

# Sri Lanka reinstitutes LTTE proscription

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A Sri Lankan soldier stands outside the destroyed walls of what used to be a Tamil Tiger cemetery in Kilinochchi. Though journalists are barred from the northern war zone, some were taken on an escorted tour of the region as part of the government's 'victory celebrations'. Photo Lakruwan Wanniarachchi / AFP / Getty Images

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## NEWS

# War not over

## Agencies

EVEN as Sinhala people in Sri Lanka and overseas celebrated the fall of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) de facto capital with street parties military observers warned of bloodier battles ahead.

Whilst the analysts saw the loss of Kilinochchi to the Sri Lankan security forces as a major setback to the LTTE, they see the war from being far from over.

"The fighting is far from over," said Susantha Seneviratne, a defence analyst for the Lanka-deepa newspaper.

"The bigger battles may yet to be fought. The Tigers can return to classic guerrilla counter-offensives."

Seneviratne said the Tigers may have already prepared their defences in the northern jungle district of Mullaitheevu, their final bastion.

"The thick green canopy favours the Tigers and they know the area better than anyone else," Seneviratne said, adding that the military's long-range weapons and air cover may be less effective in the Mullaitheevu jungles.

The defence ministry on Saturday announced that troops were already heading to Mullaitheevu, where the Tigers have shifted their political offices after the fall of Kilinochchi.

The Tigers are regarded one of the world's most ruthlessly efficient guerrilla outfits, with its own naval and air wings.

Announcing the capture of Kilinochchi, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse acknowledged that the Tigers were a formidable foe, however, describing them as "accepted internationally as the most powerful terrorist

organisation in the world".

And despite the loss of their political base -- arguably the biggest blow to the Tigers since the fall of their Jaffna peninsula stronghold in December 1995 -- the Tigers have previously shown they can bounce back.

They initially lost Kilinochchi in 1996, but re-took the area two years later and controlled it until they were driven out on January 2.

Barely six months after government troops captured the northern Jaffna peninsula in 1995, the Tigers overran the military base complex in Mullaitheevu, killing more than 1,200 soldiers.

The Tigers also reversed military gains of 19 months in a matter of five days in November 1999, going on to dislodge the military from their Elephant Pass base, located at the entrance to Jaffna.

Analysts say the capture of Kilinochchi is not the end of the LTTE. The Tigers have shown their resilience in the past and with most of their heavy weapons and cadres intact, they may spring a surprise.

In his annual Heroes Day speech this November, the Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Pirapaharan vowed to fight on until the security forces were evicted from the Tamil areas.

"Whatever challenges confront us, whatever contingencies we encounter, whatever forces stand in our path, we will still continue with our struggle for the freedom of the Tamil people," he said.

It is too early to talk about the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka.

[Edited]



Almost all the buildings in Kilinochchi town were destroyed by continuous aerial bombardment prior to its 'capture' by the Sri Lankan military. Reports said the LTTE seemed to have had time for a planned withdrawal, as evidenced by the lack of many material items, including roofs and doors

## Capture of Kilinochchi is a pyrrhic victory for Sri Lanka

ALTHOUGH, Kilinochchi was a political and symbolic target as it functioned as the administrative capital of the de facto state run the Liberation Tigers it is not a strategic target, according to Sri Lanka observers.

The last time Kilinochchi changed hands, in September 1998, LTTE forces overran the Brigade Headquarters with 15 satellite camps guarded by a 15 km long defence line virtually destroying the whole establish-

ment and killing over 1900 SLA troops and wounding another 2000.

The last time Sri Lankan army captured Kilinochchi, in 1996, it lost over 600 soldiers in a month long operation.

Similarly this time also, the Sri Lankan army paid a heavy price for the capture of Kilinochchi. In the weeks building up to the capture LTTE forces killed over 660 SLA troops and wounded over 1750.

Unlike the heavy losses army suffered in September 1998, LTTE defended the town with minimal losses and withdrew with its cadres and military fire power intact.

Analysts point out that the LTTE was prepared for the fall of Kilinochchi and cite the LTTE political wing leader B. Nadesan's statement as clear indication of the organisation's plan to withdraw from the town.

The group's "freedom struggle does not centre on a town or a city," Nadesan, said in an e-mail interview with Reuters.

"Losing land and recapturing it is common. It is not the real estate that matters. Our freedom struggle will continue to create war towns until our struggle reaches its goal -- until we win," he was quoted as saying.

The same applies for Elephant Pass also, according to analysts.

When LTTE captured Elephant Pass in April 2004, it was the largest military complex in the island with over 17,000 soldiers stationed there.

In two days of fighting LTTE fighters killed over one thousand

SLA troops and the remaining troops of the 54 division fled in disarray.

The LTTE also captured a huge array of war materials to the value of several billions of rupees including 3 long-range 152 MM artillery pieces, 2 122MM artillery pieces and twelve 120MM heavy mortars, one 25MM canon, several 50 caliber

### From garrison camp to emptied town; from largest military complex to desolate land

guns, hundreds of rocket propelled grenades, thousands of automatic rifles and a vast quantity of ammunitions, including artillery and mortar shells, several armored vehicles, tanks, military trucks, bulldozers and high-tech communication systems.

Unlike in 2000, Elephant Pass now is a desolate land with no buildings or infrastructure and little strategic value.

According to analysts, with LTTE military assets intact and cadres withdrawn further into its stronghold in Mullaitheevu, as in the past the organization could launch large scale attacks against the Sri Lankan forces at the opportune moment.

"Our military capabilities are intact and we have no difficulties in acquiring weapons. ...We have confidence and we will regain the swathes of land ... We are waiting for the time, place and setting to launch an offensive," Nadesan told Reuters.

## Sri Lanka reinstitutes ban on Tamil Tigers - govt

THE Sri Lankan government says it has formally outlawed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The move was announced Wednesday evening by the Cabinet and was seen as a formality that ruled out the possibility of new peace talks between the bitter enemies who are fighting a brutal civil war, Associated Press reported.

Speaking at a special press briefing in Colombo, Minister Maithripala Sirisena said the cabinet unanimously approved the proposal by the President Mahinda Rajapakse to ban the LTTE.

The cabinet's decision redesignates the LTTE as a terrorist group, Sri Lanka's defence spokesman said.

"The cabinet has decided to ban the LTTE as they are not allowing civilians to leave the war zone," Reuters quoted defence spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella, also a minister, as telling a press conference.

The move was viewed as a symbolic action with little concrete repercussions, Associated Press reported.

Government officials had already vowed to destroy the group, the agency said.

Though largely symbolic since the LTTE are already on U.S., E.U. and Indian terrorist lists and the government routinely calls them that, the cabinet vote is just one more sign Sri Lanka has no plans to negotiate, reiterated Reuters.

This was the second time the Sri Lankan government has banned the LTTE.

The original ban was imposed on the Tigers in January 1998, and lifted as part of a Norway-brokered truce four years later.

Rajapakse scrapped the poorly observed truce a year ago, accusing the LTTE of using it to re-arm and vowing to wipe them out.

But the main opposition United National Party has just recently defended the truce, saying that current victories are a result of assistance provided to the Sri Lankan military by the US and other countries during the ceasefire.

The move comes as the UK and US released statements calling for a political solution to resolve the conflict.

## NEWS

# 'Freedom struggle not centred on a town' - LTTE

THE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam vowed to fight on even if they lose more territory inside the area they want to establish as a separate nation for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, reported Reuters.

In an e-mail interview with Reuters, B. Nadesan, the political head of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, said the group's "freedom struggle does not centre on a town or a city."

"Losing land and recapturing it is common. It is not the real estate that matters. Our freedom struggle will continue to create war towns until our struggle reaches its goal -- until we win," Nadesan was quoted as saying.

Nadesan rejected President Mahinda Rajapaksa's precondition that the rebels surrender their arms before coming for peace talks, which the Tigers have

offered, reported Reuters.

"A peace talk at this juncture would not be possible as government has asked the LTTE to lay down their arms and surrender," Nadesan was quoted as saying.

"We will teach a good lesson to the forces in this Kilinochchi battle," Nadesan said. "We are waiting for the time, place and setting to launch an offensive."

The LTTE has lost around 2,250 fighters so far in 2008, he said. The military puts the number at around 8,000. Both sides in the past have repeatedly distorted battlefield statistics to their advantage.

"Our military capabilities are intact and we have no difficulties in acquiring weapons," he said.

"We have confidence and we will regain the swathes of land," he affirmed.



Journalists were taken to visit Kilinochchi to prove the government had captured the town, but most reported that it was a ghost town, with all fixtures, fittings and records having already been removed

## Kilinochchi: Army enters ghost town as LTTE pulls out

THE Sri Lankan military authorities on Friday January 2 said their forces had occupied the town of Kilinochchi in Vanni, situated 320 km north of Colombo.

The Sri Lanka Army (SLA) entered a virtual ghost town as the whole civilian infrastructure of what had been the centre of administration for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had shifted further northeast.

