

TAMIL GUARDIAN

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300,000 civilians continue to live in internment camps

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NEWS

Rains raise fears of malaria

IRIN

HEALTH experts warn that the expected rains could increase the risk of waterborne diseases for tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps in northern Sri Lanka.

More than 280,000 people who fled fighting between government forces and the now defeated Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are staying in some 35 government camps in four northern districts - Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna and Trincomalee.

The majority, 220,000, are living at the Menik Farm camp, a sprawling site of over 700ha outside Vavuniya town.

"With such a large number of people concentrated together, there is always the risk of waterborne disease with the rains," Laurent Sury, head of mission for Médecins Sans Frontières, told IRIN in Colombo.

MSF runs a field hospital in Vavuniya District where more than 23 of the IDP camps are located, housing 260,000 IDPs.

"There are around 115 patients at the MSF hospital now," Sury said.

Even though the World Health Organization (WHO) says no major disease outbreaks have been reported, the risk factors for malaria and diarrhoea have increased.

WHO said the Ministry of Health had taken precautions to deal with a possible malaria outbreak, with proper surveillance mechanisms at all camps.

Until 19 June, only 29 cases of malaria had been reported, but health officials initiated a high alert when two cases were reported on 18 June from zone 4 in Menik Farm.

Field staff have been deployed to all hospitals and healthcare units assisting IDPs by the Regional Malaria Office for the Vavuniya District from 8 June.

"This is an alarming situation considering the very small number of malaria cases reported from the entire country in the recent past," the WHO update

said. "An active surveillance for malaria is ... [ongoing]."

Until 18 June, 1,060 cases of dysentery and more than 5,000 cases of diarrhoea had been reported from the camps, it said.

"There is a serious threat of waterborne diseases because of so many people living so close together," one humanitarian official said, highlighting the risk posed by improper disposal of solid waste and rubbish in the camps.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on 27 June, the greatest needs were specialist doctors and other health workers.

"IDP health workers, paid by the government of Sri Lanka, are working in the IDP sites. Thirty-seven new doctors are expected to be appointed at the Vavuniya District within a week. However, a shortage of specialists remain," OCHA confirmed.

Thousands of Tamil civilians have fled the fighting in the north and are now staying at government camps in and around the northern town of Vavuniya.

According to the latest communicable Disease Weekly Update released on 25 June, surveillance within the camps by the Ministry of Health staff was being strengthened.

The greatest disease outbreak reported so far was chickenpox, with more than 12,000 cases, but those numbers had since been decreasing, the UN reported.

The number of new cases reported is steadily declining and admissions to hospitals are 40-50 patients per day, OCHA confirmed on 19 June.

"In Vavuniya, the number of Hepatitis A cases is also declining. A total of 2,139 cases were reported as at 12 June," the report added.

Medical officers working with the displaced suspect that most of the chickenpox patients contracted the disease before they arrived in camps.



Families are forced to share shelters built for fewer people in the camps, leading to rampant disease

Children malnourished

ABOUT 15-20% of the 30,000 to 35,000 children housed in the Sri Lankan government run camps are suffering from 'acute malnutrition' according to NGOs and the UN.

"About thirty thousand to thirty five thousand children are sheltered in Manik Farm. Many of them are suffering from diseases and some still suffer from injuries sustained in the military operations. Fifteen to twenty percent of them are also suffering from acute malnutrition," media reports in Colombo said quoting Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, the executive director of Colombo based NGO Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya.

It can take a few weeks to few months for these children to recover, Dr. Vinya has told media.

"The international standard is for 20 people to use one toilet, but in Manik Farm about 70 people are sharing one toilet," he said.

Around five thousand internally displaced children from Vanni and sheltered in camps which are described as internment camps fenced with barbed wire are found to be malnourished, according to a survey conducted by a non-governmental organization.

Sri Lankan Health Ministry says it has been working together with Sarvodaya, UNICEF and

others to improve the conditions in the internment camps.

Meanwhile, the high rate of malnutrition reported among children in camps for displaced people in Sri Lanka is a cause for concern, a senior UN official told the BBC's Sinhala service.

The UN's representative on children and armed conflict said the government should set up special feeding programmes.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN's special representative on children and armed conflict, told the BBC Sinhala Service that the UN hopes to send a delegation to advise the government on a range of issues relating to child welfare.

"The malnutrition rates are very high, especially among

young children, and [there is a] need for special feeding programmes and all those kind of things in the camps for the children.

"So, our sense is that the sooner they can get back to normalcy, to education, to schools, it is the best thing," she said.

Her comments follow concern expressed by Sri Lankan charity Sarvodaya about rates of chronic malnutrition in the camps.

She added that the UN is also concerned about the plight of children separated from their families.

"The delegation is to look into whether there is enough effort being taken to reunite them with parents," she said.

Plea for refugees

A NEW group of eminent Tamil people in Sri Lanka has made a plea for those held in government camps to be given a timetable for their release. The group said people were yearning to be released from their confinement. The camps still house nearly 300,000 Tamils displaced in the final stages of the war which ended in

May. The Group of Concerned Tamils in Sri Lanka says Tamil voices are being stifled and members of the minority were nervous of speaking out. In its third statement, the group says it is disturbed over persistent reports of poor living conditions and even

continued on p15

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NEWS

Refugees may 'end up in permanent camps'

Hannah Roberts
The Times

SRI LANKAN authorities appear to be building permanent camps to house many of the 300,000 refugees from the last phase of the war with the Tamil Tigers, despite promising to resettle 80 per cent of them by the end of the year.

Aid workers have told The Times that permanent buildings are being erected at the Manik Farm site where the UN says that 230,000 of the refugees are being held after the 'Tigers' defeat in May.

The aid workers said that they were able to do humanitarian work in four of six zones at Manik Farm but were barred from two others, including the mysteriously named Zone Zero.

"We're not allowed to work in these areas," said Rajinda Jayasinghe, the head of Relief International in Sri Lanka. "But you can see from the outside proper brick-walled buildings going up."

