

Inclusion the only way to real peace

PAGE 6

Hundreds of civilians killed in 'safe zone' each week



Sri Lanka Army (SLA) attacks continue to claim hundreds of civilian lives in the government declared 'safe zones' with many of the killed and injured being children. In the space of 3 days at the end of March, 179 civilians were killed, with at least 76 of them children below the age of 15 and at least another 16 pregnant mothers.

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NEWS

UN's Holmes reiterates concerns, but nothing new

THE top United Nations relief official Thursday repeated the world body's concerns over the safety of civilians - numbering as high as 190,000 - trapped by fighting in northern Sri Lanka between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Addressing reporters after an interactive Security Council discussion on Sri Lanka, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, characterized the situation as "extremely worrying."

According to the UN, the conflict zone shrank from 300 square kilometres to nearly 58 square kilometres in February, with many civilians - Mr. Holmes today put the number between 150,000 and 190,000 - sheltering in a 14-square kilometre "no-fire" zone in the Vanni region.

Those uprooted by fighting who are trapped in the no-fire zone have limited access to food, safe water, sanitation facilities and medical assistance, with the International Red Cross delivering a two-week supply of medicines aboard a ship to the zone and the World Food Programme (WFP) preparing to send 1,000 tons of food to the area by the end of the week.

"Our first appeal is to the LTTE to let the civilians out in a safe and orderly fashion," Mr. Holmes said. He also called on the Government to do all they can to avert civilian casualties and to

not use heavy weapons in the area.

He also reiterated a call for a "humanitarian pause" in fighting to allow much-needed relief in and to allow people to leave.

Since January, over 40,000 internally displaced persons have escaped the conflict zone into makeshift camps, located mostly in Vavuniya, as well as Mannar and Jaffna, and nearly 4,000 shelters have been constructed at various IDP sites in Vavuniya District, where the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is setting up a temporary medical facility.

"We have a separate set of concerns over the situation in the camps and transit centres," Mr. Holmes said, calling for conditions in these sites to meet international standards. Following a visit to Sri Lanka, he told the Security Council last month that movement into and out of these camps is "currently highly and unacceptably restricted."

Mr. Holmes "didn't say anything new in his latest briefing other than reflecting on the escalation of the crisis and the pathetic impotency of the UN in handling the situation," Roy Gardiner Wignarajah, a spokesman of the Canadian Tamil activist group, International Human Cultural Union, told TamilNet Friday.

He also referred to a recent statement by Professor Francis Boyle, a leading expert in International Law, who said that it seemed as if the UN is now



The top humanitarian relief official in the UN continues to stand behind Sri Lanka, even contradicting the figures of his own agency to ensure that his reports are most favourable towards the government

repeating one of the 'most shameful and disgraceful debacles in its entire history in today's Vanni Pocket by becoming complicit in Sri Lanka's genocide.'

Mr. Holmes in his brief on Thursday said: "I call on all who can exert any direct or indirect influence on the LTTE, for example through the Tamil diaspora, to use that influence now to persuade them to give people the choice to leave and to stop forced recruitment and the use of civilians as human shields."

Roy Gardiner who provided TamilNet a copy of Mr. Holmes' brief, which he had received from a diplomatic source in Colombo, said the brief reflects the "helplessness" of the UN.

"Holmes is turning to the help of the diaspora, which has been unjustifiably victimised all these years as 'terrorist supporters' just for sympathising with the liberation struggle of their kith and kin," he said and blamed the top UN official for "grasping at straws leaving the tail" (a saying

in Tamil: Vaalai viddu thumpai pidiththal). "This diaspora has already said and is saying loudly and clearly what it wants for its kith and kin: A ceasefire and negotiations, the diaspora demands to end the human tragedy," the Canadian Tamil activist further said. "The members of Tamil diaspora have already spoken for their blood relatives and no one else could have spoken better on behalf of the civilians of Vanni."

"Why can't the UN listen to the diaspora that voices for their own kith and kin rather than asking the diaspora to do something else in ending their people in concentration camps for an indefinite period."

The UN is the apex body of humanity enjoying all powers, privileges and jurisdiction to act on a situation like this. "But it has a problem in perception," he said.

"It is the policy followed by the powers, branding a liberation struggle as 'terrorism' and branding the genocidal war of Colombo as 'war on terrorism', that is pre-

venting the UN from engaging Colombo and the LTTE in a positive way to end the conflict," Roy Gardiner said.

Meanwhile, the Inner City Press (ICP) at the UN reported Thursday that Holmes' equivocation has contributed to the claims by the Sri Lankan government that "no one in the UN has criticized their conduct in the conflict, neither from the UN Secretariat nor from UN member states."

ICP also brought to light the evasive stance of the UN in crucial matters such as the number of casualties in the safe zone and on the probable duration for running the internment camps for civilians who leave the combat zone.

The ICP reported that Holmes "wouldn't like to put a time frame" on how long the UN would fund the camps.

Likewise, he declined again to confirm his own agency's figures of 2,683 civilians killed from January 20 to March 7, a number that only came out because the document was leaked, ICP said.

Allow rights monitors to visit Sri Lanka: UN

IN the wake of continuing violence and reports about deaths of civilians in Sri Lanka, the United Nations has asked Colombo to allow human rights monitors to visit the country and assess the situation.

"I have asked the Sri Lanka government to allow human rights monitors there. I have not got any response. I am going to press for that," Navanethem Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told reporters in India, during a visit to the island's northern neighbour.

Pillay raised the Sri Lankan issues during her discussion with External Affairs Minister Pranab

Mukherjee.

"Our view is that you can never succeed through military solution. The problem can be solved politically," she said.

She said the UN wanted the Lankan government to ensure safety of civilians.

Pillay hailed India's vibrant democratic and legal institutions, while calling on the world's largest democracy to repeal "dated and colonial-era" laws and to speak out about human rights violations, particularly in its own region.

"I encourage India to speak out on its own, as well as in concert with others, whenever the

human rights agenda that it cherishes and seeks to pursue domestically becomes of concern elsewhere," the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said during her two-day visit to the South Asian nation.

In an address to the National Human Rights Commission in Delhi, she urged India "to continue to support freedom and rights wherever they are at stake, and particularly regarding the alarming situations in its own region, such as those in Sri Lanka and Myanmar."

It was the first visit for Ms. Pillay to the country as UN human rights chief.



UN Human Rights chief Navi Pillay calls for monitors in Sri Lanka

NEWS

Global powers' trials with Vanni civilians

US and rights group accuse Sri Lanka Army of shelling civilians

TO what extent human beings can survive under extreme conditions was a Nazi research on the 'dispensable Jews' of the concentration camps, to find out the levels of extremity the human body and mind can withstand.

Academic and professional circles raise an alarm that the Colombo government and the abetting powers, in experimenting political cum military effectiveness of their local and global order through a no-witness genocidal war, are probably at such a research with the Eezham Tamils.

"Whether a humanitarian catastrophe faced by them is deliberately ignored by the international community and whether the instruments of humanitarian intervention have given up Vanni people for good," ask Dr. J. Sivamanoharan and S. Edmond Reginold, professionals of mental health working in Vanni.

The professionals of the Psycho Social Co-ordinating Committee of the Vanni Region have come out with a first hand report, Friday, on the alarming mental health conditions of the civilians in the so-called safe zone in Vanni.

Recently a British parliamentarian said that she had never heard of the need of bunkers in a 'safe zone'.

The report of the professionals is a true story of the trauma of a people, who are forced to live day and night in the bunkers, amidst torrents of SLA shelling and hundreds becoming casualty everyday. All forms of religious rituals to the deceased are abandoned, the report said.

"Many are losing their zest for life and suicidal ideations are widely found", the report said on the situation, where patients lack medical care and people see their beloved ones pathetically killed

THE United States has accused Sri Lanka of breaking promises to stop shelling a no-fire zone where thousands of civilians are trapped by fighting between separatists and government forces.

"We are very concerned that the government of Sri Lanka continues its shelling of areas where there are large numbers of civilians, very close to hospitals, very close to civilian facilities," Deputy U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Rosemary DiCarlo told reporters on Thursday March 28.

"We have urged the government of Sri Lanka to cease the shelling near civilian areas," she said after the U.N. Security Council met informally behind closed doors to discuss Sri Lanka. "We've had promises, but we need to see results."

Two days earlier, New York based Human Rights Watch made similar accusations against the Sri Lankan government stating indiscriminate army shelling is killing dozens of civilians every day in the no-fire zone in northern Sri Lanka.

"We receive reports of civilians being killed and wounded daily in the no-fire zone, while the Sri Lankan government continues to deny the attacks," said Brad Adams, Asia director at New York-based Human Rights Watch.

A doctor at a hospital in Puthuamattalaan, inside the government-declared "no-fire zone," told Human Rights Watch over the phone that dozens of dead and wounded civilians were being brought to the hospital daily.

According to the UN, more than 2,800 civilians may have been killed and more than 7,240 injured in the fighting since January 20.

Sri Lanka, however, rejected the allegation, saying the Sri Lankan military was not using heavy weapons to attack the Liberation Tamil Tiger Eelam (LTTE) held no-fire zone in northern Sri Lanka.

in front of their eyes.