It is the first time in a decade that Sri Lankan forces have been able to take control of the town, but the cost was several months of fierce fighting that claimed the lives hundreds of SLA troopers.

Meanwhile, source close to the LTTE told TamilNet that the Tigers, who had put up heavy resistance so far, had kept their casualties as low as possible in the defensive fighting.

Most of the buildings in the town were partly damaged or completely destroyed by continuous air strikes and artillery barrage by the Sri Lankan forces.

The LTTE had also taken away a lot of the fittings and records held in the town, journalists who were taken to the town on a government-escorted trip reported.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a televised address over the state run TV Friday at 4.15 p.m., officially claimed that the SLA had captured Kilinochchi town.

Meanwhile, the main opposi-

tion leader claimed that the Ceasefire Agreement paved the way for the military success.

Ranil Wickremesinghe said the ceasefire paved the way for many countries including the United States to provide arms to the security forces.

"The security forces successfully carried out operations with the weapons which were brought down after signing the ceasefire agreement," he said.

The lowered resistance by the LTTE was evidence that the organization had not used the ceasefire period to bring in arms, he said.

### Changing Hands

Twelve years ago, the SLA captured the Kilinochchi-Paranthan area from the Tigers after fighting for more than a month in 1996.

At that time the Army suffered more than 600 soldiers killed and thousands more injured.

The LTTE recaptured part of the town in February 1998.

A few months later, in September 1998, the LTTE overran the Brigade Headquarters with 15 satellite camps guarded by a 15 km long defence line virtually destroying the whole establishment in a two-day long major operation code named 'Oayaatha Alaikal-2' (Unceasing Waves-2).

The SLA garrison in Paranthan was compromised and

the Tigers destroyed a large ammunition dump within the Elephant Pass base at that time.

The LTTE recovered more than one thousand dead bodies of the SLA in the Unceasing Waves-2 operation.

At the time, the current (and then) leader of Sri Lanka's opposition United National Party (UNP), Ranil Wickremesinghe, announced in parliament that over 1900 SLA troops had been killed and 2000 wounded when the Liberation Tigers overran the Kilinochchi SLA base complex.

Wickremesinghe said that 1250 SLA troops had been killed and over 2000 wounded between September 27 when the Tiger assault began and 29, and that by September 30, when the fighting had eased, over 1900 SLA troops had died.

The Kilinochchi base had been manned by 3,500 SLA troops under a Brigadier, he said.

The UNP leader also listed some of the weapons and vehicles said the SLA had lost at Kilinochchi, though it was not clear if these referred to items destroyed or captured by the Tigers. The weapons included 4 artillery pieces, 2 T-55 tanks, 8 Buffel troop carriers, and 75 assorted jeeps, trucks and tractors.

The SLA had also lost approximately 2,500 small arms, over 2 million rounds of small arms ammunition and over 1,000 artillery rounds.

## Sinhala south celebrates 'unparalleled victory'

THE Sinhala people in the south celebrated the occupation of Kilinochchi town by the Sri Lankan security forces by taking to the streets in large numbers waving flags and lighting fire-crackers across towns and villages in the south of the island.

According to local media people in Colombo, Dambulla, Galle and many other cities celebrated the capture of Kilinochchi with street parties and people throughout the country celebrated the 'jubilant moment' thanking the security forces.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa went on television to announce the capture of the former administrative capital of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and described the fall of the Kilinochchi as an "unparalleled victory" for the nation.

"Whatever the words or language used to describe it, this is truly an unparalleled victory. What our heroic troops have achieved is not only the capture of the great fortress of the LTTE, but a major victory in the world's battle against terrorism," Rajapakse said.

"It was the constant dream of all Sri Lankans, whether Sinhala, Tamil or Muslim, who are oppo-

sed to separatism, racism, and terrorism, and have always sought peace, freedom and democracy,".

"Today our heroic troops have made that dream a reality. A short while ago, our brave and heroic troops have fully captured Kilinochchi that was considered the main bastion of the LTTE."

Rajapakse warned the LTTE to abandon the fight and said: "I am telling the LTTE for the last time to lay down their arms and surrender."

But analysts say, despite the loss of Kilinochchi, the LTTE remains a strong force and are well capable of mounting large scale counter operations as they have done in the past.

However, the fact that the LTTE retreated from Kilinochchi with its man power and fire power intact did not concern the revelers in the south.

Pubudu Udara, 25, told The Independent newspaper that all his life he had known war and that, when he heard the news of the fall of Kilinochchi, "the hairs on the back of my neck stood up".

"I jumped into the air," he said.

"This is great news. The fighting is terrible for our country and we would all like to see it end."

## NEWS

# TNA accuses Colombo of war crimes

DESCRIBING several recent escalation in incidents where Sri Lanka Armed Forces have targeted Tamil civilian during festive days between Christmas and Thaipongal, Tamil National Alliance (TNA), in a press release issued Sunday, said that the "stringent economic, food and medical embargos on the war affected areas, ... are not only War Crimes in contravention of the Geneva Conventions but are also a part of a policy of Genocide that the Sri Lankan State has been carrying out against the Tamil people."

The release, issued by the Parliamentary Group of the TNA, also noted, with disappointment, the silence of the international community "whilst the Genocide of the Tamil people is taking place," and continuing military assistance of the international states to the Sri Lankan State "using various pretexts."

Full text of the press release follows:

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) notes the deliberate and systematic targeting of Tamil civilians and civilian infrastructure, particularly hospitals, in the LTTE administered areas by the Sri Lanka Armed Forces. The escalation in such targeting has taken place during the current Christmas/New year/Thai Pongal festive season, when civilian activity is at a high. Such targeted attacks have included the following:

■ On Wednesday, 17 December 2008 a 5-month-old child and a 25-year-old male were killed and 13 other refugees including three children were wounded when Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) jets bombed refugee settlements in Vaddak-kachchi four times.

■ On Friday, 19 December 2008, the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombers attacked civilian settlements in Mullivaikal village in the morning and at noon causing injuries to 11 civilians, including 6 children. On the same day the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) had also fired artillery shells on the Mullaitivu General Hospital injuring two members of the medical staff and causing extensive damage to the hospital complex.

■ On Saturday, 20 December 2008 the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) shelling killed 2 civilians in Vaddakkachchi in Kilinochchi. From morning the SLA artillery fire had targeted civilian settlements in Vaddakkachchi and Kilinochchi destroying several houses. On the same day the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombers had also attacked a coastal area in Mullaitivu where thousands of recently displaced civilians had established temporary shelters. The bombers dropped eight bombs on fishing huts and boats.

■ On Thursday, 25 December 2008, Christmas Day, the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) fired artillery shells targeting the Kilinochchi General Hospital causing damage to the hospital buildings and nar-



Civilians are the predominant casualties in indiscriminate airstrikes, making Sri Lanka guilty of war crimes under the Geneva Convention

rowly missing several hospital staff, including the Medical Superintendent of Kilinochchi.

■ On Saturday, 27 December 2008 the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) jets bombed the Iyakkachchi, Iranamadu and Vaddakkachchi areas targeting three civilian settlements killing a 24-year-old woman and seriously injuring ten persons, including an 18-year-old girl who lost both her legs.

■ On Tuesday, 30 December 2008, the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) fired artillery shells hitting the Kilinochchi hospital causing damage to the building.

■ On Wednesday, 31 December 2008 Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombers attacked a civilian settlement in Murasumoddai on Paranthan - Mullaitivu Road killing two females of a family and a male on the spot. Another man, who was seriously wounded, succumbed to his injuries at the hospital. 16 civilians, including a couple, were wounded. The Sri Lanka Armed Forces also targeted fleeing civilians, Internally Displaced Person's huts in Karaichchi, a school, temple and agricultural lands on the same day.

■ On Thursday, 01 January 2009, New Years Day, the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombers again attacked Murasumoddai on

Paranthan-Mullaitivu Road thrice and bombed the next junction at Kandaavalai, while hundreds of civilians were fleeing due to the previous day attacks at Murasumoddai. Two civilians, a 60-year-old mother and a 20-year-old male were injured in the attack on the densely populated junction. Three shops were fully destroyed and six shops damaged.

■ On Friday, 02 January 2009 two persons who accompanied a convoy of ambulances from Puthukkudiruppu to Vavuniya were wounded when Sri Lanka Army (SLA) fired artillery shells at Mannaakandal. The two ambulances with 13 civilians with serious injuries, being transferred from Tharmapuram and Puthukkudiyiruppu hospitals to Vavuniya hospital, were targeted after clearance had been obtained through the ICRC. On the same day Artillery shelling by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) killed a civilian and wounded at least 10 civilians at 3rd Mile Post in Murasumoddai. Another civilian was wounded at Pannangkandi due to SLA shelling. The Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombers also attacked a petrol station and a bus depot killing four civilians and causing injuries to 8 close to Mullaitivu hospital. 8 buses were destroyed and the depot building

was damaged and the petrol station completely destroyed.

■ On Saturday, 03 January 2009 Sri Lanka Army (SLA) shelling continued to target densely populated civilian area in Pulia-ympokkanai in Vanni where a 61-year-old civilian was wounded when at least 6 shells hit the settlement.