Some aid workers said that the site was fast becoming Sri Lanka's second biggest city after the capital, Colombo, with schools, clinics and banks, where refugees have deposited more than a billion rupees.

"In zones where the Government works there are permanent shelters: cement floors, timber structures, corrugated iron roofs," said one aid worker, who asked not to be identified. "These are designed to last years."

The Government originally proposed holding the Tamil refugees in "welfare villages" for up to three years to check that they were not Tigers, and to clear their villages of mines.

After donor nations protested and Tamil MPs and activists compared the barbed wire enclosures to concentration camps, the Government promised to resettle 80 per cent of the refugees by the end of this year.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the Defence Secretary, who is also the President's brother, renewed the promise last week. Aid workers said that the new structures violated UN guidelines on temporary refugee shelters, and suggested that the Government meant to hold refugees for much longer.

UN sources also said that the Government had been using refugees to build the permanent

structures without paying them — a possible violation of UN guiding principles on internal displacement.

Refugees involved in the building had asked to be paid but the Government refused, the UN sources said.

Aid groups' concerns over the buildings grew last month when the Government proposed giving people in each tent two bags of cement to build their own floors, a leaked document obtained by The Times shows.

At a meeting on June 15, a group of non-governmental organisations providing shelter in the camps expressed "strong reservations" about the plans, according to the document. They said that the proposed concrete flooring was too expensive, provided no protection against flooding and violated UN guidelines on temporary refugee shelters.

"The use of concrete flooring is inconsistent with temporary structures and is one of the recognised criteria of a semi-permanent structure," the document said.

"The use of concrete or screed flooring suggests a commitment by the SLA [Sri Lankan authorities] to increased longevity of the IDP [internally displaced person] sites."

A spokesman for the Sri Lankan High Commission in London denied that the Government was building permanent structures in the camps.

"Concrete is laid only for the safety and to maintain cleanliness. It should not be considered as an indication for permanency," he said.

"People will be resettled as fast as possible. [The] 180-day target is a huge challenge. However, the Government will accomplish it with the help of the UN and friendly foreign countries."

He said that the Government had already resettled 600 families and the army had cleared 100,000 landmines.

UN officials say that those resettled are mostly the elderly and children, and foreign demining agencies say that they have been given access so far to only about 30 sq km (11½ sq miles) of the former conflict zone with access to the camps also restricted.



Tamils in the internment camps line up for food, which is sometimes as little as a single meal per day

Displaced Tamil women forced into sex rackets

Amanda Hodge
The Australian

CONDITIONS for about 300,000 refugees forcibly detained in camps across Sri Lanka remain dire, with reports of a prostitution racket run by officials in a remote camp.

Aid workers told The Australian officials at the internally displaced people's camp in Pulmoddai, a remote northeast region, are running the prostitution ring using women kept in the camp.

The Australian understands the allegations are the subject of a joint investigation between the Sri Lankan government and an aid organisation.

"It's been brought to the attention of senior government officials but no one seems to be doing anything about it," said an aid worker, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

"It's hard to know whether it's coercive or not, but there is an average of three families living to a tent and it can be extremely difficult trying to get privacy. You can imagine the military coming in and asking for something in return for more space or more favours."

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Palitha Kohona described the claims as "absolute rubbish", but confirmed the government was investigating the reports.

"These (the military) are the guys who were winning the war - they could have raped every single woman on the way if they wanted to. Not one single woman was raped," he told The Australian last night.

"I am sure in a mass of people there may be individuals who want to make a quick buck one way or another, but you have to remember the tents are so close together you can't do anything without the entire neighbourhood knowing. If you had a racket going, thousands of people would know about it."

A UN official said many families remained separated in the camps and that men and women believed to be Tamil Tiger fighters were being removed with "no due process or proper documentation, like arrest receipts, given to parents or guardians".

"These issues are of huge concern for us," the official said. "The lack of freedom of movement is a violation of human rights under Sri Lanka's own constitution."

The restrictions have heightened tensions in the camps, including a mass protest in the Ramanathan camp in the northern town of Vavuniya on Sunday

(June 28) in which IDPs tried to break down barbed-wire fences separating one camp zone - and many relatives - from another.

Tamilnet.com claimed two people were killed and at least two were injured when troops opened fire on the refugees.

But reports from aid workers in the camp suggested troops fired only into the air, causing no casualties, and that camp officials reached a compromise that allowed the IDPs movement between the two camps.

UN Sri Lanka co-ordinator Neil Buhne said camp conditions were slowly improving, thanks to better water and sanitation facilities.

"But the main thing is people are still inside these camps and they can't go anywhere. The government has made public commitments to get 80 per cent of people back to their homes by the end of the year (after separating civilians from the fighters) but that's going to be a difficult target to meet."

'People would rather live under trees'

AN opposition MP in Sri Lanka has condemned the state of the internment camps in which Tamil civilians are being held. The situation in the Internally Displaced Camps in the North are so dire that these person if given the freedom to move out of these camps would prefer to live under trees rather than inside the camps. United National Party (UNP) MP S.B Dissanayake said.

"The situation in those camps

is so bad that if the people were given the freedom will go and live under trees," Mr. Dissanayake said. "There are so many diseases spreading within these camps, there are no sanitation facilities, and water is scarce."

"At this time when we must make the Tamil people feel equal we are just angering them by keeping them within these camps that aren't just prisons but are almost like hell," he said.

NEWS

US urged to investigate War Crimes

TamilNet

A COALITION of six US-based Human Rights Organizations, in a letter to U.S. President Obama wrote: "[t]o address abuses associated with the recent fighting [in Sri Lanka's north], there is an urgent need for an independent, international commission of inquiry into many credible allegations of laws of war violations, including possible war crimes, by both sides, as well as illegitimate detentions."

The Coalition included the Carter Center, American Jewish Council through its Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, Physicians for Human Rights, International League for Human Rights, Freedom House, and Amnesty International.

"Despite repeated warnings by several international organizations of impending mass killings of civilians and despite strong statements of concern by you and several other world leaders, more than 20,000 civilians are reported to have been killed. The Times of London and Le Monde have published investigations, based on reliable data, and suggested that most of the civilian deaths were caused as a result of shelling by the Sri Lankan government," the Coalition said in the letter.