"Children seem to have outgrown their youth state. The games they play have military connotations and this is a very unhealthy symptom", the report said touching a significant point



At least 617 children are being affected by the current Sri Lankan government military incursion into Tamil areas, including 138 children killed and 608 wounded between March 18 and March 28, in the space of just 10 days, according to reports from Vanni.

Sri Lanka's Ambassador H.M.G.S. Paliakkara, however, acknowledged that the government was returning fire when attacked by LTTE forces from inside the no-fire zone.

"They (government forces) are not firing heavy weapons into the safe zone," he said. "Because (Sri Lanka's) forces have come so close to the military safe zone there is no sense in firing at short-

on the mental condition of children.

Scores of children are killed everyday in government shelling, witnessed by these children, the report said.

The most dangerous phase of

range heavy weapons."

"As you know, the LTTE is firing from the no-fire zone," he said, adding that the automatic return fire might have resulted in some civilian casualties, but not deliberately.

However dismissing Sri Lanka's rejection, Adams said: "The Sri Lankan government has responded to broad international concerns with indignation and

the experiment is the use of terror at a 'safe zone' by a government abetted by powers, in order to imprison the civilians and send them to internment camps for further experiments, said an academic specialized in refugee studies.

denials instead of action to address the humanitarian crisis."

Both DiCarlo and Adams criticized the LTTE for not letting civilians leave the no-fire zone and using them as 'human shields'.

The Tamil Tigers' use of civilians as human shields "adds to the bloodshed," Adams said and called on the LTTE to allow civilians to leave the conflict zone.

The academic also hinted at the connotations behind India starting a military hospital instead of a civilian one at Pulmoaddai.

It shows the angle from which they want to experiment with the civilian issue of Vanni, he said.

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NEWS

Rev. Jackson calls for ceasefire

TamilNet

VETERAN American civil rights campaigner Reverend Jesse Jackson, who addressed the Tamil Diaspora conference in London on Thursday said that "we [the global community] have a moral obligation to stop the killings" in Sri Lanka.

The American civil rights activist also raised the need to increase the international awareness of the crisis and asked what his organisation, the Rainbow Push Coalition could do to help.

Rev. Jackson stated that the crisis can only be resolved by "thinking it out, and not by shooting it out." He called for a commitment to a ceasefire because "we cannot negotiate to the sound of bullets whizzing over our heads."

"We know that there has to be a cessation of violence to get back to the table to resolve the conflict," Rev Jackson said.

"Whenever there is human misery, whenever there is fear, we have a moral obligation," he said. Saying that he was aware of the crisis in Sri Lanka, Rev Jackson asked "what can we do to help".

Referring to the political accommodation that has been achieved in Northern Ireland, Rev. Jackson spoke about the achievements of the civil rights movement, including marches calling for an end to segregation and to free Nelson Mandela.

"I am convinced we have never lost a battle we fought, and never won a battle unless we fought," Rev Jackson said.

"There are those who still think that violence is a solution," he said. "I believe it is not."

Rev. Jackson said he was convinced that non-violence was strength, not weakness, because it required the use of the mind, not just missiles. "I think our choices remain non-violence and co-existence," he said. Referring to the increasingly connected world, Rev. Jackson said "if people know our story they will gravitate to the rightness of our cause."

The Tamil family must seek some way of reconciliation over elimination, he said, "some plan to co-exist and not co-annihilate."

Asking what his organisation can do to help, Rev Jackson said one reason for being at the conference was to get the Tamil story told.

"Your witnesses must be able to testify," he said, "and not be drowned out by the sound of bullets and the quiver of fear."

He called on Tamils to define the help that they seek, saying that US Secretary of State Clinton had spoken and British Prime

Minister Gordon Brown had called for a ceasefire.

"What can the world do to get you back to the table and away from the battle field?" he asked, stressing the urgency about the matter.

When we fight these battles, there are some rules of the game, he said.

"We must affirm international law, human rights, self-determination and economic justice."

With that fight comes the faith to fight on until the morning cometh, he said. "We must not give up."

In our own country, not long ago, it was almost state-sanctioned terrorism, Rev Jackson said. It is not long ago that we made apartheid in our own country illegal. "We walked behind the caskets of the martyrs, the murdered and the marginalised."

The reason America is where it is today is "because we didn't give up; because we turned to each other, not on each other; because we kept reaching out; because we kept building coalitions; because we kept the faith; because we kept out hope alive." This long process, of each victory leading to another victory and each struggle leading to another struggle, led to Barak Obama becoming the 44th President.

In Sri Lanka also, we need affirmation of respect for international law, human rights, self-determination and economic justice, he said.

"Let us choose negotiation. Let us work it out and not fight it out," he said. "If the cause is right, you will prevail."

"It means co-existence not co-annihilation. It means talking with both the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil people. It means convincing all involved that beyond the pain on war is a peace that's possible."

"We must believe that peace with justice is possible," Rev. Jackson said.

"We are interested in trying to bring visibility and resolution to this crisis," Rev Jackson said, and volunteered that his organisation, Rainbow Coalition, would help in any way to achieve this.

"Hope matters, because if you can see beyond the situation, you can get where you see," Rev Jackson said. "You must conceive it, believe it, achieve it."

"We have a moral obligation to work together to stop the killing, to end the fear, to provide the hope," he said.

Rev. Jesse Jackson concluded his speech by stating that "We must live to see the end of the crisis in Sri Lanka as another victory in our quest to make the world a better place in which to live."



Veteran American civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson, addressing a gathering of Diaspora Tamils in London, said the world has a 'moral obligation' to stop the killing in Sri Lanka.

UN in ceasefire call, with only modest criticism of Sri Lanka

TamilNet

The UN Security Council's second session in a month on the conflict in Sri Lanka was a "friendly censure" of the government, according to Jorge Urbina, the Ambassador of Costa Rica, a member of the Council.

Following a closed door session at which Sri Lanka's Mission to the UN showed pictures of the conflict zone, U.S. Ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo said that Sri Lanka has been shelling areas with civilians, near to hospitals, reported Inner City Press.

She said that the camps for internally displaced people, which she called interment camps, would only be funded by the UN for three months, the agency reported.

Top UN Humanitarian John Holmes, on the other hand, said he "wouldn't like to put a time" frame on how long the UN would fund these camps, from which IDPs cannot leave or receive visits, even from family members.

Likewise, he declined again to confirm his own agency's figures of 2,683 civilians killed from January 20 to March 7, a number that only came out because the document was leaked to Inner City Press.

Meanwhile, the UN, backed by the US and Britain, has urged the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Tigers to back a "humanitarian pause" in fighting.

A senior UN official said the civilian population trapped in the conflict zone in the north was not being allowed out.

Amnesty International said on Friday that thousands of civilians were increasingly at risk in the conflict. Rights and aid groups have continued to criticise both the government and the Liberation Tigers over civilian casualties.

Amnesty International said that tens of thousands of people trapped in government-designated "safe zones" in the north-east were becoming more exposed because of the escalation in fighting.

Amnesty also called for an immediate truce to allow aid to reach trapped civilians and ensure safe passage for all those who wished to leave.

It called on the UN and international donors to put pressure on Sri Lanka to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to camps for displaced people.

"The deliberate firing on civilians by either side constitutes a war crime," said Sam Zarifi, director of the Asia Pacific region at Amnesty International.

"We cannot stress enough the importance of an immediate pause to allow the displaced to leave before thousands more are killed."

Holmes' equivocation, combined with UN Resident Co-ordinator Neil Buhne's even more pronounced placating of the government - which has led senior

UN officials in New York to say Buhne has been "captured" - have led the Sri Lankan government to claim that no one in the UN has criticized their conduct in the conflict, neither from the UN Secretariat nor from UN member states, Inner City Press reported.

Inner City Press asked Sri Lanka's representative after the meeting to explain his Foreign Minister's claims. He said he would have to look into them.

Asked when the newspaper editor locked up during the conflict would be put on trial or released, he said "I am not an astrologer."

He said the Army is closer than one kilometer from the zone, but is holding back.

A senior UN official on March 25, the day before the Council meeting, said that the UN internally is increasingly worried of a "nightmare scenario" in which the government makes a final push, tens of thousands of civilians end up dead and "everyone blames the UN."

U.S. Ambassador DiCarlo said the number of civilians remaining in the LTTE controlled area was somewhere between 150,000 and 190,000.

The UN's Holmes preferred to use the Sri Lankan government's figure, which is 70,000, Inner City Press said.

This is despite figures released by his own organisation, which said that between 200,000 and 250,000 civilians remained in the LTTE controlled territory.

NEWS

LTTE: Pressure Colombo for ceasefire, negotiations

THE LTTE is not a movement believing that war is the only means to achieve the aspirations of the people it represents. But, political solution needs an environment conducive to it.

The International Community can play a positive role by adequately pressurizing Colombo for ceasefire and by promoting negotiations between Sri Lanka and the LTTE as equal partners with due recognition, said Selvaraja Pathmanathan, the LTTE head of international relations, in an interview to TamilNet on Monday, March 30.

On the issue of civilians, Mr. Pathmanathan said they have already asked the International Community (IC), what international instruments now hold Sri Lanka accountable for the denial of basic rights of the people already moved and presently living in the internment camps.