■ The abovementioned targeting of Tamil civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces is taking place whilst over 330,000 Tamil civilians are internally displaced in the Vanni. The Sri Lankan State has also imposed stringent economic, food and medical embargos on the war affected areas in the Vanni where there is a total population of nearly 500,000.

These measures that collectively target the Tamil population cannot be justified under any circumstances. They are not only War Crimes in contravention of the Geneva Conventions but are also a part of a policy of Genocide that the Sri Lankan State has been carrying out against the Tamil people.

The TNA notes with disappointment that the international community has not only been, by and large, silent whilst the Genocide of the Tamil people is taking place, but also that key

international States are continuing to provide military assistance to the Sri Lankan State using various pretexts.

It is whilst these crimes are taking place in the Tamil Homeland that the Sinhala political parties and the Sri Lankan State have been celebrating what they consider to be military successes. It is this approach of subjugation of the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan State that is at the root of the conflict. There can be little doubt that the continued desire to subjugate the Tamil people without addressing the long held legitimate political aspiration of the Tamil people, as overwhelmingly mandated at the 1977 General Elections to the TULF and thereafter to the TNA, will not produce any positive results. These events only further demonstrate the complete polarization between the Sinhalese and the Tamil peoples in the island.

The aforementioned are a reminder to the 70 million strong world Tamil population that the success of the Tamil peoples struggle to live as a free people with dignity on this island depends on our unity, strength and determination.

**Parliamentary Group  
Tamil National Alliance**



## FEATURES

# White vans and vanishing men

Living in constant fear, the Tamils are considered fugitives in Sri Lanka

**Kavitha Muralidharan**  
The Week

WHEN our white van stopped in the Muslim hamlet of Saintha Maruthu in Batticaloa district on the night of November 23, residents viewed us with fear. So my friend from the locality introduced me to them, "She is a journalist from Chennai."

For the Tamils in Sri Lanka, a white van is terror on four wheels. "White vans have been used to abduct people, especially young Tamil men," my friend told me.

It was in such a van that Madura Guna Singam was abducted from Colombo last June.

"My son was staying with my eldest daughter, Kalanayagi, in Colombo. I knocked on all doors. God knows what happened to my son," said Madura's mother, Velayutham Pushpavalli, 60, from Kilinochchi.

Madura's sister Sivapatham, who stays in Vavuniya, said her brother had no links with the Liberation Tigers. "My brother was innocent. He was a van driver. They might have taken him thinking he was with the LTTE. Please give him back to us," she said with folded hands.

Soon after the abduction, the family informed the police, but they did nothing. "We tried every avenue, the Red Cross and the human rights organisation. We met minister Douglas Devananda three times. We do not know who abducted my son and why," said Pushpavalli. Though fragile and old, she has not given up. "I am sure he is alive and will come back," she said.

Jayanthi Krishnan's husband, Pushparaja Krishnakumar, 34, was abducted from Colombo in June. "Some people came to his shop in a white van and took him away," said Jayanthi, who has a two-year-old son, Vekesh.

"To run the family, I had to sell off the shop. If my husband does not return, I will have to go begging with my child," she said.

Mukunda Sivagunaratnam, 33, was waiting to join his wife in Canada when he was arrested in June. His mother, Selvajothi, feels she led him to his fate.

"He was living in London and came here to get himself registered so that he could join his wife in Canada. I suggested he join a computer course. He was abducted from the computer centre," she said. Mukunda had called up his family saying that he was being taken by the police.

Selvajothi and her daughter Darshini approached the police,



White vans are feared by Tamils as they are often vehicles for abduction. The abductors are thought to either be members of Sri Lankan security forces or have close ties to the military and security forces on the island. Photo Sanka Vidanagama / AFP / Getty Images

who said they were unaware of the abduction. Said Darshini: "We are sure the army has done it because after the abduction, the special task force came to our house twice for inquiry."

Unaware of Mukunda's fate, the Canadian embassy recently sent a letter to him, asking him to appear for a medical test. "Mukunda would have been overjoyed to see the letter," said Selvajothi.

As proof of her son's innocence, she has the 'no objection' certificate issued to him by the police for his travel abroad. "He had a clean record. He was a simple person. Why would anybody want to snatch him away from us?" she asked.

Idayarani knows that her son Robinson, abducted five months ago, is in Boosa detention camp in Galle, near Colombo.

"There is no sign of his release. We are not allowed to see him. There is no inquiry. He just exists there," she said.

The family received a ransom call, but Idayarani cannot pay it.

Mano Ganesan, MP from Colombo and head of the Civil Monitoring Commission that tracks human rights issues of the Tamils, feels the abductions were carried out with the connivance of the army. "Anybody with a number on his mobile phone that the government thinks belongs to an LTTE cadre can be picked up, abducted or shot," he said.

Reports say there have been around 3,000 white van abductions in Sri Lanka since the ceasefire ended in 2005; 300 of them were in Colombo.

The Tamils live in constant

fear of being abducted or shot. They suffer the ignominy of having to register themselves in their own places, and live as a displaced people in their own country. The government had made registration mandatory for Tamils who came to Colombo in the last five years.

"They think every Tamil-speaking person is a terrorist. It shows they don't trust us," said Murugan, a hotel employee.

Despite the government's statement that civilians are not affected by the war, 3,000 families are living in camps for Internally Displaced Persons in Batticaloa.

Displaced during the 'liberation' of the east, they cannot return to their homes, which, as a woman said, "are in high security zones." The life of IDPs on the war front in the Vanni region is even worse.

My attempts to get the permission to go to Jaffna failed. Later, a lawyer friend said it was easier for Sri Lankan passport holders to get permission. "In a family I know, the parents had UK passports and the daughter a Sri Lankan passport. The daughter went to Jaffna, but the parents' request was rejected," she said.

"Your governments will make it a big issue if you are affected. We can be shot like dogs in Sri Lanka. No one bothers about Tamils."

The peace in government-controlled areas is not without violence. Said S.L.M. Hanifa, a Tamil writer in Batticaloa: "We have suffered more during times of peace and ceasefire than during times of war."

## Colombo Tamils ordered to register

AS the new year began, Sri Lanka's police continued their racially targetted harassment, ordering all Tamil civilians who arrived in Colombo and other parts of the Western provinces after 2003 to register at the nearest police stations.

The order went out on January 1, ordering the registration to occur on January 4. Those regis-

tered with the police in 2008 have also been asked to register again, media reports said.

Last year Tamils of north temporarily and permanently staying in Colombo and other parts of the western province registered at police stations on 21st September, and Tamils of eastern province on 5th on the instruction of the Sri Lanka Police Headquarters.

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## Back to the Future

## Ethnic enmity is now the very fabric of 'Sri Lanka'

Sri Lanka banned the LTTE this week. The United States endorsed the move in a statement making explicit its implicit stance for the past few years: "[the US] does not advocate the government of Sri Lanka negotiate with the LTTE, a terrorist organization." The subplot is that the war to crush the Tamil rebellion against Sinhala oppression will soon be won. This very much remains to be seen - though we can confidently repeat our assertion that the Sinhala state will continue to reproduce the existential conditions that compelled Tamils to violence in the first place.

Amidst the myriad aspects of reality that analysts could focus on, it is the map of 'controlled areas' that has curiously come to dominate. Reducing the territory the LTTE controls, it is held, equates to putting down the Tamil struggle for freedom. The capture last week of Kilinochchi, the former administrative capital of the LTTE, is thus hailed as a watershed in the conflict. This logic is even reflected in commentary by Sri Lanka's political analysts, in whose columns can be found more emphatic military-related assertions than practiced security scholars would dare pin their names to.

In the meantime, crucial changes in the island's ethno-political imbroglio, whilst in plain sight, are simply ignored. Indeed, Sri Lanka's future is well signposted for those who care to look. A virulent form of Sinhala chauvinism is now all-pervasive, from the corridors of state power to public streets and chatrooms on the Internet. Rarely in the past, with the exception of the state-backed pogrom of 1983, has the sense of alienation been so acute amongst Tamils. The Muslims, meanwhile, are also waking up to their place in Dutugemunu's realm. What was being described as ethnic 'polarization' a couple of years ago is fast turning into commonsense. Ethnic enmity is now the very fabric of Sri Lanka's social ordering. And no amount of international funding for 'ethnic reconciliation' or 'peace building' is going to change this.

This has nothing to do with the effects of conflict - the violence has, especially in recent years been confined largely to the Northeast and the deprivations of displacement, 'disappearance' and death have been borne overwhelmingly by Tamil-speakers, if not Tamils. Rather, the present is the result of the sixty-year-old Sinhala project to align state, army and citizenry towards a majoritarian vision of

the island. This, by the way, is the 'solution' acceptable to the Sinhalese.