The letter warned that "[t]he failure of the international community to take concrete action to protect civilians in Sri Lanka has given the green light to regimes around the world and has signaled that there is nothing that the international community will do when a government kills its own people under the cover of sovereignty."

On the 300,000 Tamil civil-

ians still held in internment camps, the organizations appealed to "urgently address the plight of those in de facto internment camps and to initiate action to hold accountable those responsible for the mass killings. There are reports that some in the camps have already died from starvation or malnutrition....there are consistent reports of widespread and serious human rights violations ... including enforced disappearance, extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment, forced recruitment by paramilitary groups and sexual violence."

Pointing out that "the Sri Lankan government's record on investigating serious human rights abuses is poor and impunity has been a persistent problem," the letter drew attention to the the past failed efforts to address violations through the establishment of ad hoc mechanisms in Sri Lanka, and urged Obama to take steps to initiate an international inquiry into "allegations of laws of war violations, including possible war crimes, by both sides."

In the background of the failure of the United Nations to take any punitive action and realizing that effective leverage can only be exercised by the U.S., the letter said. "It is now imperative that the United States assume the leadership necessary to mobilize the international community to protect the surviving civilians and to hold accountable those responsible for mass atrocities. Failure to do so would encourage governments to commit mass atrocities without fear of consequence. That is why your immediate action is important at this juncture," it said.



The government is accused of possible war crimes in the last conflict, when 20,000 civilians were killed

Aid money 'siphoned off'

THE Sri Lankan Government is trying to siphon off millions of pounds of humanitarian aid by imposing a tax on all funding for aid groups, The Times newspaper reported.

Aid workers told the paper that Burma was the only other country that they could remember imposing such a tax — one of several new measures hampering their efforts to help victims of Sri Lanka's civil war.

Colombo is backdating taxes to 2005, the paper also said. The government has started to insist local and international non-governmental organisations pay the 0.9 per cent tax on all their funding.

That could amount to several million pounds, as there are at least 89 such international and local organisations in Sri Lanka, mostly helping victims of the

2004 tsunami and the civil war.

The new tax regime was unveiled in 2006 but not enforced immediately, the paper said.

Most agencies did not comply, as they hoped to persuade the Government to change it, according to aid workers.

In the past year, however, the Government has grown increasingly hostile towards foreign aid groups and Western donors, accusing many of sympathising with the Tamil Tigers, it said. "If it's non-profit work, it shouldn't be taxed — there should be incentives to work in particular areas instead," Jeevan Thiagarajah, the executive director of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies, told the paper.

The Government says that the tax is designed to crack down on NGOs that abused Sri Lankan law

and squandered their funds on their own staff after the tsunami. Aid workers, however, say the new rules do not grant tax exemption for all the work they are doing — and want to do — to help 300,000 Tamil refugees in army-run camps.

Some say the tax contravenes the international disaster response guidelines drawn up by the Red Cross in 2007 with the participation of 140 countries, including Sri Lanka. "This is money on which people have already paid tax in their own countries and which is supposed to be helping people in need," said one aid worker. "This is a desperate money-making measure by the Government." Another charity worker said: "This runs contrary to everything that the humanitarian aid community stands for."

Probe into MPs' murders urged

THE Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is calling on the government of Sri Lanka to mount a thorough investigation of the murders of 3 MPs, two of them Tamils. The IPU says the Sri Lankan government no longer has any reason for not investigating the murders of the Parliamentarians now that its long-running civil war with the Tamil Tigers is over. The IPU's Human Rights Committee says the government has always maintained it was unable to investigate the murders because they occurred in LTTE-held ter-

ritory. That excuse no longer exists, says the IPU. With Tamil Parliamentarians subject to arbitrary arrest, harassment and intimidation, the committee is concerned about the situation of 12 Tamil MPs, who essentially have been stripped of their rights of freedom of movement and of their ability to perform their legislative duties. The IPU says the Tamil Parliamentarians are reluctant to leave Colombo because their security is not guaranteed. "So, there is great fear among the Tamil Parliamentarians."

Actions speak louder than words

Jeremy Page
The Times

WHEN President Rajapaksa declared victory over the Tamil Tigers in May, he reached out to the Tamil minority that the defeated LTTE had claimed to represent over 26 years of civil war. Speaking in Tamil, as well as his native Sinhalese, he told Parliament in Colombo that the war against the Tigers was not a war against the Tamil people, and declared that everyone in Sri Lanka should live with equal rights.

Since then, however, he has done little to convince Sri Lanka's three million Tamils — let alone the 74 million-strong dias-

pora — of either of those points, and has, in fact, tolerated or condoned much to persuade them that the opposite is true. In the celebrations that followed his victory, he appeared to revel in comparisons to King Dutugemunu, a legendary Sinhalese sovereign who routed a rival Tamil monarch and unified Sri Lanka.

More than six weeks after the Tigers' defeat, his Government still has not allowed UN staff and aid workers unfettered access to the 300,000 ethnic Tamil refugees in army-run internment camps.

Critics of the Government continue to be harassed and intimidated, the most recent example being a popular astrologer who was arrested after predicting that Mr Rajapaksa would lose power

in September. His Government announced that it planned to add another 50,000 people to its armed forces — already at a record strength of more than 350,000, almost all Sinhalese.

In its defence, the Government says that it has set a date of August 8 for elections to representative bodies in the Vavuniya and Jaffna areas, as part of a broader plan to democratise the Tigers' former territory.

However, if the Government continues to indulge Sinhalese nationalists, drag its feet on resettlement, harass its critics and spend public money on the military rather than reconstruction, even moderate Tamils say that the elections will be a meaningless gesture.

NEWS

Attacks on Tamil papers stepped up

ALL the local newspapers of Jaffna that defied publishing an anonymous and defiling notice against the LTTE came under attack by an armed group in the early hours of Thursday.

The notice was brought out in the name of 'Tamil Front Protecting the Country' allegedly linked to a paramilitary group operating with Colombo.