Pathmanathan's interview was a summary of the LTTE's endorsed position on the current situation.

"No amount of international concerns or guarantees had enabled the Sri Lanka government to provide a swift and just solution for the displaced in the past", Pathmanathan said, citing the examples of the people of Valikaamam, Jaffna, in camps for 19 years and the people of Manalaaru and Thiriyaay in the East for 14 years.

"It is unrealistic to expect that the people of Vanni who have shown allegiance to the LTTE will be treated any differently or with justice", he said.

While insisting that the IC should ensure adequate food and medicine to the civilians of Vanni in the safe zone as a priority, Pathmanathan said that such a humanitarian response is an

important step, but band-aid solution will not deal with actual grievances of the people.

Responding to the human-shield accusation, he said that they were people living with the LTTE, sought protection from the LTTE and always chose to move towards LTTE, even when they were displaced and had chances to go to Colombo's side.

"LTTE has a moral responsibility to protect them", he said adding that people should not be coerced to leave their place of choice by denial of food and medicine and by continuously placing them under shelling.

Laying down arms before any political solution is unrealistic, he told TamilNet, pointing to the Sri Lankan context where the government has built up a brutal force and the peaceful demands of the Tamils in the past have always been met with violence of the Sri Lankan forces.

"It is wrong to assume that the versatile and resilient LTTE is in a weakened position", he said.

Looking upon Tamil Nadu as an emotional and geographical base for Eelam Tamils in any fall back and appreciating the support of the people of Tamil Nadu, Pathmanathan said that the Tamils who have genuine sympathy for India have never been opposed to its strategic interests.

On the uprisings of the diaspora, Pathmanathan foresees further strengthening and resoluteness, if there is escalation in the aggression of Colombo.

The right to self-determination is of paramount importance to the diaspora and it has clearly recognized the role of LTTE in any solution to the conflict, he said, adding that the diaspora should be given a chance of being heard by the IC.



Dozens of American Tamils on Friday, March 20, staged a protest rally in front of the headquarters of the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC, urging the IMF to deny funding to Sri Lanka.

US Tamil group files complaint against IMF, US Treasury

TAMILS Against Genocide (TAG), a US-based activist group, filed a complaint against Secretary of the US Treasury, Timothy Geithner, and the US Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Meg Lundsager, in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia to obtain a "declaratory judgment that a failure of the United States to oppose Sri Lanka's pending \$1.9 billion IMF loan application would constitute a violation of U.S. law."

The 84-page complaint asserts that "[d]efendants, sitting on the Board of Governors and Executive Committee of the IMF, respectively, are obliged by statute, 22 U.S.C. 262d, to vote against any loan application submitted by a member country with a pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

"Plaintiff reasonably apprehends that Defendants might for non-statutory reasons decide not to oppose Sri Lanka's request for a \$1.9 billion balance of payments IMF loan in violation of section 262d. If Plaintiff waited to sue Defendants for allegedly violating section 262d in failing to oppose Sri Lanka's \$1.9 billion IMF loan application until after the loan had been granted, there would then be no practical legal remedy for the violation," the

Complaint notes.

The previous Friday, in a letter addressed to Secretary of the US Treasury, Timothy Geithner, and to the US Executive Director at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Meg Lundsager, warning of the filing, counsel for TAG said that TAG will be filing a complaint in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia "to obtain a declaratory judgment that a failure of the United States to oppose Sri Lanka's pending \$1.9 billion IMF loan application would constitute a violation of 22 U.S.C. 262d."

The letter further said: "[t]he lawsuit will be withdrawn at any time the Plaintiff receives a written commitment from you that the United States will oppose Sri Lanka's pending \$1.9 billion IMF loan request."

The complaint asserts: "[i]f Sri Lanka is denied its \$1.9 billion loan request by the IMF, it is reasonably likely that its pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights will diminish or end in order to qualify for IMF funding under section 262d; or, the GOSL would be financially disabled from continuing its pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

"The GOSL is especially vulnerable to economic sanctions at present because its economy is severely ailing," the letter noted.

"The IMF team would present a report on its review mission to the board of the Fund by the middle of next month [April] and, once approved, the first tranche would be released on the same day," Sri Lanka's weekly Sunday Times said last week, quoting a senior Central Bank official.

Bruce Fein, counsel for TAG, said: "We have an overwhelming factual case for believing that the GOSL is guilty of horrifying human rights abuses that satisfy the statutory standard of section 262d. The more difficult question is whether the statute can be enforced in a court of law, which is the usual course, or whether it entrusts the decision exclusively to the Secretary of Treasury. The answer is not self-evident because the statute does not say the Secretary's decision is not subject to judicial review or that it does not create a private cause of action. Clearly, the intended beneficiaries of the statute are the would-be victims of the human rights violations, and TAG is a stand-in because they cannot sue themselves given their plight in Sri Lanka," Fein added.

If the Court agrees with TAG's claim, an injunction or a declaratory judgment would persuade other IMF members who follow the lead of the United States to vote against the assistance, which would kill the GOSL's application.

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Futile Wait

Sri Lanka's slaughter reveals the fiction of international liberalism.

As the Sri Lankan military continues to massacre Tamil civilians at will in Vanni, there have been increased murmurs of disquiet from the international community. The United States, for example, has, with a few words, surpassed India in its criticism of Sri Lanka's cold-blooded slaughter. The mass agitation in Tamil Nadu has not stirred the Central government to act. Instead, overwhelmed by the simplest of tasks expected of any aspiring great Power - ending a regional crisis - Delhi is paralyzed. Bewildered by the responsibility thrust upon it, the South Asian hegemon is simply hoping the problem will go away. The eruption of Tamil outrage and the ensuing nationalist mobilisation - in Tamil Nadu and the Diaspora - will, along with untrammelled Sinhala chauvinism, ensure this crisis will not disappear, but expand to become an important part of the international agenda.

Diaspora anger is directed not just at the Sinhala state, but at the (West-led) international community. With good reason. For many years, especially during the 2002-2006 peace process, Western liberal states have not only lectured the Tamils on human rights, pluralism, democracy, etc, but justified their calculated attempts to thwart the Tamil freedom struggle on these bases. The proscriptions of the LTTE in 2006 by the European Union and the Canada, for example, were rationalized on the movement's 'violence'. The supposed primacy of liberal values were put forward as justification for denying the Tamils self-determination - the quintessentially liberal right of a people to govern themselves.

Yet, today, as the Sinhala state deliberately and openly tosses these values aside, as it uses mechanized violence to kill upwards of 60 Tamil civilians each day, as it incarcerates those who flee the war-zone, as it silences the press, not through censorship, but spectacle killings and arbitrary arrest, these same Western states are silent. Their logic is the same as the Sinhala state: if the LTTE can be wiped out, the Tamils can be easily pacified; hence, whatever serves the destruction of the LTTE is permissible, including the wholesale slaughter of Tamil civilians.

Even now, as over two hundred thousand starving, traumatized Tamils cower amid Sri Lanka's ceaseless barrages, these self-styled paragons of liberalism remain silent. No threats now of sanctions, withholding aid, war crimes charges, travel

bans and such. Instead, there are mumbings of independent accounts not being available, questionings of the number affected and, of course, blaming of the LTTE: the problem, according to them, is the LTTE's blocking of the people's movement, not the hundreds of shells being fired at them by 'their' state. There is also no talk now of 'responsibility to protect', or 'sovereignty as responsibility'.

These are important lessons for the Tamil community. Firstly, international commitment to human rights is a fiction. Rather, human rights have been merely a rhetorical tool to justify the self-serving bias of the Western states (non-Western states, whilst equally self-serving, do not attempt to dignify their interests with claims about human values). In other words, the Tamils need no longer take seriously these hypocritical sermons. Secondly, it is clear that if the Tamil people are to survive the genocide being conducted by the internationally-backed Sri Lankan state, they have to act. It is not simply a matter of waiting for the West to be stirred into action by the scale and horror of killings: the West did not act when Bosnians, Kosovars, and Tutsis, amongst others, were being slaughtered, there is no reason to think it will do so for us. These peoples stood up for themselves first.

However, Tamils must test Western rhetoric to the utmost, bringing as much pressure as possible to bear on Western governments, agencies and institutions. Some actors are rethinking their long-standing logic that the Sri Lankan state, no matter what its flaws, must be defended against the LTTE and Tamil demands for Eelam. HRW, for example, is now insisting that the world do something, warning the IMF, which has been approached by Colombo for an emergency loan, that the money will not further peace. These changes have nothing to do with the Tamils, but with the realization that the Sinhala state cannot be cajoled, stroked and seduced into behaving like a good liberal world citizen: it needs to be disciplined. Tamils realized this thirty years ago; state terror cannot be stopped by strengthening the state, but by confronting and coercing it. Our struggle is based on this self-evident fact, one deliberately ignored by Western states or, more charitably, masked by liberal optimism. The question for Tamils is: when the realization dawns in Western capitals, will they act or will they watch?

Inclusion the way to real peace

Howard Debenham

The Age

ON May Day in 1993, Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa was in the back streets of Colombo, greeting supporters as they streamed into the capital for the day's festivities, when he was killed by a suicide bomb. Had the conventions of diplomacy permitted it, I would probably have been at his side. He had been insistent that I should join him on this occasion.