Amidst all this the impotence of global liberalism is plain to see. Not that its international proponents recognize this. There is still a belief, for example, that the Sinhala nation gives a damn what the West thinks or says about human rights, democracy, pluralism, tolerance and such like. (Unsurprisingly, the former foot soldiers of global liberalism in Colombo have now either found accommodation with Sinhala chauvinism or, in the case of those who were too far in front of the Norwegian peace initiative, have been reduced to despondency and lament).

For a very long time the international community has been seeing a very different problem to that which exists in Sri Lanka. In trying to solve the former, they have systematically and drastically fuelled the latter. Amid a preoccupation with developmental metrics and civil society, they have failed to see the plain reasons why, when flag waving Sinhala expatriates took to the streets in Canada, Tamil refugees in India despaired when Kilinochchi 'fell'.

The 'concerns', in international parlance, of Tamils and Sinhalese cannot be met within a united Sri Lanka. This is not a question of Tamils' 'trust' in the state or Sinhalese' 'fears' about the country being divided. Rather, it is about what 'the Tamils' are. To the Sinhalese, they are the legacy of past invasions who must adhere to their proper (subordinate) place in a Sinhala land. The Tamils see themselves as a collective equal to its Sinhala counterpart, with just as much right to their homeland in the Northeast as the Sinhalese have to theirs in the South. No amount of constitutional 'capacity building', 'conflict sensitive' aid or 'security sector reform' will bridge this divide.

In short, Sinhala chauvinism, emboldened by befuddled international actions, is going to pursue the genocidal reordering of territory, population and security called for by the Mahavamsa. The Tamils, meanwhile, will not go quietly into the night. In past decades they've engaged in some capacity building of their own. As Colombo again bans the LTTE and the Sinhala army once again seeks to put down the Tamil rebellion, there appears to be a return to the past. At the same time, as a racial polarization between Sinhalese and others becomes concrete and commonsense, the future is already here.

## Credit crisis comes to Sri Lanka?

Even on holiday in Sri Lanka, the effects of the credit crisis are felt

Joe Nocera

The New York Times

"SO," said the driver as we settled into our seats for a four-hour ride to our resort in Sri Lanka's tea country, "Do you think the economic crisis will get better in 2009?"

We had just landed in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, and these were practically the first words we heard.

We were coming from Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India, where the effects - and potential effects - of the credit crisis were front and center.

Would the Wall Street layoffs hurt the technology outsourcing firms that have proliferated here, they had asked.

Would corporate America's need to control costs help the booming business process outsourcing industry, they had wondered.

Everywhere I went, people expected me to opine about the credit crisis.

But in Sri Lanka, a small, lush, tropical island of 20 million people that neighbors India, and where we had come for holiday, I didn't expect to hear the same fears.

After all, this is a place where the economy is still largely agrarian; its largest export, by far, is tea.

And this is also a place that has been consumed by a decades-old civil war. Yet the economic crisis found its way into almost every conversation we had over the next week.

Because I was on vacation, I didn't interview people in their offices. Instead, my conversations were over tea in the afternoon and drinks at sunset. I met people in Sri Lanka's newly emerging resort business.

They had survived the tsunami; now, they felt threatened by this new economic tsunami. Indeed, they could mark the exact moment when business fell off the cliff: it was September, when Lehman Brothers defaulted.

The country's cricket association - by far the biggest spectator sport in Sri Lanka - was essentially broke; the big, upcoming Test Series between Sri Lanka and Pakistan had not been able to find a single sponsor.

Land development was largely on hold because financing was impossible to get.

Oh, and on my second day in

Sri Lanka, I picked up the local newspaper to discover that a large bank, Seylan, had been taken over by the country's central bank.

My new Sri Lankan friends told me the backstory: the bank was run by a businessman who was offering 25 percent interest to attract deposits, which he was then using to finance development projects that were unraveling because of the credit crisis. When the depositors found out, they raced to pull out their money, creating a run.

After the central bank took over, its governor, Ajith Nivadda Cabral, gave a news conference in which he played down the bank's mistakes, and chalked up the problem to an inexplicable crisis of confidence. It turns out the bank's owner was politically connected.

A few days later, we were in the south, having drinks with a friend, a British ex-pat who runs a small, high-end property. He had spent an anxious afternoon in nearby Galle, where the Seylan Bank had a branch, because he wanted to get his money out. He was worried. The bank told him to come back in seven days. That made him even more worried.

For all the talk of the interconnectedness of world trade and global markets, it is still striking to see how events in America in 2008 have created turmoil in this small country. You shake your head in wonder. Sri Lankans, however, understand that interconnectedness all too well. Or at least some do.

We made friends in Sri Lanka with Dominique and Rohini Nordmann - he runs a boutique resort company; she is the sales director for the Aman Resorts - and we spent time at their home, which looks out over the Indian Ocean.

Gazing out at the water, Dominique told me about his own economic indicator.

"See out there?" he said pointing to the distance. "A few years ago, you would have seen shipping containers from China, one after another, all day long."

I looked out at the empty ocean. "Now we see maybe one or two a day," he said. The Nordmanns didn't need to read the newspaper to know the world was in recession. They could see it from their lawn.

## EDITORIAL &amp; OPINION

# Financial meltdown decolonising Asian minds

**Kalinga Seneviratne**  
IPS

THE year 2008 may well go down in history as a watershed in which the global financial crisis, precipitated by the collapse of Western economic models, 'decolonised' Asians minds, say observers.

"In the past, Asian governments expected Western counterparts to be role models of good governance," observed well-known Singaporean diplomat and author Kishore Mahbubani in a recent commentary published in London's Financial Times.

Pointing to how major United States and European financial institutions have fallen like packs of cards, due mainly to the failure of financial regulators in their respective countries, Mahbubani argues that Asian governments' belief in good governance and regulation may serve as a real asset in the storm.

"The gold standard that the West assumed it had in the field of regulation has vanished," Mahbubani points out. "Asians realise that they must forge their own standards."

An increasing number of Asian economists and commentators have pointed out in recent weeks how U.S. and European governments are doing exactly the opposite of what they had advised Asian governments to do during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Asian governments are now quietly building a new financial architecture in the region that will not be dictated to by the West.

Yung Chul Park, professor of economics at Korea University in Seoul, in a recent interview with the 'New York Times' pointed out that when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pledged 20 billion US dollars to South Korea during the Asian financial crisis in 1998, one of the conditions it imposed was that the Korean government allow ailing banks and other companies to collapse rather than bail them out.

"Washington is following a different script this time," he noted. "I understand why they do it [but] they've lost credibility to some extent in pushing for opening up overseas markets to foreign competition and liberalising economies."

Mahbubani agrees that the

U.S. and European policy makers are doing the opposite to what they advised Asia to do in 1997-98.

"Millions of Indonesians and Thais would have been better off if their governments had been permitted to do what western governments are doing now," he argues, adding that "an apology from the West to Asia would not be inappropriate".

Asian media has not lost sight of the fact that Asian governments are quietly moving to increase regional cooperation and tighten up government regulation with respect to financial industries.

These governments are also moving ahead towards a possible Asian Monetary Fund, which was quickly shot down by the West when Japan mooted the idea in the late 1990s.

But, this time, without calling it such, moves are already in motion towards this goal.

In mid-December, China, Japan and Korea met in Fukuoka for the first time exclusively to discuss a new financial partnership to make Asia the centre of global trade and economic vitality.

The three financial powerhouses agreed unanimously that Asia should continue to be the engine of growth to counter the global economic crisis, not by opening up markets for global investors, but, by reviving their economies with infrastructure projects and bolstering domestic demand.

The Nation newspaper in Thailand in an editorial on Dec. 22 hailed this move as "an important commitment" by the three Asian giants which would "help the overall integration of the East Asian economy," known as ASEAN plus three.

Hadi Soesastro, executive director of the Jakarta-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, pointing out that East Asian nations have accumulated close to four trillion dollars in reserves, argues that the time has come to set up a regional fund independent of Western control.

Writing in the Jakarta Post, Soesastro notes that to make such a fund operational it would need some political decisions which would address issues such as the size of the fund, conditionalities



The majoritarianism of the Sri Lankan government was seen in 'victory celebrations' over Kilinochchi, with the differing reactions of the Sinhalese and other communities reinforcing fundamental fissures

## Sleepless in Sri Lanka

**Sutirtho Patranobis**  
Hindustan Times

THE victory of the armed forces in Kilinochchi might have triggered a sense of euphoria among the Sinhala majority but it also raised wave of quiet unease among Tamils in Colombo.

What did not help matters was another unofficial Tamil census held this week on those staying in Colombo but belonging to other parts of the country.

More than 100 were detained because they could not furnish enough details about what they were doing in the Capital.

Imagine a situation where all those who migrate to New Delhi everyday from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar being asked to furnish reasons for their apparently unwelcome visit.

The military and police of course said that it was done to check the entry of suicide bombers into the city.

They added that the census was also done to also ferret out sleeping LTTE cadres from

Colombo's Tamil majority areas.

No doubt, a chilling reminder of the Tigers' capability of violent retaliation was the suicide blast in front of the air force headquarters the same day Kilinochchi fell.

But was it reason enough to alienate or make awkward the lives of thousands of Tamils who abhor violence as much as the majority community does?