Thousands of copies of the local newspapers, Valampuri, Uthayan and Thinakkural (Jaffna edition), were burnt down wholesale in huge flames by the armed group allegedly operated by the Sri Lankan military intelligence at Anaippanthi and Kannathiddi junctions at 5:00 a.m. Thursday, June 25, while the newspapers were being taken for distribution.

The distribution workers were also brutally attacked.

A distribution worker of Thinakkural, 26-year-old Anojan, who was physically attacked was also robbed of his belongings by the armed men.

Newspaper editors of Jaffna were intimidated to publish the notice and warned of dire consequences the previous day through anonymous telephone calls. However, the editors sceptical of the contents of the notice decided not to publish it.

The Managing Director of Tamil-language newspaper, Uthayan, the biggest seller in the northern district of Jaffna told the BBC that his staff in Jaffna have been ordered to quit their jobs or be killed.

"Tamil Front Protecting the Country in a warning notice, delivered by men in helmets on a motorbike, accused Uthayan of being a "mouthpiece for terrorists" and of aiming to destroy peace, said Saravanapavan.

The security forces have laid on extra protection but Saravanapavan said he was especially worried about the ordinary workers and newsagents who, he said, should be able to operate without fear.

He said it was incumbent on the government to ensure no one was harmed.

Saravanapavan said that one of his colleagues had spoken to President Mahinda Rajapaksa who had promised to take necessary steps to protect media freedom.

Commenting on the attack, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarians Mavai Senathirajah and Suresh Premachandran at a press conference said: "We do not believe that the elections are going to be free and fair. The burning of newspapers on the eve

of nominations raises a big question about the circumstances under which the elections are going to be conducted."

The government is fully responsible for the attack on newspapers that took place when two of its ministers are camping in Jaffna said Suresh Premachandran MP.

After the burning of the Eezhanaadu newspaper along with the public library in 1981 by the Sri Lankan forces, and again the burning of Eezhanaadu by the Indian military (IPKF), this is the third major burning of the newspapers of Jaffna by occupying forces.

In 1981, the burning of the public library and the newspaper office took place while two of Colombo's ministers were present in Jaffna and it is alleged they had a direct hand in orchestrating that. The present attack on newspapers took place when Sri Lanka's Education Minister and General Secretary of Mahinda Rajapaksa's ruling UPFA alliance, Susil Premajayantha and Social Welfare Minister Douglas Devandana were camping in Jaffna.

Meanwhile, a Tamil journalist was kidnapped from outside her home in the capital Colombo and held for a day by people claiming to be the police.

Krishni Ifam, a Tamil reporter who works for media development NGO Internews, said the men had warned her to give up journalism altogether.

According to Ifam, men claiming to policemen forced her to get into their vehicle outside her Colombo home early on Wednesday and drove for several hours while keeping her blindfolded. She was then released in the central city of Kandy late on Wednesday, June 24 with a tiny amount of cash. Ifam said the abductors took her belongings, asked if she was writing articles for foreign media outlets and warned her to give up journalism altogether before releasing her. Ifam used to write for a prominent Tamil-language newspaper.

Earlier Poddala Jayantha, a press freedom campaigner, was abducted and assaulted while returning from work.

According to Amnesty International, at least 14 Sri Lankan journalists and other media workers have been killed by suspected government paramilitaries and rebels since the beginning of 2006. A number of others have been detained, tortured or have disappeared, and at least 20 more have fled the country because of death threats.



The Tamil media in Sri Lanka has come under increasing attack, with editions of the Valampuri, Uthayan, and Thinakkural burnt, distributors beaten and journalists threatened. In light of forthcoming elections in Jaffna, this is seen as a worrying effort to prevent some parties campaigning.

No Media Council request media groups

Anjana Pasricha
Voice of America

MEDIA groups in Sri Lanka have urged the government to scrap moves to re-establish a media panel which could jail journalists. The reactivation of the Press Council is being seen as a means to control the media in a country where concerns have been voiced about intimidation and pressure on reporters critical of the government.

The government's move to revive the powerful Press Council was announced by the Sri Lankan media minister, Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena.

The Press Council was staffed with government appointees. It had the authority to hear complaints about inaccurate reporting or defamation and fine and jail journalists if found guilty. It ceased operations in 2002, after it was criticized as an anti-democratic tool to suppress criticism of the government.

The government says it reactivated the body after a parliament committee found that council salaries were still being paid and office space was still being rented.

Minister Abeywardena says the media has nothing to fear, and it has no intention of gagging the

press or imposing restrictions on it.

But the move to restore the Press Council has provoked concern among journalists in Sri Lanka.

Seven media bodies, headed by the Editors Guild, have in a joint statement to President Mahinda Rajapakse, saying that a media culture cannot be based on placing charges against journalists, fining them or sending them to jail.

Vincent Borsell of the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders calls the decision to restore the Press Council another step to suppress the independent media.

"It's very dangerous and also is unfortunately a new step in all this campaign against free media in Sri Lanka," he said. "I think the government should consider it again."

The Press Council is being considered in the wake of a number of threats and attacks on journalists who have been critical of the government and its handling of a war against Tamil Tiger rebels.

The war ended last month, raising hopes the situation would improve. But some people fear

that may not be the case.

Just two weeks after the war ended, a strong advocate of freedom of expression, Poddala Jayantha, was abducted and assaulted in Colombo.

Vincent Borsell says there has been a spate of attacks on journalists, in recent years, dealing a blow to investigative and independent reporting.

"Since the war has restarted in 2007, there is a lot of incidents," he said. "It starts from killings, beatings, kidnappings and death threats. But it also goes on to pressure on the media, so it means now there is no let us say direct censorship in countries like Burma, but there is a huge self-censorship, especially on all the issues related to the army, and all sensitive issues. They are victims of self censorship on issues that were very well covered by the media."

The government denies any interference with the media and says that police are investigating the attacks on journalists. It also says it is prepared to discuss any changes to the Press Council suggested by rights groups.