In the previous year, Premadasa had allowed me to see some of the handiwork of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Before the bodies were cleared away, I spoke with some of the shattered survivors of LTTE massacres of simple farming folk in the pitifully poor eastern villages of Palyagodella and Alinchipotana, in one instance crouching with a wild-eyed labourer over the pools of drying blood where his family had had their throats cut.

But neither Premadasa nor his successors were as accommodating when it came to investigating the handiwork of government forces, which has so often been of equal savagery.

By the time of his assassination, however, Premadasa was coming around.

Among other things, he allowed a limited review by a small group of ambassadors (myself included) of the widespread extrajudicial killings and disappearances of Tamils at the hands of government forces.

It is often overlooked that Tamil militarism was, in the first place, spawned by the deliberate demonisation of Tamils (both Hindu and Muslim) in the early years of Sri Lanka's independence from Britain.

The situation took a significant turn for the worse following the failure of Junius Jayawardene's government to promptly intervene in the deliberate slaughter of thousands of innocent Tamils over just a few days in 1983.

In his retirement, an unrepentant Jayawardene explained to me at his residence in Colombo in 1992 that, following a tit-for-tat killing of policemen by Tamil militants, 1983 had been about giving the Tamils a "bloody nose" to "put them in their place".

He scoffed at the notion that the country's Tamils were as Sri Lankan as the Sinhalese. Jayawardene was not alone in this view then, nor is he now.

It is therefore hardly surprising that many Tamils feel it is only the spectre of the Tigers and their ability to strike back that prevents further pogroms against their people.

The answer for many Tamils to the Government's failure to broker a peace has been to flee the country to either the refugee camps of southern India or, for the more fortunate, a new start in other countries.

This is happening in such numbers that they are referred to as the Tamil diaspora.

For those trapped in the north during the current Government offensive, the risk of accepting a "haven" on the Government side must be weighed against the risk of putting themselves in the hands of Government forces.

The essential interest of Sri Lanka's Sinhalese political parties and personalities is still how to exploit the struggle with the Tigers to maintain power in Colombo.

Successive governments have more or less dressed up their intention to negotiate to assuage the feelings of the United Nations and donor countries, including Australia, but not nearly enough to fool any informed observer into believing that the underlying issue of rapprochement between Sinhalese and Tamils is any more on the government's agenda than it was 50 years ago.

There is little hope of an enduring end to Sinhalese victimisation of Sri Lanka's Tamils until Sri Lanka produces the kind of courageous and visionary leadership that can admit the errors of the past and reach out in a sustained way to all Sri Lankans, thus providing a sound basis for drawing all Tamils, including the Tigers, into the political process.

The Sri Lankan government did this with the murderous Communist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) back in the late '80s after its violent uprising had almost brought the country to its knees.

But that, it seems, was different: the JVP was Sinhalese.

Unhappily, the vision required today, free of the deeply embedded political and financial corruption that has plagued Sri Lanka for so long, is nowhere in sight.

Ordinary Sri Lankans, disempowered and cowed through decades of dominance by the

Continued on p14

OPINION

Cluster bombs, concentration camps, civilian attacks, media - lies, lies, lies

Dr. A. Baskaran
Tamil Guardian



Sri Lanka's numerous lies about its approach towards the Tamils are being exposed by its conduct

SRI LANKA'S war on the Tamil people has reached an extremely brutal level. Many neutral observers and human rights activists have called it 'genocide'. While brutal attacks against Tamils have reached a new height, lies spread by the government have also reached a new height. For example, Sri Lanka has been lying on the use of cluster bombs, concentration camps, and attack on food supplies, civilians, and media. The catalogue of lies and disinformation churned out by plethora of ministers and spokespersons of Sri Lanka reminds us the propaganda unleashed by the Dr Joseph Goebbels under the Hitler's Third Reich. Sri Lanka has been emboldened to churn out lies after lies because it has thrown out all international media and aid organisations from the war zone and imposed censorship on domestic media through draconian laws and brutal violence. Even ICRC does not have full access to this area. Despite this news blackout, one after the other Sri Lanka's lies are being exposed everyday.

Since October 2008 there have been reports about the indiscriminate use of cluster bombs and artillery shells by Sri Lankan forces on Tamil population. These are banned weapons under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) which was signed by 92 countries in Oslo in December 2008. Sri Lankan ministers and officials have repeatedly denied using cluster munitions despite graphic evidence from the war zone. They claimed that Sri Lanka does not even have cluster munitions and technology. This lie was exposed by Pakistan which supplied these munitions to Sri Lanka. In an interview to the Dawn newspaper in July 2008, Major General Mohammad Farooq, Director General of the Defence Export Promotion Organization, while boasting about Pakistan's defence exports spilled the beans that Sri Lanka has purchased cluster bombs, deep penetration bombs and rockets and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) from Pakistan. As early as May 2006 the Indian

Express reported that Sri Lanka has placed orders with Pakistan for cluster bombs, deep penetration bombs and rockets and UAVs. At the time no one took the report seriously, maybe except the LTTE.

Sri Lanka claims that Tamil civilians who crossed over to government areas from the LTTE controlled areas are sent to 'welfare villages'. In reality these are nothing but concentration camps. They are surrounded by thick rolls of barbed/razor wire and manned by the army. The inmates are denied free movement outside camps and are not allowed to meet relatives. The fact that these are really concentration camps are not lost on international agencies and media. For example, after seeing the plight of the so called 'liberated' Tamils in the East, this is what Sreeram Chaulia from the Maxwell School of Citizenship in Syracuse, New York, commented (Online Asia Times, 11 September 2008): "With the objective of luring Tamil civilians into 'cleared areas' (territory retaken from LTTE control by the state), the government is setting up reception centres in Vavuniya district. These camps are strictly policed and offer very limited freedom of mobility for inmates. Since civilian escapees from Wanni are all suspected of loyalties to the LTTE, the camps are subject to screening and 'weeding out' operations by security forces. One informed international aid official likened them to Nazi concentration camps." Again, in her testimony to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee (February 2009), Dr Anna Neistat from Human Rights Watch described these camps as 'defacto internment camps'. She observed: "The perimeters of the sites are secured with coils of barbed wire, sand bags, and machine-gun nests. There is a large military presence inside and around the camps...Upon arrival in Vavuniya, all displaced persons, without exception, are subjected to indefinite confinement in defacto internment camps, which the government calls transit sites, 'welfare centres', or 'welfare vil-

lages".

Recently, some media and embassy officials were taken on a conducted tour to one or two selected camps which are considered the best ones to demonstrate how nicely the helpless Tamils are looked after by the government. In one just tour, Amos Roberts, reporter for 'Dateline', a programme of Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), could see how terribly frightened these people are to open their mouth to the visiting reporters and he also observed how the camp was filled with soldiers everywhere. A representative of Medicine sans Frontiers advised him not to talk to the inmates as that could spell disaster to these helpless people. When Amos Roberts sought permission to visit and interview the wounded Tamil civilians who have been evacuated by ICRC from the war zone to Trincomalee, Major General Palita Fernando, the military commander in Trincomalee refused permission and when asked why not, he replied: "that's the way we want it, simple answer." It is obvious, if allowed to interview wounded civilians, they would tell the truth that the government has been attacking civilians with cluster bombs and munitions and thousands were killed.

Sri Lanka has presented a plan seeking international funds to create a number of these 'welfare villages' (concentration camps) to detain displaced people for at least three years. When objected by international agencies including the UN, the government started saying that Tamils will be sent to their homes within a short period. This is another lie that is proved by the experience of the people in the East and Jaffna. Thousands of people in the East are still languishing in internment camps more than one year after their so called 'liberation'. There are over 93,000 permanently displaced persons (for over 19 years) from Jaffna district where their homes were taken over by the

army to form High Security Zones (HSZ). This shows that the government has no intention of sending people back to their own villages.

Often Sri Lanka used embargo on food and medicine to bring Tamils to their knees. During the ceasefire period it closed A9 Highway to Jaffna and stopped food supplies. It followed same strategy and also used artillery shelling and aerial bombings to drive Tamils out of their villages in the East. In September 2008 the government ordered all aid organisations to leave LTTE controlled areas and stopped supplies of food and medicine to over 350,000 Tamils. Recently, the government allowed ICRC to carry just a tiny fraction of the supplies needed by a ship to the conflict area. The army fired artillery shells on the ship while it was unloading and blamed it on LTTE. This is a devious ploy to cancel even this tiny volume of food supply. This cheap lie is again exposed by the ICRC. In a statement to BBC (9 March 2009), Carla Haddad, Deputy Head of communications of ICRC, Geneva said: "We have no reason to believe the ship flying the ICRC flag was targeted by shells which were falling around it while trying to unload supplies."

A number of journalists, particularly Tamils, have been killed by Sri Lankan government forces and its paramilitaries. Lasantha Wickrematunge, the editor of Sunday Leader, was killed in broad daylight. His obituary (published as editorial) written by himself anticipating such event clearly accused the government for his death. Recently, Nadesapillai Vithyatharan, the editor of two Tamil news papers - Uthayan and Sudar Oli - was at first abducted by the notorious White Van in broad day light (very few returned alive after being abducted). But the government was forced to declare that he was arrested due to international pressure. Yet, Jaliya

Wickramasuriya, Sri Lanka's Ambassador to the US, had the audacity to argue that the "attacks on journalists may have been perpetrated by 'terrorists' seeking to embarrass the government."