Television channels continuously beamed footage of residents in South Sri Lanka bursting crackers and unfurling the Lankan flag. The same footage was shown through the day.

A newspaper reported: "According to sources, people in Colombo, Dambulla, Galle and many other cities throughout the country celebrated this jubilant moment thanking the security forces."

If celebration is to be reported from "sources", it leaves one to wonder how widespread the joy of victory actually was.

good move and Singapore's blanket guarantees on deposits which has led to Malaysia following suit.

If India can also encourage the already strong domestic demand, he believes that inter-Asian trade could help to boost the economies of countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Vietnam, which are heavily dependent on western markets.

Even China may quietly move to demand changes to the IMF.

Fan Gang, professor of economics at Peking University, believes that China is now in a position to increase its voice on a long-standing concern of theirs - the U.S. dollar's status as global

It was not as if every one swallowed the victory of taking over a bare, empty town as the "beginning of the end" of LTTE.

"No doubt, it is an achievement. I mean it was the LTTE capital, a symbol and seat of their power. But what did the army capture? Was a single cadre arrested? They had long left the town," said government hospital doctor who preferred to remain anonymous.

A website columnist wrote: "in opinion polls a majority of Tamil respondents express a clear preference for an immediate ceasefire while most Sinhala respondents want the war to be continued. This is an understandable divergence since it is Tamils who have to bear the brunt of the war and it is Tamils who suffer most at the hands of both the LTTE and the Lankan state. Moreover the dominant section of the regime and the state regard the war as a Sinhala on Tamil conflict (as does the LTTE)."

Probably it is this majority-minority dichotomy that continues to deny Sri Lanka its share of peace.

reserve currency.

He says that China would like to see an amendment to IMF's mandate so that they could "discipline America's money supply and debt accumulation".

Thus, though not making a big noise in the international scene yet, Asian countries and their policymakers are slowly but surely decolonising their minds of the idea that economic expertise comes purely from the West.

"If Asian countries can work together, the region can not only deal with the financial tsunami, but lay the ground for a powerful future, one in which greater coordination prepares the path for the eagerly awaited Asian century," predicts Chhibber.



YEAR 2008 IN A GLANCE

# Looking back on an eventful year

The Peace Secretariat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam identified ten events that summarize the year that was 2008

1. On 3 January, Sri Lanka announced the termination of the six year Ceasefire Agreement brokered by Norway. The Norwegian government issued a press statement expressing its 'regret' at the decision.
2. On 29 January, a claymore attack on a school bus in Madu claimed the lives of 20 civilians, including 13 children and their school principal, and injured 14. The bus was 1 km away from Madu church, having picked up the children at Thadchanaamaruthamadu and was on its way to Paalampiddi.
3. In March, two books illuminating another aspect of the Tamil genocide, the deliberate and well planned changes to the demography of the Tamil homeland, were released.
4. Two leading human rights activists, TNA Member of
- Parliament, Kiddinan Sivanesan, and NESoHR Chairperson, Rev Fr Karunaratnam, were assassinated in March and April respectively by claymore attacks.
5. On 20 May, Brigadier Balraj passed away following a heart attack. The Tamil Eelam nation mourned the loss of one of its brave and able sons.
6. On 23 May, despite hard lobbying by Sri Lanka, it lost its battle to remain in the UN Human Rights Council due to its appalling human rights record.
7. Having created a massive human catastrophe in Vanni by targeted shelling of civilians, forcing village after village to displace, on 11 September, Sri Lanka evicted UN and other international humanitarian agencies that were providing desperately needed care to the IDPs.
8. On 24 October, Tamil Nadu
- erupted in protest against the genocide in Sri Lanka, with a 60 kilometer long human chain under pouring rain.
9. In November, Cyclone Nisha produced the heaviest floods in Vanni and Jaffna, further worsening the displacement crisis in Vanni.
10. In December, the New York based Genocide Prevention Project released its report including Sri Lanka as one of eight "red alert" countries where genocide and other mass atrocities are underway or risk breaking out. Separately, a task force led by Madeleine K Albright, former Secretary of State, and advisor to Obama and Clinton, released a report on world genocide threats which will likely be used by the Obama administration as a guide post to prevent developing genocides, using factors from countries like Rwanda.





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## NEWS

# Tamil Nadu uprising call following fall of Kilinochchi



Tamil Nadu political parties have called for rallies to protest the fall of Kilinochchi

## Delhi ignoring Tamil Nadu sentiments: PMK

Times of India

IN a sharp criticism of the UPA regime, one of its coalition partners, the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), has accused the Indian government of deliberately ignoring the sentiments of Tamil Nadu by refusing to heed the state's repeated pleas to take steps to end the war in Sri Lanka.

In a strongly-worded letter to the Prime Minister, PMK founder S. Ramadoss assailed "New Delhi's mindless and callous attitude" and wondered whether it was silent only because those at the receiving end of "genocidal frenzy" were voiceless Tamils.

Coming a day after the PMK decided not to back any party in a

Tamil Nadu State Assembly by-election, its strong note of disapproval may mean that it is preparing the ground to reconsider its continuance in the UPA and avoid being on the same side as the DMK in the next Lok Sabha polls.

"For the scheming bureaucrats and unconcerned decision-makers in New Delhi, are the war-and-genocide-mongers in Colombo more important than the millions of law-abiding Tamilians? Is the honour and self-respect of these millions of no concern to them?" the PMK leader asked.

He recalled the state Assembly's resolutions on Sri Lanka and reminded Manmohan Singh of his promise to send external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee to

Colombo to persuade the island nation to stop the war.

Nothing had been done by the UPA government on the steps that the PMK had suggested on Sri Lanka.

On December 4, Ramadoss had given a note to the Prime Minister when he met an all-party delegation headed by chief minister M. Karunanidhi.

Ramadoss said if India could do nothing directly, it could have acted through the UN Security Council.

"This has not even been attempted despite the fact that Sri Lanka has been listed among the eight red alert countries where genocide or mass atrocities were either underway or were in the risk of breaking out."

POLITICAL parties in Tamil Nadu took out their anger on the Congress led central government for the fall of Kilinochchi and condemned it for the inaction over the issue even after a unanimous declaration by the Tamil Nadu Assembly demanding an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka.

Several leaders called for uprising in Tamil Nadu in the aftermath of Sri Lankan forces entering Kilinochchi town in Vanni and the indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in Vanni.

The Communist Party of India Tamil Nadu branch on Saturday January 3, announced it would launch a protest on January 6 in Tamil Nadu's capital Chennai.

Pazha. Nedumaran, the leader of the Tamil National Movement called for black flag protest against the Indian Prime Minister who is scheduled to visit the annual congregation of Non Resident Indians (NRI) on January 8.

The leader of Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), Thol. Thirumazhavan said New Delhi's ignorance stands exposed as it failed to satisfy even the simplest demand to send its foreign minister to Colombo to stop the war.

The CPI State Secretary T.

Pandian in his statement said the state council of the party had resolved to extend support to the movements that protest against the New Delhi as it has ignored for a prolonged period of time the requests from Tamil Nadu to impress upon Colombo to put an end to the genocidal war.

Expressing his disappointment at New Delhi not sending External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee as agreed in a meeting in early December, Paataali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadoss in a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote: "This only shows New Delhi's mindless and callous attitude just because at the receiving end of this genocidal frenzy are the hapless and voiceless Tamils."

Ramadoss urged Delhi to step in at least at this stage and put an end to the military solution being pursued by the Lankan government and instead push for a negotiated political resolution.

Although the ruling DMK did not react officially, its Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi, who is Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi's daughter, said she shed tears after learning about the fall of Kilinochchi.

# BJP wants LTTE proscription lifted

THE Tamil Nadu unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the principal opposition party in India, has given clear indications of the necessity for lifting the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam according to news reports in the Indian media.

Vaithiyalingam, a senior BJP leader and member of the party's national general council, proposed this idea. In an exclusive interview to a Tamil biweekly, he said that although his party did not believe in violent measures, it was unfair to impose the ideas of a Gandhian struggle on the people of Tamil Eelam.

"The British did not disregard any pact they signed with us, the Indians, during the course of our freedom struggle. But, the Sinhalese government has torn apart and rubbished three major peace pacts relating to the Eelam Tamils. In such a situation, how can anyone believe that holding talks with such a government will

lead to a solution?" he asked, drawing parallels from history.

He also lambasted the Sri Lankan government for seeking the Tigers to lay down arms as a precondition for talks.

The Sinhalese government must first come out with the political solution that it envisages for the Tamil people, he said.

Emphasizing the need for a rethink on the LTTE ban, Mr. Vaithiyalingam said: "We have banned 26 organizations within India. However, the LTTE is the only organization in that list which is operating on foreign soil and which is struggling for the rights of the Tamil people. Our intention must be to ensure that the Tamil Tigers are not making use of India as their base. Unfortunately, we have banned the LTTE alleging it for Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. A majority of those who were accused in his assassination have also been punished. In such a situation, if

we continue to link Rajiv's assassination with the people who are waging a struggle for the rights of Eelam Tamils, the entire Tamil population would be annihilated."