Amnesty International says at least 14 members of news organizations have been killed by suspected government paramilitaries and the defeated Tamil Tiger rebels since 2006. Twenty journalists critical of the government are said to have fled the country.

EDITORIAL AND OPINION

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Living Horror

Sri Lanka's concentration camps exemplify ethnic relations there.

With each passing day, more reports of atrocities emerge from Sri Lanka's concentration camps where three hundred thousand Tamil people are detained by the Sinhala government. Young men and women are 'disappearing' every day, while bodies are found with throats cut and villagers report fresh mass graves in other parts of Vavuniya, the garrison town near which the military-run, barbed-wire ringed camps are located. Amid increasing reports of rapes, a prostitution ring run by government officials has been identified in at least one of the camps. Even as the people - the entire population of the Vanni - were herded into the camps in from March, thousands came bearing grievous injuries sustained during the indiscriminate bombardment by the military which killed 20,000 Tamil civilians this year. They have largely been denied sufficient food and medical assistance. Disease has swept through the camps in recent weeks while malnourishment is widely reported. Sri Lanka's genocide of the Tamils is proceeding steadily.

With customary contempt for international humanitarian and human rights norms, the Sri Lankan state has rejected all criticism of its 'welfare camps' and instead blamed the international community for the suffering of the Tamils. That the Tamil detainees are starving is the fault of the United Nations agencies'. So, apparently, is the revolting sanitary conditions that inevitably came about when hundreds of thousands were crammed into the tented camps. Colombo's contempt for international norms was underlined when President Mahinda Rajapakse this week mockingly boasted that his camps "are the best in the world."

An increasing number of international observers and scholars have begun taking a close look at ongoing events in Sri Lanka. Former skeptics are increasingly agreed that something is seriously wrong in Sri Lanka. As Prof. Martin Shaw, an expert on genocide, puts it, "the continuing concentration of over 250,000 people in the camps ... itself constitutes a most serious crime." Human Rights Watch has condemned the "illegal detention of 300,000 Tamils" as a "national disgrace."

None of this international criticism is going to make an iota of difference to Colombo. The Rajapske regime is enjoying the highest popularity of any Sinhala government. It is whipping up a wave of Sinhala chauvinism that had been sim-

mering under former governments but is now rampant. The defeat of the Liberation Tigers' conventional strength in May, despite the horrific - and still hidden - casualties suffered by the Sinhala military, has triggered undisguised triumphalism and daily acts of racism.

More importantly, the Rajapakse government has set about transforming Sri Lanka from the market democracy that - on the surface, at least - was engaging with Western notions of good governance, free markets, ethnic equality and other liberal concepts, into an archaic model of Sinhala governance straight from the pages of the Mahavamsa mytho-narrative. President Rajapakse has encouraged comparisons between him and the Sinhala king Dutugemunu in these chronicles. Whilst people in other countries may snicker at such conduct, the implications for the island's future of this re-enactment of a mythical past could not be more serious. For the Tamils, they are genocidal. It is worth remembering that in the Mahavamsa, the Sinhalese' enemies are the 'Damils' - sub-humans.

The point here is that Sri Lanka's actions towards the Tamils are not merely the result of weak state capacity, indifference, corruption or the peculiarities of a particular Sinhala leadership, but the consequences of the pursuit - the 'making real' - of a particular ordering of ethnic value inherent to Sinhala mytho-narrative. Amidst a logic that places the Sinhala - the 'rightful' inheritors of the island - at the top of a hierarchy of ethnicities, no amount of 'engagement', 'capacity-building' or otherwise cajoling the Sinhala state is going to produce any change in its conduct. If the international community is going to stand by its humanitarian and human rights norms, then it is going to have to confront the Sinhala state head on. The Tamil Diaspora, settled mainly in the liberal democracies of the West, must continue to engage with these states and the associated international organizations and agencies. Whilst the Sri Lankan state can murder, threaten and block access to Tamil voices in the island, it cannot silence their fellow Tamils overseas. In the coming months and years, the Sinhalese will make it clear why 'reconciliation' is impossible in Sri Lanka. But in the interim, the Diaspora must ensure that the West-led international community makes good on its claim to defend human rights and other liberal values.

Sri Lanka - camps, media ... genocide?

Martin Shaw

Open Democracy

WHAT kind of violence has the Sri Lankan state been committing against its Tamil civilian population as the island's civil war ended; on what scale and with what intentions? Martin Shaw explores the difficult terrain where war, atrocity and genocide meet.

The civil war in Sri Lanka is receding from the international headlines, as crises in Iran and celebrity deaths occupy the media's limited space and attention-span.

A very large number of its Tamil victims are still, more than six weeks after the fighting ended, confined in government forces in a complex of forty camps in the north east of the country.

An estimated 280,000 civilians - originally displaced from their homes by the fighting between the Sri Lankan military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers / LTTE), and in some cases fleeing from the brutal regime in the LTTE's former "liberated" zone - are being held, generally against their will.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in his "victory speech", told Sri Lanka's parliament that "our heroic forces have sacrificed their lives to protect Tamil civilians", and he took "personal responsibility" for protecting Tamils.

Yet his government is now scandalously confining this huge population - who have already suffered not only from the LTTE but from Sri Lankan bombardments which caused probably tens of thousands of deaths and injuries - in squalid conditions.

The government has officially backtracked, under international pressure, on plans to hold the displaced, while screening them for potential "terrorists", for up to three years; it now says that 80% will be resettled by the end of 2009.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) comments: "The government's history of restricting the rights of displaced persons through rigid pass systems and strict restrictions on leaving the camps heightens concerns that they will be confined in camps much longer, possibly for years."

In the shadows

The eruption in Iran has in a twisted way done the Sri Lankan government a service.

In any case, Colombo has

been ruthless in restricting international journalists and rights organisations: in May 2009 even the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was barred from Menik Farm, the largest camp, and Channel 4's Nick Paton Walsh was deported.

Sinhala nationalism remains oppressively dominant within the majority population, and critics of the government face an atmosphere of intimidation and even terror: Sri Lankan journalists have frequently been murdered, assaulted and detained.