Again Sri Lanka has been deliberately and repeatedly lying about the number of Tamil civilians in the war zone. It insists that there are only 70,000 people in the war zone while the ICRC and UN aid agencies have been saying that there are between 200,000 and 250,000 people in the war zone.

It seems that by repeating same lies hundreds of times, Sri Lanka wants to make the international community to believe them as facts and truths. To some extent, it appears to have succeeded in marketing its lies and deceptions. But now increasingly the international media has started asking probing questions. For example, the international community has willingly accepted Sri Lanka's absolute lie that it is always ready to find a political solution but the LTTE has been intransigent. They never asked Sri Lanka: 'what is your peace proposal or political solution?'

In his recent article in The Guardian (17th December 2008), Jonathan Steele nailed this lie and observed: "Ironically, the only constructive proposals made since the crisis started came from the LTTE in 2003. Their suggested Internal Self-Governing Authority is over-ambitious but it has never been matched by a detailed blueprint from the government side. Until the government comes up with a realistic offer, which will have to involve elements of a federation, there will be no cause for celebration and no chance of compromise and peace."

Is this the beginning of the end for the Goebbels of Sri Lanka? Let us hope so.

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DIASPORA



Diaspora conference calls for ceasefire

TAMILS from across the globe gathered in London on March 25 and 26 to resolve that an immediate ceasefire in Sri Lanka was essential and that humanitarian access to the Vanni should be permitted immediately.

The forty-five delegates from 22 countries gathered in the British capital also recognized that the Tamil should determine their own destiny and that Tamil Eelam had been mandates by the Tamil people as the only enduring solution.

Wednesday saw the delegates take part in an internal session, addressing issues such as the humanitarian tragedy, the genocidal war and the right to defend, the political processes of establishing legitimacy and the role of international actors in the conflict. Based on discussion papers, the delegates established their position on each of the four issues and shared them with the group.

At the end of Wednesday, a resolution was drafted that covered

the main points the conference participants wished to be stressed. This resolution was then unanimously affirmed by a show of hands on Thursday.

On Thursday, the delegates were addressed by distinguished speakers including American civil rights campaigner Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rt. Hon. Des Browne MP, the British Special Envoy to Sri Lanka. Other guests included Lord Falconer, Siobhan McDonagh MP, Simon Hughes MP, Keith Vaz MP and Sir Jimmy Saville.

Rev. Jackson spoke of the moral obligation to stop the killing and the need to bring "resolution and visibility" to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Des Browne spoke of the numbers killed, saying that 70,000 was probably an understatement. He focused on the pressing need, which he identified as the humanitarian crisis, and the hundreds of thousands of Tamil caught in the conflict zone.

Stating that civilians must have the freedom to leave the conflict zone, Mr. Browne said the situation was made worse by the largest number of casualties occurring in the safe zones. He condemned "these acts of violence" and said that he expected the Sri Lankan government to investigate every death.

The British government is doing everything it can to bring about a ceasefire since Prime Minister Gordon Brown mentioned it in January this year, he said.

Nothing that the intention in appointing the special envoy was to focus on the final solution and the humanitarian crisis, he expressed the disappointment of the UK government that Sri Lanka had turned down the appointment. He mentioned that he would be reaching out to Diaspora groups in order to continue his role as Special Envoy.

Stating that the UK does not wish to impose a solution - "that is for the Sri Lankans to decide" -

Mr. Browne said that like Northern Ireland, the only viable solution is a political one, not a military one.

The conference ended with a press conference on Thursday afternoon, attended by many London based Tamil and international media representatives.

The conference resolution is reproduced in full below:

We, the 45 delegates from 22 countries at the Conference of World Tamils, having met and deliberated in London on the 25th and 26th day of March 2009:

■ Are severely shocked and deeply concerned by the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the Vanni and lack of any substantive reaction by the international community;

■ Recognise that the Sri Lankan state is engaged in a genocide of the Tamil people of the island;

■ Recognise that the Tamil people have the inalienable right to determine their own destiny;

■ Recognise that the Tamil people

have mandated the establishment of a free, sovereign state of Tamil Eelam as the only enduring solution;

■ Recognise that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are the authentic representatives of the Tamil people;

And hereby we resolve that:

■ All killings and attacks of Tamil civilians by the Sri Lankan state must cease immediately;

■ Unimpeded humanitarian assistance to those in need in the Vanni must be allowed;

■ The United Nations, International Non-Governmental Organisations, and the ICRC must have unfettered humanitarian access to the Tamil population and be permitted to re-establish a permanent presence in the Vanni;

■ There must be an immediate ceasefire; and

■ Negotiations for a political solution to the conflict must begin immediately after the ceasefire, based on the principle of self-determination of the Tamil people.



NEWS

Indian Army back in medical garb

Gen. Ashok Mehta
Sunday Times



Indian soldiers are back on Sri Lankan soil in an active role, albeit in the guise of only running a medical hospital. As Tamil civilians are deliberately targeted by the Sri Lankan military, the India military is busy providing treatment to the Sinhalese soldiers engaged in targeting the Tamil civilians.

PRECISELY 20 years to the month after the Indian Peace Keeping Force left Sri Lanka, Indian soldiers from a military field hospital re-entered the country last week, low profile in civilian clothes.

It has sparked a minor controversy, some Sri Lankans depicting it as an invasion.

Just how fragile is India's neighbourhood diplomacy and diminishing clout, especially in the last five years, chasing the chimera of big power status, is evident from Delhi's futile attempt in the last two years to end the war and humanitarian tragedy in the North East of Sri Lanka.

None of the neighbours listen to India.

In the Maldives where India's Special Forces preempted a coup d'etat in 1988, the government there has been more amenable to China and the West than to Delhi.

We've been at war with Pakistan since 1947, unable to stop cross border terrorism despite a decisive military victory in 1971.

Delhi has invested billions in Nepal, introduced democracy twice and helped Maoists to join the political mainstream and win elections. Yet anti-India feelings are the highest ever and the Maoist government most hostile, in words and deeds.

As for relations with Bangladesh where 300 soldiers were martyred during the Liberation war, the less said the better, though there is now a glimmer of hope with the new Sheikh Hasina government.

For preserving Sri Lanka's sovereignty and territorial integrity, 1300 IPKF soldiers sacrificed their lives. Yet IPKF was unceremoniously evicted and two decades later, while India is still committed to safeguarding Sri Lanka's well being, Colombo has not moved an inch to meet Tamil political grievances.

Instead it has de-merged the North East and created a situation where majority of Tamils are now housed outside the North East or in camps in the North East.

When Eelam War IV picked up after the liberation of the East by security forces in 2007, the story goes that Tamils in Jaffna would look up into the sky for Indian help reminiscent of Operation Poomaalai, the bread-bombing in 1987 which ended the war and led to the Indo-Sri Lanka

Accord.

Unfortunately IPKF was withdrawn before the implementation of the 13th Amendment-enabled devolution. When the last ship carrying IPKF left Trincomalee Harbour, the then Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne called up Commander-in-Chief President R Premadasa to report that the last foreign soldier had left Sri Lankan soil.

What followed was a long period of India's sulk diplomacy. In 2000 when the Tamil Tigers all but defeated the security forces after the fall of Elephant Pass, Sri Lanka requested for India's help in evacuating the Jaffna garrison. This would have meant another expeditionary force interposed between the warring factions. Delhi offered financial assistance but declined any military involvement.

A tested friend Pakistan came to Sri Lanka's rescue by supplying crucial Multi-Barrel Rocket Launchers which helped to hold back the Tigers. Indian leaders at the time remarked, heavens will not fall if the LTTE reoccupies Jaffna.

India-Sri Lanka relations are characterized by different IPKF placards carried by Buddhist monks in Colombo. In 1987 it was "IPKF Get Out". In 2000, "IPKF Come Back" and in 2008: "IPKF Keep Out".

Therefore, the description of the Army Medical Team at Pulmoddai, North of Trincomalee Harbour as 'invasion' accompanied by protests by doctors. Each placard is representative of the perceived military balance with the LTTE and the political equation with India.

All through 2007, when President Mahinda Rajapaksa was embarked on a military solution to crush the Tigers and eliminate the menace of terrorism with military assistance from China and Pakistan, financial aid from Saudi Arabia and Iran and moral and material help from the West, periodically India, under pressure from Tamil Nadu would urge Colombo to end the war with homilies like 'no military solution' and 'only a negotiated settlement will bear fruit' etc. These prescriptions were water off a duck's back especially after a military solution appeared within grasp.

More unsolicited advice followed: military victories offer a political opportunity to restore normalcy. But Rajapaksa would

allow no intervention in the war which his ministers said India was supporting.

The LTTE had been confined into a box, shrunk in size from 16,000 sq km to less than 30 sq km today.

Just as Sri Lanka shifted the spotlight from an ethnic war to one against terrorism, towards end 2008 /early 2009 India and the international community were able to shift focus to the humanitarian disaster stemming from the war.

