objectives?", she replied: "Well, I believe that terrorism is a tool that has been utilized throughout history to achieve certain objectives. Some have been ideological, others territorial. There are personality-driven terroristic objectives."

"The bottom line is, you can't lump all terrorists together. And I think we've got to do a much better job of clarifying what are the motivations, the *raison d'être* of terrorists."

"I mean, what the Tamil Tigers are fighting for in Sri Lanka, or the Basque separatists in Spain, or the insurgents in al-Anbar province may only be connected by tactics. They may not share all that much in terms of what is the philosophical or ideological underpinning."

"And I think one of our mistakes has been painting with such a broad brush, which has not been particularly helpful in understanding what it is we were up against when it comes to those who pursue terrorism for whichever ends they're seeking."

Political implications...

Continued from p8

jects, the two Hambantota schemes and the Eastern Province showcase, are difficult to pull off.

Inflation is what hits the common man directly. The 2009 war budget has been raised to nearly Rs 200 billion (\$1.8 billion), nevertheless even the warmongering JVP has threatened to oppose the budget "because of the government's track record." Trade unions are again showing signs of restiveness. Globally, economic forecasters are dismissing inflation fears and discussing deflation, but here in Lanka inflation cannot be brought below the 20% to 25% mark.

The war is one reason, another is that there is no way this regime can extricate the country from a debt trap - both foreign and local. Oil prices, the big culprit, have fallen, but inflation will

remain high; we are in a complex inflationary trap and correction in global oil and commodity prices will not liberate Lanka from high double digit inflation. Employment in the Middle East will be the next sector to be hit.

The private sector is currently stabilising the economy and the regime remains more popular with the business classes than the UNP. The UPFA is now the principal party of Lankan capitalism, the UNP the alternative party. Nor is Ranil a more direct agent of imperialism than Mahinda; all these old clichés are simplistic and dated.

Everything has to be reassessed in the light of the imperatives and processes of the civil war. Imperialism will dump Mahinda for just one reason, if he is going to lose the war leading to a huge crisis of destabilisation in the South. Neither India nor the

West will pull the rug from under him except in such extremis. The economic outlook is grim, but will not alone push the regime to extremis, the addition of a military setback will.

The bright note on the national question is that the large Tamil population which emigrated to the South, particularly the environs of Colombo, has without hullabaloo integrated into employment and business. The 1956 to 1983 experience of discrimination in employment, and burning of shops and homes, seems to be a thing of the past; a residual scar on the Tamil psyche, but not a fact of life today. This quiet process of social and economic reintegration, if sustained, will outweigh the folly of this and future regimes, hence its social and economic dimensions are worth the attention of sociologists and political scientists.