We know that counterinsurgency is one of the most common contexts of genocidal violence

Although human-rights organisations and western governments have continued to protest at the situation, the Sri Lankan government has found friends in the United Nations's new Human Rights Council; it was able to pass a resolution there on 27 May 2009 praising its own commitment to human rights (endorsed by such notable bastions of freedom as China, Cuba, Russia, Pakistan and Egypt).

The vigorous campaigns by members of the Tamil diasporas have ensured that the situation has not been entirely forgotten, but the interned Tamils don't have the mobile-phone access that (in the early post-election stages at least) so embarrassed the Iranian regime.

There are some pictures of the camps on the internet, but no iconic images of Tamil suffering have entered the commercial, established media in the manner of Iran's Neda Soltani - or indeed of Fikret Alic, the emaciated prisoner pictured behind barbed-wire in the Trnopolje camp in Bosnia in summer 1992.

A dire predicament

It is often said that pictures tell their own story.

However what is important is the media narrative and the momentum behind the issue: in both the Iranian and Bosnian cases the crises were much more strongly established in the dominant media (and the exposure of the experiences of Neda Soltani

OPINION

and Fikret Alic) fed this.

In the case of Sri Lanka, sadly, the level and intensity of coverage - despite the impressive Tamil campaigns - has not matched these.

Moreover, what was important in Bosnia was that Trnopolje was described as a "concentration" camp - so the image facilitated the connection between the atrocious treatment of Bosnian Muslim prisoners and the murderous history of concentration camps in Europe under Nazism.

The Bosnian-Serbian government that was responsible for Trnopolje naturally disputed this appellation, describing it merely as a holding centre for "refugees"; today the lowest-common-denominator descriptor seems to be a "detention" camp.

The Sri Lankan government also prefers its camps to be seen as "refugee" camps.

However once people are detained, camps are clearly more than that; and where there is a sustained policy of concentrating detainees then the term "concentration camp" applies.

In war, these camps - invented at the beginning of the 20th century to describe the enclosures in

remarked of the Sri Lankan situation on 11 June 2009: "Virtually all camps are overcrowded, some holding twice the number recommended by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Food distribution is chaotic, there are shortages of water, and sanitation facilities are inadequate. Camp residents do not have access to proper medical services and communicable diseases have broken out in the camps."

What is more, "the military camp administration has imposed numerous restrictions on humanitarian organizations working in the camps, such as limiting the number of vehicles and staff members that can enter the camps, which has delayed the provision of much-needed aid. The military does not allow organizations into the camps to conduct protection activities, and a ban on talking to the camp residents leaves them further isolated."

If reports of violence and disappearances are added to this, the situation of the interned Tamils appears dire.

A "rolling" genocide?

The western fixation with the Nazi holocaust means that there is an obvious political temptation to link all anti-civilian violence with the Nazi model.

The pro-Tamil United States-based academic Francis Boyle, in his posts, sees a sixty-year "rolling" genocide in which Sinhalese governments of Ceylon (the country's name at independence in 1948) and Sri Lanka have sought "to annihilate the Tamils and to steal their lands and natural resources."

This is what Hitler and the Nazis called lebensraum - "living space" for the Sinhala at the expense of the Tamils."

In this perspective, the camp system is all too clearly the latest stage of genocide - although other Tamil advocates date genocide back to the anti-Tamil pogroms in 1983 in response to which the LTTE campaign began.

The idea of "rolling" genocide, applied by Madeleine Albright to distinguish the Sudanese campaign in Darfur from the "volcanic" genocide in Rwanda, suggests discontinuity in a history of genocide - albeit, in the Darfur case, within two or three years rather than six decades.

However in many cases, there may be genocidal "moments" (as the genocide historian, Dirk Moses, has suggested of colonialism) in stories of oppression - decades or even centuries long - which do not, taken as a whole, constitute processes of genocide (see A Dirk Moses ed., *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History* [Berghahn, 2008]).

There may be sporadic genocidal massacres, rapes and expulsions, or even sustained campaigns, at particular points in these histories.

Something like this seems to be true in the Sri Lankan case: no one doubts the long history of



The containment of Tamils in these concentration camps amounts to a 'genocide moment'

Sinhalese nationalist oppression against the Tamil community since independence, which includes moments like 1983 which can be plausibly seen as genocidal outbursts.

But the history as a whole is not simply one of genocide.

Indeed the dedication of the LTTE to armed struggle against the Sri Lankan state helped turn a history of oppression and resistance into one of brutal insurgency and counterinsurgency (see *The trouble with guns: Sri Lanka, South Africa, Ireland*, 10 June 2009).

We know however that counterinsurgency is one of the most common contexts of genocidal violence.

It remains to be seen - since most of the survivors are locked away from the world's media and the Sri Lankan government is blocking all attempts at independent investigation of the recent violence - how far the Sri Lankan army went in the direction of deliberate atrocity as opposed to

brutal disregard for civilians.

Here, indiscriminate allegations of a long-running Sri Lankan genocide paradoxically blunt the real questions: what kind of violence did the Sri Lankan state commit against its

The continuing concentration of people in the camps both blocks the search for answers and itself constitutes a most serious crime. If the doors are not opened quickly, this will raise questions of whether the government seriously intends a restoration of Tamil society in the conquered zone.

Tamil civilian population in the concluding prosecution of the war, on what scale and with what intentions?

The continuing concentration of over 250,000 people in the camps both blocks the search for answers to these questions, and itself constitutes a most serious crime.

If the doors are not opened quickly, this will raise questions of whether the government seriously intends a restoration of Tamil society in the conquered zone.

This would indeed pose a question of genocide, in the sense of the deliberate destruction of a population group in its home territory.

Martin Shaw is a historical sociologist of war and global politics, and professor of international relations and politics at the University of Sussex. His books include War and Genocide (Polity, 2003), The New Western Way of War (Polity, 2005), and What is Genocide? (Polity, 2007).

The real questions are: what kind of violence did the Sri Lankan state commit against its Tamil civilian population in the concluding prosecution of the war, on what scale and with what intentions?

which the Spanish detained Cubans and the British detained Boerfarmers and their families during the South African wars - are usually designed to corral a civilian population seen as potentially sympathetic to a guerrilla enemy (as Tamils evidently are still seen despite the LTTE's defeat).