India has chosen to ignore the fact that at least 40 civilians are being killed in the war zone every day, as part of an understanding with Sri Lankan that it can fight the Tigers, irrespective of the humanitarian costs.

But as a result of this silence, India has further shrunk its political and strategic space in Sri Lanka.

The plight of Tamils trapped in the war took centre-stage. Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee created a furore in Parliament by his statement that LTTE had killed fleeing Tamil civilians and done much damage to the Tamil community.

The humanitarian situation was reviewed periodically with the Sri Lankan government and safe zone created to minimize effects of the conflict on Tamil civilians.

Despite the mounting unrest in Tamil Nadu, charges of genocide against Colombo and sustained calls for ceasefire by Tamil Nadu politicians, at no time did India expressly ask for a ceasefire or a humanitarian pause in the fighting.

Mukherjee said: "Government

has no instrumentality under which it can force a sovereign government to take a particular action".

Yet, slipped into President Pratibha Patil's address to Parliament was a call for a ceasefire and talks with LTTE.

Home Minister P Chidambaram, from Tamil Nadu said LTTE "must announce they're willing to lay down arms and are prepared for talks. Simultaneously Sri Lanka should suspend military operations. Then we can arrange talks".

All that Rajapaksa did was to order a 48-hour safe passage without any ceasefire and said he would talk to LTTE only if they laid down arms. Rajapaksa has not been pressed on the political rights for Tamils or any deadline on devolution.

With general elections round the corner, Delhi has done a tight-rope walk, balancing Tamil sentiments in Tamil Nadu with Sri Lankan sensitivity to Indian interference in conduct of war which unknown to many it has backed with crucial intelligence, operational and moral support.

Credit for the military victory though is rightly claimed by Sri Lankan forces with Chinese and Pakistani military assistance. India's help is taken for granted even as Colombo ignored National Security Advisor MK Narayanan's demarche of not seeking military hardware from China and Pakistan.

The collective urgings of the President, Foreign Minister and home Minister of India and leaders of Tamil Nadu for a ceasefire to end the tragic plight of Tamils went unheeded. Rajapaksa's government had promised India zero tolerance of civilian casualties. According to a UN report, 40 civilians are being killed in the war zone every day.

Last week, a UN report by Human Rights High Commissioner cited 2800 people being killed and 7000 injured since 20 January in the war zone and described some actions by the Army and Tigers as constituting war crimes.

Charges of genocide and calls for ceasefire have echoed in the Canadian Parliament as also R2P

(Right To Protect). Former US Deputy Assistant Attorney Bruce Fein has called for genocide charges to be slapped against Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and security forces officials.

The US Senate Foreign Relations hearings last month noted that Sri Lanka's war on terror had a connection with the ethnic conflict and Tamil grievances.

The most scathing criticism of Sri Lanka has come from Human Rights Watch, an NGO. It says the media and human rights organizations have been prevented from covering the war replete with LTTE excesses and government abuses. A culture of impunity prevails even as a humanitarian disaster - which ICRC has forecast as a humanitarian catastrophe - on an unprecedented scale is in the making and the international community is quiet.

The government denies any problem exists though at least 150,000 civilians are caught in the crossfire.

Last month Sri Lanka's Donor Co Chair - the US, Norway, Japan and the EU - evolved a US-led humanitarian intervention operation by three Marine Evacuation Brigades to extricate civilians trapped in the war. In this plan there was much more than humanitarian concern for the US which has always sought a strategic foothold in the North East of Sri Lanka, close to the crown jewel, Trincomalee harbour.

A Washington-Colombo-Delhi dialogue on the launch of Operation rescue was apparently rejected by India and which Sri Lanka also did not favour.

Instead, Delhi has managed to locate a 52-man medical mission as a beach head for any contingency project to end the war. This is a concession made by Sri Lanka to India for letting Colombo have its way in the fight to finish the Tigers regardless of the humanitarian costs.

By allowing Rajapaksa a free hand in defeating the Tigers without any move on the political solution, Delhi has further shrunk its political and strategic space in Sri Lanka.

Colombo like Kathmandu wants to look beyond Delhi.

NEWS

Singh to 'wait and see' even as Tamils die

DESPITE hundreds of Tamils dying in Vanni daily, Indian premier Manmohan Singh wants to 'wait and see' for the Rajapakse regime to put forward a devolution package, something it has not managed to do for over three years.

In a letter to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Singh wrote: "Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has very recently reaffirmed his commitment to a devolution package, which, he said, will fully satisfy the Tamils."

"We may wait and see what steps are actually taken," he added.

The letter, which tries to project India setting up a military field hospital near the eastern port city of Trincomalee as a major achievement, is aimed at defending the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the Congress from attacks by Tamil Nadu political parties in the context of Sri Lankan issue ahead of Parliamentary elections.

Most Tamil political parties in the state of Tamil Nadu have accused the Central and state governments of abandoning the Sri

Lankan Tamils to their fate.

Singh's letter, dated March 19, which was a reply to a February 22 letter written by the Chief Minister.

The Indian Premier's letter further stated: "During discussions with Sri Lanka, we have consistently proposed temporary cessation of hostilities, which could be utilised to facilitate movement of the Tamil population out of the war affected areas to safety zones, where proper rehabilitation facilities could be arranged."

"Our concerns regarding the plight of the Tamils were explicitly reiterated. Certain suggestions to ameliorate their conditions were proposed, the most important being an offer to set up a Field Medical Unit/Hospital to cater to the civilians and internally displaced persons evacuated from the war zone."

"The Sri Lankan side has responded enthusiastically to this offer and the field hospital has been established and it is functioning well," the letter, which is viewed as an inadequate attempt to protect the DMK, said.



Sri Lanka credits India with being of great assistance in the war against the Tigers, especially with respect to the naval intelligence provided by India, which resulted in the sinking of LTTE ships

India's help significant in defeating Tigers - Sri Lanka

NIMAL Sripala de Silva, a cabinet minister in Sri Lanka parliament, said that India's great assistance helped Sri Lanka Army (SLA) to defeat the Liberation Tigers and that the people of Sri Lanka should be grateful to India, while responding to the strong accusation against allowing Indian Medical team into Sri Lanka by Anurakumara Tissanayake, the parliamentary group leader of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party, during the proceedings of the House of Representatives when it met Tuesday, March 17, sources in Colombo said.

Anurakumara Tissanayake pointed out that the Indian medical team in question is really a wing of the Indian Army and that its members will engage in espionage from Pullmoaddai hospital helping the Liberation Tigers.

Tissanayake had submitted a lengthy report on this issue

expressing his strong condemnation and protest against the coming of Indian medical team to Sri Lanka.

The report was presented in the House with the permission of the Speaker at the end of question time. Minister Nimal Sripala de Silva also told the members of the House that the Government of India is providing its co-operation and support for the war against the Liberation Tigers to the Rajapakse government.

The minister told the House that as no Sri Lankan doctor was willing to treat the SLA soldiers, fifty of them have been forcibly enlisted to serve.

Therefore no one can protest against the presence of Indian medical team in Sri Lanka, he further added.

Meanwhile, National Independent Front (NIP) led by Wimal Weerawansa and Jathika Hela

Urumaya (JHU), the Buddhist Monks party, had expressed their strong opposition to the coming of the Indian Medical team in a press meet held in Colombo last week.

During the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, India's main opposition party, the Bharathya Janatha Party (BJP), will expose the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's support for the escalating war in Sri Lanka in which thousands of Tamils have been killed and maimed, according to a senior leader of the party.

Referring to Minister Nimal Sripala de Silva that India's help significant in defeating LTTE, Tamil Nadu State BJP president L Ganesan said on Wednesday, March 18, said it is proof of the tacit support extended by the UPA government to the Sri Lankan army.

Two more die in Tamil Nadu over Eelam issue

TWO more persons self immolated themselves in two separate incidents in Tamil Nadu over the plight of Tamils in war-torn Sri Lanka.

On Monday, March 23, Marimuthu from Sivakasi and Balasundaram Puthukottai died when they set themselves ablaze protesting the inaction of Central and state governments in relation to the Eelam Tamils.

Marimuthu (60), a former Congress activist, set himself ablaze at Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district and police said it recovered a letter in which he had urged Congress President Sonia Gandhi to intervene and stop the ethnic war.

Marimuthu, in the letter, said: "Neither the Tamil Nadu Government nor Centre are serious about ending the conflict in the island nation."

Before setting himself ablaze after pouring kerosene over his body, Marimuthu hoisted the

Congress flag in front of his house, according to Police.

In the second incident, Balasundaram, a cook from Sri Lanka living in India since 1972, immolated himself at Alangudi in neighbouring Puthukottai district, upset over the situation in Sri Lanka.

A member of DMDK, headed by actor Vijayakanth, he expressed anger over Congress "not taking any steps to protect Lankan Tamils," police, quoting the initial report said.

After a heated debate with his friends, he returned to his house late last night and immolated himself.

Attempts by his neighbours to save him proved futile, police said. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

At least 11 persons have so far committed self immolation in different districts of the state in the past few months, calling for action on the Eelam Tamils issue.