Speaking about the attitude of Congress leaders in Tamil Nadu, BJP leader Vaithiyalingam clearly pointed out that "Ilangoan, Thangabalu and Gnanasekaran's demand that those who speak in support of Tamil homeland and the LTTE should be arrested under the National Security Act is an effort to rob people of their freedom of expression."

He called upon Congress leaders to reconsider their view with respect to the Tamil Tigers.

In the interview, he also criticized the Indian government for not paying heed to basic demands put forth by the Karunanidhi-led delegation. He also warned that such a "careless attitude" might prove to be "too costly" for the Congress party. If national parties are going to lose their hold in

Tamil Nadu, it is entirely owing to the blase manner in which the Congress handled the Eelam issue. A situation will possibly arise where the Congress does not win a single parliamentary constituency in Tamil Nadu, he said.

Further, he pointed out that instead of waiting for the Indian Foreign Affairs Minister to visit Colombo and hold talks, it would make more sense for the Indian Prime Minister to call up his Sri Lankan counterpart to demand an immediate ceasefire.

He also expressed concern that Karunanidhi had double standards on the Eelam issue. He pointed out that "justice and duty should not be avoided" at the cost of appeasing others by avoiding any mention of a separate Eelam or the LTTE. "He is vigorous in taking up the issue of Eelam as a leader of the opposition, whereas, when he is the chief minister he is worried that the alliance with the Congress would be ruined."

Vaithiyalingam called upon the Chief Minister to revive the demand for a separate Eelam that was passed in the Tamil Eelam Supporters Organization Conference held at Madurai under his leadership. He also added that all the Eelam Tamils were rallying behind the LTTE, therefore, it was unbecoming of Tamil Nadu politicians to impose their choices as to who was the real representative of the Tigers. He opined that this responsibility was best left to the people of Eelam.

Independent sources in Tamil Nadu also confirmed that there had been no voice of dissent when the resolution demanding a deproscription of the LTTE was being discussed in the BJP state executive committee meeting. This, coming from the second largest national party in India, is especially noteworthy as several pro-Tamil leaders are in prison for having expressed their support for the Tigers.



## NEWS

# Tamil Nadu recognises genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka

POLITICIANS and activists across Tamil Nadu have expressed their opinion that the Sri Lankan state is engaged in genocide against the Tamils on the island.

Calling the Sri Lankan regime a 'genocidal' one, Vaiko appealed to the Indian Prime Minister to stop military assistance to the island's government.

"I am registering my view that the present action, approach, attitude of the Indian Government amounting to assist the genocidal Sri Lanka regime is sowing the seeds of sorrow and despair, loss of confidence in the minds of the Tamils" the leader of the MDMK wrote in his letter to Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh dated 18 March 2008.

Similarly, Paatali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S Ramadoss wondered whether the Indian government was silent only because those at the receiving end of "genocidal frenzy" were voiceless Tamils. In a letter to the Indian Prime Minister, he assailed "New Delhi's mindless and callous attitude", reported the Times of India.

**While this genocide is on across the Palk Straits, the Indian government remains a dumb witness**

Ramadoss said if India could do nothing directly, it could have acted through the UN Security Council, the paper reported. "This has not even been attempted despite the fact that Sri Lanka has been listed among the eight red alert' countries where genocide or mass atrocities were either underway or were in the risk of breaking out," he is quoted as saying.

"For the scheming bureaucrats and unconcerned decision-makers in New Delhi, are the war-and-genocide-mongers in Colombo more important than the millions of law-abiding Tamilians? Is the honour and self-respect of these millions are of no concern to them?" the PMK leader asked.

The poet and central government parliamentarian Kanimozhi has also expressed similar sentiment. Tamils were gradually being wiped out in the island nation, she said in a report in The Hindu on January 2 this year.

Citing a few lines from Mr. Vairamuthu's poem, she said, "There was no point in living on the past glory without raising our voice against the genocide of Tamils."

The strongest Tamil Nadu voice against the genocide has been from the Communist Party of India, which has been consistently at the forefront of the latest protests on behalf of Sri Lankan

Tamils.

A press release from the National Executive in September 2008 expressed alarm at the "worsening situation" in Sri Lanka, calling the actions of the Sri Lankan government 'genocide'.

"Instead of finding a political solution to the four decade old ethnic problem and take steps for a just, viable political settlement to solve the ethnic conflict the Sri Lankan government has unleashed an undeclared war against the Tamils in Sri Lanka, using indiscriminate aerial bombings on civilian habitats including schools and hospitals, which had resulted in the killing of hundreds of innocent children and women and had displaced hundreds of people," the press release said.

"The Sri Lankan government is neither providing them any relief or allowing voluntary groups to extend humanitarian help to them," it noted.

"While this genocide is on across the Palk Straits, and the Indian fishermen are often getting killed by the Sri Lankan army, the Indian government remains a dumb witness to these tragic events," the National Executive chastised the Indian government.

In the lead up to the hunger strikes organised by many organisations across Tamil Nadu in support of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the notion that the events in Sri Lanka were genocidal gained popular credence in Tamil Nadu.

"Unlike in many other conflicts, in Sri Lanka, a group has taken up arms to defend its people from genocide," noted a news report of the time.

"Sri Lankan state has embarked on a focused effort to crush the struggle and to erase the Tamil people from the map of Sri Lanka. The Indian Government should recognize this and work towards saving the Tamil people. It should not be seen as collaborating in Sri Lanka's genocide of Tamils," was an oft heard cry from the speakers at the various hunger strikes, including Tamil film director Seeman.

The Tamil Protection Movement (TPM), an umbrella organization consisting of pro-Eelam political parties, NGOs, members of the film fraternity and Tamil associations also condemned the Indian state for extending military support to the 'genocidal' Sri Lankan Government.

In a statement in March 2008, Ramadoss and Thol Thirumavalavan, President of the Viduthala Chiruthaikal Kadchi (VCK or Liberation Panthers Party) demanded the "Indian Government to radically change its approach and actions in the Sri Lankan Tamils issue" and warned the union government not to be seen as collaborating in Sri Lanka's genocide of Tamils.



Speakers across Tamil Nadu have not hesitated to call Sri Lankan actions against the Tamils 'genocide'

## Tamil Nadu leaders on fall of Kilinochchi

**Kanimozhi, MP - Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)**

Kanimozhi, MP, said Tamils were gradually being wiped out in the island nation.

"What we were hoping would not take place has actually happened. ... We are in pursuit of other things when an uncertain future is staring at our brothers and sisters. ... There is no point in living on the past glory without raising our voice against the genocide of Tamils."

She urged the Tamils in the State "to rise in support of the Sri Lankan Tamil brethren with whom we have umbilical ties."

**D. Pandian, Communist Party of India (CPI)**

"The Sri Lankan Army may have overrun Kilinochchi but we have to wait for a reaction from the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. I don't think the war will end with this. Other forms of struggle will be adopted and the battlegrounds will shift,"

**P. Nedumaran, Tamil Nationalist Movement (TNM)**

"Kilinochchi was already a

ghost town, no one lived there. So the Sri Lankan Army cannot claim a big victory. ... War will now engulf Sri Lanka and move to other parts."

**K Veeramani, Dravidar Kazhagam (DK)**

The Dravidar Kazhagam president described the capture of Kilinochchi as a pyrrhic victory for the Sri Lankan Army.

The army had only captured the 'ghost town' which had been deserted by the Liberation Tigers. This was only a strategic retreat by the LTTE which, he said would successfully bounce back as it had done in the past.

He lamented how long the annihilation of Tamil race would go on in Sri Lanka and it was unfortunate that the whole world was keeping silent over the annihilation.

**Thyagu, Thamilar Movement**

"As always this has been India's betrayal. ... This is a war where winning and losing are common. It is just another event, a small setback. One may lose battlefields but that doesn't mean

the war is lost. If the LTTE is not able to win this way, they will change their tactics. ... There are also other ways to fight. ... We will continue to support Eelam and the LTTE and we will keep working to lift the ban on LTTE."

**S. Ramadoss, Paataali Makkal Katchi (PMK)**

Ramadoss accused Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa of trying to mislead the world by "making false claims."

Questioning New Delhi's silence, the PMK founder asked: "What is the reason for the Indian Prime Minister's silence?"

"Congress President Sonia Gandhi and the Prime Minister were remaining silent for more than one-and-a-half years," he said and urged Chief Minister M Karunanidhi to impress on the Prime Minister to intervene and take steps to ensure that the Lankan military offensive against the Tamil Tigers is stopped.

Ramadoss also accused India, China and Pakistan of helping Sri Lanka in the war against the

*Continued on p14*



## NEWS

# Sri Lanka announces subsidies with eye on polls

SRI LANKA unveiled a 16 billion-rupees (\$141 million) stimulus package that includes cutting fuel prices and removing some taxes saying it is needed to stimulate the economy in the face of a global economic downturn.