Totalitarian regimes, including Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany, have also used camps to concentrate other civilian groups - actual and potential political opponents, trade unionists, and ethnic "enemies" such as Jews.

The complication in using the "concentration camp" category is that such regimes went on to develop their camps into something more - in the Soviet case, labour camps, in the Nazi case, extermination camps.

Clearly, not all concentration camps are "death" camps in the Nazi sense; but all concentration camps tend to produce death, as well as widespread physical and mental harm.

Since their premise is enmity towards the interned civilians, the history of concentration-camps has been marked, from the Boerwar onwards, by callous disregard for their welfare, and often worse.

As Human Rights Watch

DIASPORA



TORONTO, CANADA



“Break the Silence” begins 1000 mile journey to Washington D.C.

TamilNet

THREE Tamil College students from Canada are on a 1000-mile walk from Chicago to Washington D.C. to "raise awareness with the general American population to what is happening in Sri Lanka," Illinois Times reported. More than 50 people assembled on the steps of the Capitol Friday, wearing tan, gray and blue T-shirts that carried their message: Break the Silence in Sri Lanka, the paper added.

"Despite the afternoon's stifling heat, these Sri Lankan natives and descendants showed up to rally behind Kannan Sreekantha, Vijay Sivanewaran and Ramanan Thirukketheeswaranathan, three college students who are walking from Chicago to Washington, D.C., to call attention to the humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka,"

the paper said.

The crowd - with members young enough to ride in strollers and old enough to be grandfathers - chanted "Stop the genocide" and "We want justice." They wielded American flags and handmade signs that reported the number of deaths, rapes and detainees in the war-torn island country. They even hit the street, passing out fliers to drivers stopped at the intersection of Second and Capitol, according to Illinois Times.

From Springfield, the three men will travel east through Indianapolis; Cincinnati; Dayton, Ohio; Columbus, Ohio; Cambridge, Mass. Wheeling, W.V.; and Pittsburgh before reaching Washington, D.C., during the week of Aug. 9., the paper further said.



வோல்தம்ஸ்ரோ ஸ்ரீ கற்பக விநாயகர் ஆலயம் WALTHAMSTOW SRI KATPAHA VINAYAGAR TEMPLE

- 12-07-2009 ஞாயிறு மாதாந்த காயத்ரி அம்மன் வழிபாடு காலை 10.00
- 15-07-2009 புதன் பைரவர் மூலமந்திர ஆராதனை மாலை மீனனி
- 16-07-2009 வியாழன் ஆடிப்பிறப்பு மாலை மீனனிக்கு ஐயப்ப வழிபாடு
- 19-07-2009 ஞாயிறு பிரதோசம் மாலை 5.30 ருத்திரஹோமம் தொடர்ந்து சுவாமி புறப்பாடு
- 21-07-2009 ஆடிஅமாவாசை காலை 7.00 முதல் பிதிர் வழிபாடு மோட்ச அர்ச்சனை
- 25-07-2009 ஆடிப்பூரம், ஆடிச்சதுர்த்தி மாலை 5.00 அம்பாள் வழிபாடு
- 31-07-2009 வெள்ளி வரலக்ஷ்மி பூசை மாலை 5 மணிக்கு லக்ஷ்மி ஹோமம்

மங்கள வாத்திய தேவைகளுக்கு தொடர்புகொள்க 020 8527 3819

ஆலயம் தொருவது சாலவும் நன்று

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LIFE IN THE CAMPS



Tamil civilians live in appalling conditions in the internment camps where toilets are open pits, tents are overcrowded and hygiene is hard to maintain, leading to the rapid spread of diseases. But some aid workers consider these camps now more acceptable, only because they are an 'improvement' on the conditions in the last days of May.

NEWS

UN staff not immune but genocide suspects are

THE United Nations' continued silence on the abuses being committed by the Sri Lankan state was once again demonstrated with its handling of UN staff arrested by the Sri Lankan military.

Instead of demanding the Sri Lankan state to release its staff who have immunity, according to media reports, the UN has "hired a lawyer who has visited" the UN staff, who are "still detained in Colombo."

This is in complete contrast to its action in Kosovo. The UN Mission in Kosovo actively invoked immunity on June 26 in favour of a person charged with genocide. When Agim Ceku was arrested in Bulgaria, based on an Interpol warrant, it is reported that a UN documentary showing was made in order to get Ceku released.

In Sri Lanka, however, UN spokespersons and officials gave conflicting claims over the immunity status of the arrested staff. Whilst the Associate Spokesperson Farhan Haq in New York acknowledged

the immunity status of the two local staff members who were grabbed up by the government using unmarked vehicles, John Holmes, the UN humanitarian chief said that immunity only applied to international staff.

The head of the UN Refugee Agency in Sri Lanka Amin Awad went one step further than Holmes and issued a statement saying that the Sri Lankan government is free to detain UN staff as long as procedures are followed.

The UN Staff Union has disagreed with Holmes and countered that national staff have immunity within the scope of their work. It also criticized Awad's statement.

Accusing the UN of running scared of Sri Lanka, the Inner City Press reporter, Matthew Russel Lee, questioned rationale behind the immunity for those charged with war crimes and genocide, but non defense of immunity for UN staff in Sri Lanka.



Egeland mourns the failure of R2P in Sri Lanka, but the UN continues to do nothing about the camps

Jan Egeland: R2P failed against 'horror' in Sri Lanka

FORMER UN head of Humanitarian affairs Jan Egeland has accused the UN and the international community of letting the Sri Lankan state get away with denying the Tamils protection and access to humanitarian relief.

"Sri Lanka is the latest example of the world community letting a government get away with denying access, to witnesses, humanitarian relief, protection of civilians," Egeland said on Tuesday June 23.

Egeland further said that the

Responsibility to Protect, enacted by the UN in 2005, was "not upheld in Sri Lanka, the heads of state have failed."