PMK splits from Congress over support for Eelam

PAATAALI Makkal Katchi, an ally of ruling Congress government has announced that it is forging a new regional alliance in a blow to the ruling Congress party's attempts to secure a national coalition weeks before the general election. PMK said it would join Co-ngoress opponent the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the Lok Sabha election, party officials said. PMK's move is the latest in a series of blows for Congress. While it is still the election front-runner, Congress has struggled to cement alliances in Bihar and

Uttar Pradesh, which together account for 120 seats in parliament. Many national polls show that the Congress-led alliance could beat the main opposition grouping led by the BJP, but it could still fall short of a majority in parliament. A "Third Front" of communist and regional parties is challenging the two main alliances. PMK's move in Tamil Nadu could give impetus to the Third Front if the PMK and AIADMK join it in an alliance. Tamil Nadu, which accounts for 39 of the parliament's 543 seats, was a swing state in the last general election in

2004 and helped the Congress-led coalition gain a majority in parliament. Speaking to reporters after announcing its split with Congress, PMK founder and leader Dr. Ramadoss said Congress has been ignoring the sentiments of seven crore Tamils on the Eelam Tamils issue and his party would press the next Central government to take concrete steps on Sri Lanka which includes stopping all aid, economic and military. He also said that the party stands by the belief that a separate nation for Eelam Tamils was the only solution to their problem.

NEWS

TNA calls for immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access

SRI LANKA'S largest Tamil political party called on the government to declare a ceasefire to protect civilians in the north and demanded that humanitarian agencies are permitted access to the conflict zone before discussing a political solution to decades long ethnic conflict.

Tamil National Alliance (TNA), in a press conference organised to clarify its stance relating to an invitation by President Mahinda Rajapakse to discuss the 'prevailing political situation' in the country, on Wednesday March 25, said that it has decided not to engage in talks with the Sri Lankan President or anyone representing the SL state before a conducive environment for such political engagement is created by an immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access to the suffering people of Vanni.

"The Sri Lankan military must stop the offensive," Mavai Senathirajah, a lawmaker from the Tamil National Alliance, said yesterday.

"Humanitarian workers must be allowed in," Senathirajah said adding "The government must listen to the calls by the international community."

The TNA, which holds 22 seats in the 225-member parliament, also condemned the abduction of the brother of Jaffna district MP Kajendran, barely 48 hours before the TNA was to decide its position on accepting an invitation for a meeting with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Family members of TNA parliamentarians have earlier been harassed, especially during the time of budget voting.

The text of the letter to President Rajapaksa released by TNA follows:

INVITATION TO MEET WITH THE TAMIL NATIONAL ALLIANCE

We thank you for the letter sent by your Secretary dated 20 March 2009, inviting us and all the other Members of Parliament belonging to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for a meeting chaired by you, to be held on 26 March 2009 at 6.30 p.m. at Temple Trees to discuss the prevailing political situation in the country.

We observe that you vaguely state that you desire to discuss the prevailing political situation in the country without any specific reference to the political issues that need to be discussed. There is also no reference to the grave humanitarian crisis prevailing in a part of the Mullaitheevu District, relating to around 300,000 internally displaced Tamil civilians. After the government designated certain areas as safe zones, these displaced Tamil civilians largely moved into these areas.

We consider it necessary to state certain facts pertaining to this grave humanitarian crisis relating to the displaced Tamil civilians.

1. The fighting between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE's) military formations is said to be taking place on many fronts some distance away from the said government designated 'safe zones'. Yet the Sri Lankan armed forces have been bombing the safe zone areas by air and artillery fire killing on an average between 40 to 50 civilians on a daily basis and causing grave injuries to civilians many times more.

2. Despite the grave humanitarian crisis prevalent in these areas, the government has evicted all international humanitarian organizations and has since imposed restrictions on supplies to these areas tantamount to an embargo on food, medicine, shelter and other basic humanitarian items.

3. No independent media is permitted access to this area to report on the situation really prevailing in this area.

4. No functioning hospitals remain in the Vanni as government bombing campaigns have destroyed all such facilities. There are gross shortages of medicines. Despite numerous requests by the few remaining medical officers in the Vanni, the government has failed to send adequate medicine. Diseases related to overcrowding, poor nutritional intake, a lack of sanitation and exposure to the elements are becoming prevalent. People have died recently as a result of complications which could have been easily treated had there been proper health facilities and medicine.

5. The Internally Displaced Persons do not have any form of toilet facilities. The government has banned all construction materials into the area and as a result building of temporary toilets has not been possible.

6. More than 60,000 families (240,000 individuals) are living in open areas with shelter made from tarpaulin. Due to the very hot weather conditions, staying in these shelters has become intolerable. The government has not allowed shelter materials into the area.

7. Even though there are around 300,000 civilians in the relevant areas, the government insists that there are only about 70,000 civilians in the area. This position of the government is inconsistent with the assessment of UN and other international agencies who estimate that there are around 200,000 displaced civilians in this area. In doing so the quantity of food aid and medicine and other essential humanitarian supplies sent is grossly



Refusing an invitation by the Sri Lankan government for individual members of the TNA to attend a discussion on the political situation, the alliance instead called for an immediate ceasefire

inadequate and as a result the civilian population is starving to death or dying due to unavailability of medical supplies. It should be noted that within the last month, several people have died of starvation. The dead have included many children.

8. There is also a complete inadequacy of drinking water. Water Bowsers from Puthukudiruppu are used for transporting water. This water is dangerous to collect due to continuous shelling and bombing of the area by the Sri Lankan armed forces. To compound matters, lack of fuel for the Bowsers and the water pumps is also hampering water collection and delivery. The situation regard to non drinking water (toilet, washing, cooking, etc) is that it is almost non-existent.

9. Since the beginning of this year alone, over 3000 civilians have been killed in these so-called 'safe zones' by bombing campaigns carried out by the Sri Lankan armed forces. Well over 8000 civilians have been gravely injured. The fact that the armed forces have been bombing these areas suggests that the civilians are being deliberately targeted. It is also our submission that the government's failure to permit adequate food and medicine into these areas demonstrates that food and medicine are being used against the Tamil civilians as a weapon of war.

The TNA has made public this grave humanitarian situation and

appealed to the government to take necessary steps to ensure that the Tamil civilian population is not harmed. The international community has similarly made strong appeals to the government on behalf of the Tamil civilian population. The government has not responded to these appeals. If the military attacks now taking place, and the deprivations caused by the embargo on food, medicines, shelter and other humanitarian needs continue, a grave humanitarian catastrophe affecting the Tamil civilian population will before long occur in this area.

We consider it our primary duty to protect and safeguard the displaced Tamil civilian population from this grave humanitarian catastrophe. We have to therefore earnestly request :-

■ That the military attacks be stopped immediately.

■ Ensure that adequate supplies of food, medicines and shelter are sent immediately to sustain a civilian population of around 300,000 so that the displaced Tamil civilian population is not denied urgent humanitarian needs.

■ Urge that UN agencies, the ICRC and other international NGOs are able to freely function in this area, and thereby ensure the fulfillment of the humanitarian needs of these displaced civilians.

We should also point out that the international community has with one voice urged the govern-

ment to swiftly take action on the aforesaid lines.

It is in the background of this grave humanitarian crisis relating to the Tamil civilian population that we have received your invitation. The Tamil people and our party are strongly of the view that the utmost priority must be given to the resolution of this humanitarian crisis before it assumes catastrophic proportions, and that any political discussions to be purposeful and meaningful must follow such resolution.

Since you have hitherto consistently followed a policy of ignoring the TNA in regard to all political issues in the Northeast, we are glad that you now wish to engage in discussions with us, recognizing even though belatedly, that we represent the Tamil people.

We will extend our cooperation to any credible political process that seeks to evolve an adequate, acceptable and durable political solution to the Tamil question.

We would strongly urge that you take necessary steps to address forthwith the grave humanitarian crisis pertaining to the displaced Tamil civilian population.

Yours sincerely,
- R. Sampanthan M.P., TNA Parliamentary Group Leader
- Mavai Senathirajah M.P., ITAK
- N. Srikantha M.P., TELO
- Suresh Premachandran M.P., EPRLF
- G. G. Ponnambalam M.P., ACTC



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An Immediate & Permanent
Ceasefire in Sri Lanka!**

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To: Hyde Park Corner

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British Tamils Forum

NEWS

Inclusion the way to real peace...

Continued from p6

business and political elite and effective exclusion from the rule of law, are still easily duped into believing that they will be better off once the Tamils have been crushed.

It is at least doubtful that the LTTE can be completely wiped out by Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa's salaried soldiers, who are largely in it for the money they cannot earn at home.

Government forces should certainly be able to outgun the LTTE in military set pieces, but it is most unlikely that they will ever be able to match them in guerilla warfare.

Having so loudly abandoned the peace process, the Rajapaksa Government is throwing everything into the military fray.

Though this approach is being backed with claims of higher body counts and significant incursions into Tiger territory, the consequence of pushing the military arm of the LTTE to the wall could well be a dramatic upsurge in

urban terrorism, of which the recent mosque bombing in Akuressa would only be the beginning.

It is an option for which, after all the years of its existence, the LTTE is no doubt well prepared.

Should infrastructure, transport and even tourism become systematic targets in such a campaign, Sri Lanka could be brought to its knees.