However analysts believe that the subsidies and tax cuts are being announced by the government with a view of holding elections in the first half of 2009.

"It's an intensive package for exporters and stimulus package for growth, so we expect the cost of living will get reduced ultimately," cabinet spokesman Anura Priyadarshana Yapa told Reuters.

The government, in a special cabinet meeting held passed the package which includes cuts in the price of fuel and gas, concessions for industry and subsidies for main exports.

## Fuel & Energy

Diesel, kerosene and furnace oil prices were cut by 10 rupees a litre and gasoline by 2 rupees a litre.

The government has reduced diesel prices by 12.5 percent to 70 rupees, petrol by 1.6 percent to 120 rupees, and liquefied petroleum gas by more than 10 percent.

As part of the package, three-wheeler taxis will receive 75 litres of fuel a month at a reduced price of 20 rupees a litre.

For industries, a 15 percent surcharge on electricity will be lifted from tourism, apparel, leather and rubber industries.

Also as part of the package, to help exporters, the government will give an incentive payment of 5 percent of revenue to companies that do not fire workers.

## Rubber

The government announced the removal of taxes on rubber exports, supply of subsidised fertiliser to farmers and government purchase of the commodity to support prices.

However, the Rubber manufacturers do not think the government plan would benefit the industry and say that the government has to come up with a new pricing formula, as the issues faced by the industry are mainly due to the drop in sheet and crepe rubber prices. Sri Lanka's rubber industry is facing a severe crisis due to the decrease in demand and fall in prices.

## Tea

The government will sell fertilizer to small tea farmers at 1,000 rupees a ton until the price of green leaf, an industry benchmark, reaches 45 rupees.

The government also sus-

*Continued on p14*



The collapse of Seylan Bank resulted in funds of depositors being frozen and eventually, the banks' nationalisation. Photo AFP/Getty Images

# Government takes over private bank but depositors remain in limbo

THE Sri Lankan government took control of a private bank saddled with bad debt declaring that the action was required to 'maintain the stability of the financial system'.

Seylan Bank, part owned by Ceylinco Consolidated, faced a liquidity crunch as depositors started withdrawing their money following the revelation of a credit card scandal at non-listed Golden Key Credit Card Company, which is also owned by Ceylinco Consolidated.

Analysts estimate the amount involved to be around 26 billion rupees (\$228.8 million).

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka exercised its regulatory powers to dissolve Seylan Bank's board of directors with immediate effect and appointed the government-owned Bank of Ceylon to continue business operations at the troubled Bank.

"The difficulties of Seylan Bank PLC presented a potential danger to the stability of the financial system," a statement

released by the Central Bank said.

Commenting on the bank bailout, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse assured the nation that the government would take all possible steps to stabilise the nation's economy whenever there occurred a financial crisis.

"That was a step we have already proved by intervening in the crisis faced by the Seylan Bank," the Rajapakse said speaking at the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB).

Although the Sri Lankan Monetary Board has assured the safety of the deposits with Seylan Bank, according to latest reports, the troubled bank has stopped all withdrawals and is advising customers who have small and medium scale deposits as fixed savings that they could withdraw their deposits, only if they had matured and not otherwise.

One customer who has two fixed deposits with a suburban Seylan Bank branch worth over Rs. 2 million and wanted one

deposit withdrawn was told he could not, as it does not mature till June 2009, reported Lanka Everything website.

"I am not a Golden Key depositor. I have my EPF money in the bank," said this customer who had retired as a Management level employee from a private company, 3 years ago.

"I had two fixed deposits with one to be broken up when I needed money," he said in anonymity.

He said it is totally illegal and an injustice to deny people like him to withdraw their own money, when they most needed it.

"I was not asking a loan. I went to have my own money," he said with a tinge of dejection and anger. "I wish I could sue them for this. Its defaulting," he said, adding there were many like him who were turned back in desperation.

Another customer said he was offered only a fraction of his deposit, "as a personal help" by a Seylan bank staffer, reported Lanka Everything.

"This is stupid" he said, adding that he doesn't need personal help to withdraw his own money.

Seylan bank customers who spoke to media said they have not been given any guarantee or a time frame as to when they could withdraw their monies in deposit with Seylan bank, added Lanka Everything.

Lalith Kotelawala, chairman of Ceylinco Group has announced that he would sell his shares to repay investors in failed Golden Key Credit Card Company.

Kotalawela did not say how much shares he would divest or what amount he is expecting to raise from selling his shares.

But the bank's CEO Ajitha Pasqual was quoted in a newspaper saying "it could be 23-25 percent or even more."

The collapse of the Golden Key Company and the run on Seylan deposits is seen as the first sign of international financial woes hitting economy of Sri Lanka.



## NEWS

# Sri Lankan rupee hits all time low

THE Sri Lankan rupee fell 0.9 percent on December 29, hitting a record low of 113.80/114.00 per dollar, surpassing the previous low of 113.45/113.55 on September 19, 2007.

The rupee has fallen around 3.4 percent since December 8 and 5.2 percent since October 30.

Currency dealers said a state bank, which usually represents the Central Bank, was not seen intervening in the market as it had done in past weeks.

"Later a state bank which usually represents the central bank offered dollars at 113.80 to direct the market and avoid sharp volatility," said a currency dealer.

The state bank's action allowed the rupee to recover slightly from its all time low.

In recent weeks Sri Lanka has intervened heavily to stabilise the rupee. Whilst the Central Bank says it is in favour of a 'limited' depreciation of rupee its actions, however, are having the opposite effect.

According to Central Bank governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal the rupee has been allowed to depreciate 'a little bit' to improve export competitiveness, Reuters reported.

Cabraal said exporters had clamoured for a weaker rupee because of "tremendous pressure" on their businesses.

Although the Central Bank says the depreciation is allowed in the hope of a weaker exchange rate boosting exports, and replenish its dwindling foreign reserves,

it could be in preparation for a request to the International Monetary Fund for a bail-out, as the latter would demand a weaker currency as a condition of any financial assistance.

Sri Lanka is under pressure to shore up the dwindling foreign reserves that has fallen a third to just \$2.37 billion between the end of August and the end of October, equal to about two months of imports.

Foreign exchange reserves have declined as the economy was first hit by the soaring cost of commodity imports and more lately by the global economic downturn. The central bank has said it could have a balance of payments deficit in 2008.

Whilst claiming it favoured a 'limited' depreciation of the rupee, on Tuesday December 30, the central bank ordered commercial banks to reduce their net dollar positions prompting the rupee to rise as much as 0.8 percent.

Currency dealers said the central bank's action would force commercial banks to sell dollars in the market.

"The cut depends on individual bank. Some banks face around 50 percent cut in their net long-dollar positions," said a currency dealer.

The central bank, also said the government's exposure to foreign exchange risk has significantly declined, but analysts said the state was desperate for dollars after spending a third of its reserves to protect the rupee.



The LTTE will continue to aim at economic targets like Katunayake airport, Nadesan said

## 'Destruction of economy is part of our defensive war'

THE political head of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in an interview with Reuters admitted the organisation had faced some setbacks in the war, but said their options for fighting back included sabotage against Sri Lanka's \$32 billion economy.

The LTTE will target Sri Lanka's economy as part of their defensive strategy to counter a military offensive, said the Reuters report. "The destruction of

the economy is also an aspect of our defensive war. When the government economy is destroyed, its genocidal war against the people will also be weakened," Nadesan was quoted as saying.

An LTTE attack on the main international airport in 2001 dealt a heavy blow to the economy by hurting tourism revenues, a factor in a year that saw negative 1.4 percent growth.

Political critics say President

Mahinda Rajapakse's administration has mismanaged the economy, which now is facing a host of problems, including high loan costs, a potential balance-of-payments deficit and low foreign currency reserves, reported Reuters.

Allies of the president acknowledge the economic challenges, but do not expect it to extract too much political cost given widespread support for the war amid multiple military victories.

## Sri Lankan shares fell 40% in 2008

SRI LANKAN shares ended the year more than 40 percent down at the lowest close in four years.

The Colombo All Share Index (CASI) lost 40.8 percent in the year due to poor earnings, high borrowing costs, global economic woes and the long dragging ethnic conflict, analysts said.

On 31 December 2008, the CASI fell 0.65 percent or 9.72 points to 1496.38, its lowest close since Dec. 29, 2004.

"Investor sentiment is negative," said Shivantha Meepage, a research analyst at HNB Stockbrokers.

Top conglomerate John Keels Holdings, which fell to a new near 5-1/2-year low, closed 3.85 percent lower at 50 rupees, calculated on a weighted average. It alone accounted for around 59 percent of the day's market

turnover.

Oil retailer Lanka IOC, a subsidiary of Indian Oil Corporation, plummeted 7.35 percent to its life low of 15.75 rupees.

Top listed private lender Commercial Bank of Ceylon fell 1.82 percent to 67.25 rupees after Fitch Ratings agency said the bank and state-owned People's Bank were exposed to counterparty defaulting risk.