Rajapaksa, or whoever is in power, would then have to think again about a peace process, but this time from a weaker position than the one that applied through much of 2006, when a small group of uniquely qualified Americans and a former Australian high commissioner quietly tried, working with the highest levels of the Sri Lankan Government, to build capacity for statesmanship and progress before peace talks with the LTTE scheduled for Geneva in October of that year.

As it turned out, Sri Lanka's leaders only pretended to listen, and so doomed a country and a



people once so full of promise to more mindless death and destruction, the worst of which may yet be to come.

Howard Debenham was Australian high commissioner to Sri Lanka from 1992 to 1994.

President J R Jayawardene was not alone in viewing the Tamils as being 'not as Sri Lankan as the Sinhalese'. He saw the Black July riots, in which over 3,000 Tamils were killed in government sanctioned and organised violence, as a chance to 'bloody the Tamil's noses' and 'teach them their place' on the island.



LTTE continues attacks on STF

IN the space of one week, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched attacks on Special Task Force (STF) commandos in the eastern district at four separate locations killing 9 STF commandos injuring 13.

According to LTTE officials in Ampaarai, LTTE fighters carried out three separate attacks on Friday March 29 and Saturday March 30.

Liberation Tigers launched the first attack around 10:45 pm on Friday on the STF commandos posted at the road check point located between Urukaamam and Kiththul on Batticaloa-Badulla road.

An STF commando was killed and three seriously injured in that attack.

The second attack took place Saturday, March 28, around 12:30 pm on the STF mini camp at 78th mile post on Chengkaladi-Badulla road.

In that attack, a time bomb planted by the Tigers exploded killing two STF commandos and seriously wounding one.

The third attack was on the STF sentry post in Karadiyanaaru

police division.

In that attack, three STF commandos were killed and four seriously wounded, Batticaloa district LTTE officials said.

Meanwhile, two Sri Lanka Army (SLA) home guards lost their legs caught in a booby trap set by the Tigers Saturday around 6:30 am in the 16th village in Ampaarai district, LTTE members in Ampaarai said.

A few days earlier, on Sunday March 22, three STF commandos were killed and five sustained injuries when LTTE commandos launched an attack on an STF mini-camp on Chengkaladi - Badulla Road.

According to a news release issued by the LTTE Political division in Batticaloa, the STF commandos were caught in the surprise attack by LTTE soldiers in the east.

The mini-camp was located between Koappaaveli and Pullumalai, the Tigers said.

Most of these attacks are occurring in parts of eastern Sri Lanka that the Sri Lankan government claimed long ago to have 'liberated' from the LTTE.

Sydney protest draws more than 5,000

TamilNet

MORE than 5,000 protesters took to the streets of Sydney Saturday, 28 March, demanding action against the Sri Lankan government and the atrocities being committed against Tamil civilians caught up in the war in the Vanni.

Sydney's Central Business District suffered traffic congestion and delays as demonstrators took over major city roads as the protesters marched towards the city's Town Hall, participants in the rally said.

Many protesters carrying placards of the Eelam flag and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader V. Pirapaharan and called out for the Australian government to help end the genocide in Sri Lanka.

Members of the Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO) which organised the event said they were pleasantly surprised at the show of solidarity.

TYO representative Jay Nathan spoke to the crowd, describing the stark differences between life in Australia and life in Sri Lanka.

"I see my fellow Tamils living in Sri Lanka and I am overcome with sorrow to see that they are denied even a fraction of the rights and luxuries that I enjoy here in Australia," Ms Nathan said.

"They live their lives in fear of persecution, abduction and death because of who they are."

Adrian Francis, another TYO representative, said: "To me it is beyond doubt that the agenda of the government of Sri Lanka is to reduce and marginalize the Tamil population. These are our brothers, these are our sisters, mothers, fathers, everything - all lost, lost lives, lost dreams."

"The thousands of protesters, many of whom have lost faith in

the international monitors who have repeatedly failed to hold the Sri Lankan government to account for the thousands of civilians left dead, and the many thousands more injured without access to decent medical aid, demand the immediate action to stop any more lives being lost," Francis added.

"We feel that organisations such as the UN need to do more to stop the bloodshed in Sri Lanka immediately. The parallel between what is happening in Sri Lanka and what happened to the Jewish people in Germany is uncanny, yet the world sits silently. You would think the international community would have learnt from the horrific lessons of the past," Francis said.

"What the world doesn't realise is that once you are forced into a corner with no way out, one can only fight for one's life, one's freedom. That is exactly what is happening to the Tamil people. Yet the world conveniently calls this terrorism," said another protester.

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(1) Premier Division - 8 Teams (2) Division One - 8 Teams (3) Division Two - 9 Teams (4) Division Three - 15 Teams

Premier Division Draw

26/04/2009	5/31/2009	7/26/2009
Redbridge -A Vs Santos	Northern -A Vs Santos	Southall -A Vs Santos
Skyrose Vs Millenium	Southall -A Vs Redbridge -A	Northern -A Vs Redbridge -A
Southall -A Vs Northern -A	Skyrose Vs Eastham -A	Skyrose Vs Dollishill -A
Dollishill -A Vs Eastham -A	Dollishill -A Vs Millenium	Millenium Vs Eastham -A
5/3/2009	6/7/2009	8/16/2009
Santos Vs Eastham -A	Dollishill -A Vs Santos	Santos Vs Northern -A
Redbridge -A Vs Dollishill -A	Eastham -A Vs Redbridge -A	Redbridge -A Vs Southall -A
Northern -A Vs Skyrose	Skyrose Vs Southall -A	Eastham -A Vs Skyrose
Millenium Vs Southall -A	Millenium Vs Northern -A	Millenium Vs Dollishill -A
5/10/2009	7/12/2009	8/23/2009
Santos Vs Skyrose	Skyrose Vs Santos	Santos Vs Dollishill -A
Millenium Vs Redbridge -A	Redbridge -A Vs Millenium	Redbridge -A Vs Eastham -A
Northern -A Vs Dollishill -A	Dollishill -A Vs Northern -A	Southall -A Vs Skyrose
Eastham -A Vs Southall -A	Southall -A Vs Eastham -A	Northern -A Vs Millenium
5/17/2009	7/19/2009	8/30/2009
Millenium Vs Santos	Santos Vs Millenium	Eastham -A Vs Santos
Skyrose Vs Redbridge -A	Redbridge -A Vs Skyrose	Dollishill -A Vs Redbridge -A
Southall -A Vs Dollishill -A	Dollishill -A Vs Southall -A	Skyrose Vs Northern -A
Northern -A Vs Eastham -A	Eastham -A Vs Northern -A	Southall -A Vs Millenium
5/24/2009	6/21/2008	
Santos Vs Southall -A	Santos Vs Redbridge -A	
Redbridge -A Vs Northern -A	Millenium Vs Skyrose	
Dollishill -A Vs Skyrose	Northern -A Vs Southall -A	
Eastham -A Vs Millenium	Eastham -A Vs Dollishill -A	

Flying Tamil Eelam flag legal - Canadian Police

THE use of Eelam Tamil national flag did not contravene any law in Canada, according to a report by CBC News which cited Toronto police spokesman Mark Pugash.

Citing the ban on the LTTE, some representatives of the Sri Lankan government, who have been over-sensitive to any demonstration of overwhelming Tamil diaspora support to Tamil nationalism, have been demanding a ban on the national flag of the Eelam Tamils, seeing it an opportunity of dismembering Tamil nationalism.

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in Canada, Dayanada Perera, last week in an interview with the country's foreign policy newsweekly, Embassy, called on Canadian authorities to crack down on public protests by the "Tigers".

"Your government should

have climbed down and not permitted them to wave the LTTE flags because it's a banned terrorist organization," Mr. Perera was quoted as saying.

Deepak Obhrai, the parliamentary secretary for the foreign affairs minister told the magazine that he had received Perera's complaints, but the government does not plan to take any action against the protests. He said that LTTE funding channels from Canada have been blocked and that the government has cut all contact with the group, but no action will be taken against peaceful protests.

The national of flag of the Eelam Tamils, described as symbolizing the political, social and cultural aspirations of the Tamils of Sri Lanka was declared in 1990 by the LTTE, at a time when it was not banned by any government.

The flag was also differentiated from the LTTE emblem by having no legend on it. There is also no red colour background in the LTTE emblem. The national flag soon got into wide use with the masses and became a symbol of their nationalist aspirations.

"There is nothing wrong in the Tamil nation raising its national flag. The Tamil national flag is not the Tigers' flag but it is the Tamil people's flag," was the message of leaders who resisted the opposition by the Sri Lankan military to hoist the Tamil Eelam flag during the peace process in SLA controlled territory.

The LTTE selected a Tiger as the Tamil Eelam national insignia to present an image rooted in Dravidian civilization symbolizing martial valour and the uniqueness of Tamil language and culture.



The Kumbabishekam and Sangabishekam of Swarna Kamadzi Amman temple took place on 8 February and 15 March respectively. The Temple, at 1 Stephenson way, Three Bridges, Crawley, West Sussex, is opened for the public between 10:00am till 1:00 pm and 6:00pm till 9:00pm, with poojas at 12:00 noon and 8:00pm.

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