The insurance and financial services organisation, Ceylinco Consolidated announced a credit card scam last week in one of its non-listed companies, leading to 15.77 percent drop in non-voting shares in Ceylinco Insurance, a company under the group. This also led to the eventual nationalisation of Seylan Bank, which had been owned by Ceylinco Consolidated.

## Top foreign exchange earner in trouble after mass lay-offs

FOREIGN remittances, Sri Lanka's top foreign exchange earner, is suffering as tens of thousands of Sri Lankans employed over seas are laid off due to the global financial crisis.

More than 30,000 Sri Lankans employed in the construction sector in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and South Korea are at risk of being laid-off owing to the global recession, the Sunday Times newspaper reported, quoting Foreign Employment Minister Keheliya Rambukwella.

"A highly reputed international financial institution in South Korea had recently terminated the jobs of some 4000 white collar employees including many Sri Lankans though the exact number was not known," Rambukwella told the Sunday Times.

"This shows that not only labour staff but even those in

higher posts might lose their jobs," he said.

Foreign Employment Bureau chairman Kingsley Ranawaka said the construction industry in the UAE had suffered a body blow and thousands of Sri Lankans might lose their jobs, the Sunday Times report said.

According to Ranawaka, of the 238,000 Sri Lankans working in the UAE, 102,000 were men with most of them working in the construction industry, Sunday Times further added.

He said it was not only labour staff who would be hit but also quantity surveyors, engineers, architects and other professionals, the paper said.

Ranawaka further told the newspaper that many construction projects were at a standstill and that people were unable to get jobs in the UAE and he feared the

situation might get worse.

Ranawaka further said other West Asian countries also were affected, especially some construction projects in Qatar.

Suraj Dandeniya, Former president of the Association of Licensed Foreign Employment Agencies (ALFEA), said the demand for construction sector workers in the UAE and other Gulf countries had drastically dropped and most of the job agencies here would also be affected, reported Sunday Times.

According to the newspaper, S. Rajah, an official of Professional Manpower Recruiting Services Ltd, said that UAE employers and contractors had informed Sri Lanka of a 30 percent reduction in job opportunities.

Visas were not being issued for jobs in some sectors, he said.



## NEWS

# 'Annals of history'

## TamilNet Opinion

THE capture of Kilinochchi was celebrated with the bursting of crackers here in the Sri Lankan capital. There were also reports that the Sinhala diaspora celebrated it with the bursting of Champagne bottles. No wonder such things happen in a culture nurtured by cricket and football matches.

The Sri Lanka president in his address to the nation on Friday declared, "I am now ready to reveal to you the proud news of the most honourable victory in the annals of military heroism that runs through many centuries of our history".

What Mahinda Rajapaksa refers to is obviously the military victory of the Sinhalese against Tamils, because in the annals of the many centuries of the history of the island there were no wars of significance fought by the Sinhalese other than what they fought with Tamils.

The colonial wars fought by them couldn't prevent the advent of colonialism. The only outside military expedition made by them against Myanmar in the 12th century ended a failure in mid sea.

The message of veiled racism in Sri Lanka president's remark betrayed the true intentions of him and his ilk, camouflaged in saintly wordings against separatism, terrorism, racism, North-South war etc, to hoodwink the outside world.

It is said that Rajapaksa's next step is to seek electoral mandate from the Sinhalese to cook a political formula in order to give the

semblance of a political solution.

Increasingly one hears talk on the 'legitimate' rights of the Tamils. Who decides what is legitimate and what is not? The universal principle of democracy is that legitimate rights are always decided by a concerned people. Others deciding for them is only legitimizing enslavement.

Perceiving everything of the state on ethnic lines and after deepening the ethnic divide of the island through a brutal war, it is folly to expect the outcome of a feasible solution within the Sri Lankan state system.

Unfortunately those who claim to be at the helm of the international community, even though very well aware of the impossibility of the Sri Lankan state to satisfy Tamil aspirations, refuse to acknowledge the logic and legitimacy behind the ethnonational demand of Tamils to have political sovereignty to save themselves from genocide.

The recent interview given by the US ambassador in Colombo to a Sri Lankan newspaper while sounding skepticism in a subtle way about Colombo government's approaches, not only still pins hope on a united Sri Lanka but also advocates the genocidal government of ways how to get rid of even the only existing safeguards of the Tamils, by isolating them from their fighters and from their diaspora.

He further applauded what the Colombo government is doing in the East and has said that it will be an inspiration to the North.



**President Rajapakse's message - written in Sinhalese and delivered in poor Tamil - reinforced the veiled racism inherent in his government argues this opinion columnist**

What is evident is that there is no democracy in the outlook of the guardians of democracy and what actually plays role is nothing but geopolitics. Such an approach is only going to deepen the crisis in the island and in the region and that is what perhaps they want to happen.

The lesson learnt by USA in Vietnam has already been written in bold in the annals of history.

The civilized world has to now teach a lesson to the so-called international community that this time it will be written in the annals of history that even if the elements of power all over the world align to the contrary, a righteous cause of humanity fighting against oppression in a humble corner of the world would still be successful.

The main element behind the

present phase of war in Sri Lanka is mischievously silent as though it doesn't know anything.

We come to know that it is once again busy in formulating quislings. When the crisis spread in the region it will also be written in the annals of history how this element either bungled or consciously sabotaged the national and regional interests of a great country.

## Tamil Nadu ...

*Continued from p11*

LTTE.

**Vaiko, Marumalarchchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK)**

He charged New Delhi with helping Sri Lanka by giving arms, which enabled that country's army to capture the "deserted" Killinochi and said the LTTE will win the war ultimately.

"At least now, we should realise that the Indian Government hasn't done anything for the Sri Lankan Tamils. India has been supplying arms which helped the Lankan Government capture Killinochi."

LTTE men had "strategically" withdrawn and the people there had gone into hiding. The town wore a deserted look, he said.

"This is only a temporary victory for the Sri Lankan Govern-

ment. They can't defeat them permanently. They would strike back like their earlier operations. ... I am confident they (LTTE) will win the war ultimately."

**Thol. Thirumazhavan, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK)**

Commenting on the Sri Lankan Army occupying Kilinochchi, he said the Sri Lankan forces only occupied the administrative capital of Eelam Tamils with the tremendous helps of six or seven countries including India. Thirumavalavan further said, the Central government betrayed 100 million Tamils all over the world and helped the Sri Lankan government to occupy the Killinochchi.

"It is not going to end the war, but suffering of our brethrens in Eelam are multiplying into many folds."

## Subsidies...

*Continued from p12*

pending repayments on loans given to modernize tea factories and said one month's working capital would also be given to tea factories through commercial banks on the recommendation of the Sri Lanka Tea Board, a state agency that regulates the sector.

However, industry experts say, the Tea industry which sought urgent government assistance in late 2008, is in severe crisis and the government's intervention has come a bit too late.

The package also proposed a 5-15 percent cut in salary and perks for government ministers.

Sri Lanka's economic growth will slow this year to near 6 percent, its lowest level since 2004, from last year's 6.8 percent, as the economy feels the reverberations of the global financial crisis, government officials have said.

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NEWS

British Tamils Football League 2008/2009  
Table & Top Scores

Premier Division

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts		Players	Team	Top Scores
1	Maha jana	11	8	1	2	37	7	30	25	1	Chrishanthan	Santos	11
2	Santos	11	8	1	2	37	22	15	25	2	Sean	Maha jana	10
3	W est-3	9	5	2	2	25	13	12	17	3	Luxm an	Santos	8
4	W atchm e	11	5	2	4	27	22	-5	17	4	Ahlan	Surbion	7
5	kingston Boys	10	4	3	3	28	11	17	15	5	Vnoth	W em bley	6
6	wem bley	10	4	3	3	16	21	-5	15	6	Sim ilan	Maha jana	6
7	Surbion	10	3	3	4	12	14	-2	12	7	Pia	Kingston Boys	5
8	Sunrise	11	2	3	6	21	35	-14	9	8	Shankar	Maha jana	5
9	Blues	11	1	2	8	15	48	-33	5	9	Roshan B	Santos	5
10	O lmpics	8	0	2	5	6	27	-21	2	10	Senthuran	Sunrise	5

Division One

	Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS		Players	Team	Top Scores
										1	Moham ed	MTSSC	17
										2	Thanu	11 Stars F.C	10
										3	Tee	E-17	8
										4	Jenu	Srin urugan	5
1	Srin urugan	8	6	-	2	22	8	14	18	5	Keeth	Harrow Boys	5
2	E 17 F.C	8	6	-	2	29	17	12	18	6	Suntharesh	E-17	4
3	Harrow Boys	9	4	1	4	16	15	1	13	7	Seh	Young Rise	4
4	MTSSC	9	4	1	4	27	26	1	13	8	Aru jna	MTSSC	4
5	Young rise	9	3	1	5	16	24	-8	10	9	Naz	Young Rise	4
6	11 Stars F.C	9	4	-	5	23	30	-7	12	10	San je	Srin urugan	4
7	ValvaiBlues	10	2	1	7	11	24	-13	7	11	Milson	Harrow Boys	4

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