Predicting that conflict will brew as injustice against the Tamils are continuing, Egeland added, that he was not saying this as a UN official, that he is now with the Norwegian Institute on International Affairs.

Egeland who was in New York for a UN Colloquium on Conflict Related Sexual Violence in Peace Negotiations, told the

media that we can "safely assume... horrors" in the treatment of "women in Sri Lanka, Tamils," due to the continuing denial of access not only to humanitarian review but also "witnesses."

Egeland's comments were in contradiction to current UN humanitarian coordinator John Holmes, who has commended the Sri Lankan government for how they are running the UN-funded camps where they have detained 300,000 Tamil civilians.

UN Jaffna officials 'misreporting'

CIVIL society sources in Jaffna raised accusations against United Nations Jaffna officials for releasing facts and statistics, related to the detainees held in the Sri Lanka Army internment camps, provided by Government of Sri Lanka and SLA, instead of the true situation prevailing in the camps. For instance, the UN officials in their June 15 report said that only four detainees had died in the past six months in Jaffna camps whereas many have died including a woman due to septicemia, participants at a meeting said. The meeting was attended by UN Jaffna officials and organizations working with the UN in Jaffna. The UN report created a furore among the representatives of civil organizations attending the meeting who said that the UN officials in Jaffna are helping the government and the SLA to hide the true situation in the camps from the world.

Another glaring misrepresentation in the UN report was the number of Vanni civilians held in Thellippazhai SLA Special Rehabilitation Camp. The report

says that only a hundred detainees from Jaffna camps, where there are around 11,223 detainees, have been taken to Thellippazhai SRC while the number of young men and women detainees held there is around 800 hundred, civil society representatives said.

Apart from this, Education Officials who had visited Thellippazhai SRC say that more than a hundred children between 14 to 18 are detained there. Particularly, the report does not mention these children and pregnant women held in Thellippazhai SRC.

The UN officials in Jaffna have betrayed the Tamils by having failed to collect the true facts and figures related to the condition of the detainees in the camps and to have helped the government and the SLA to release reports based on false statistics fed by both, civil society representatives accused.

Meanwhile, 35 types of infectious diseases have been observed in the camps and among these typhoid fever and jaundice are found to be spreading fast, health officials said.

Sri Lanka concludes aid workers probe, refuses to publish results

AFP

SRI LANKA'S top rights panel said has concluded investigations into the murder of 17 local employees of a French charity and six other high profile cases from the island's civil war, but refused to publish the outcome.

The head of the probe refused to say who had been found responsible for the 2006 massacre of the aid workers, which international monitors and rights groups have blamed on Sri Lankan government forces.

"We have completed seven cases, including the ACF (French charity Action Against Hunger) case, and we have asked for a date to hand over the report to the president," Nissanka Udalgama said.

"I can't discuss our findings because it is up to the president to decide," he added, saying his panel would ask the president to

establish a more permanent body to keep up investigations.

Thirteen men and four women who worked on water sanitation and farm projects for the ACF were found shot dead in August 2006 in the northeast of the island while troops and Tamil Tiger rebels were locked in combat.

Nordic peace monitors at the time blamed the killings -- the worst attack on aid workers since the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003 -- on government forces.

The government has denied any role in the massacre.

Udalagama's investigation has been controversial from the start, with rights activists dismissing it as a government cover-up.

Colombo did appoint 11 senior foreign diplomats and dignitaries to supervise the probe, but they eventually pulled out in

April 2008 saying that the investigations did not meet minimum international standards.

Amnesty International repeated calls for the findings to be made public.

"Families of the victims and survivors need answers," said Yolanda Foster, the group's Sri Lanka expert.

"These people still have not received any justice from the Sri Lankan government... It proves a real need for an international, independent mechanism to investigate the allegations of war crimes and grave human rights violations committed by both sides."

Sri Lanka continues to come under pressure over its rights record, with the UN reporting the deaths of thousands of civilians in a government offensive that led to the defeat of the Tamil Tigers last month and calling for a war crimes probe.

The Sri Lankan president has rejected the demands.

NEWS

US warns against travel to Sri Lanka

TamilNet

THE United States has warned "American citizens traveling to or living in Sri Lanka about the potential for continued instability, including possible terrorist attacks."

Despite Sri Lanka's announcement of victory over the Tamil Tigers, the remnants of the LTTE remained and Sri Lanka's "security posture remains heightened."

The US especially warned against travel to the North and East, given the "possibility of renewed [LTTE] insurgency" and the continued activity by government-backed paramilitaries in the Northeast.

"In some cases, foreigners of Sri Lankan origin may be detained without their embassy being notified," the statement published on Saturday June 27 said.

"The activities of journalists, researchers, aid workers, and volunteers receive particular attention," the release added.

The United States travel advisory aimed at discouraging US citizens from visiting Sri Lanka was part of US strategy to undermine Sri Lanka reported the pro-Government Island newspaper, quoting a Sri Lanka Foreign Ministry official.

"[N]othing could be as bad as the US warning of potential for continued stability and possible terrorist attacks a month after the end of war," the paper said, and added, "though the armed forces maintained road blocks and car-

ried out routine checks on vehicles entering the city and its suburbs, there was no likelihood of LTTE attacks," attributing the comments to a foreign ministry official.

"Another official pointed out that the US issued its latest warning close on the heels of Sri Lanka Tourism launching its new brand identity 'Sri Lanka Small Miracle' to promote tourism," the paper said, adding that recently a Sri Lanka ambassador has "urged the western countries to remove travel advisories as peace and stability had been restored in all parts of the country."

Sri Lanka's President, Mahinda Rajapakse had earlier told a tourism and hospitality personnel gathering that Sri Lanka "hoped to receive 2.5 million tourists in 2016, and that 2011 would be declared as 'Visit Sri Lanka Year,'" the paper said.

Meanwhile, Tamil diaspora circles said if Colombo continues to mistreat the 300,000 Tamil civilians being held in internment camps, and fails to reach an acceptable political solution, the diaspora will embark on a worldwide economic boycott of Sri Lanka goods, and will pressure the big-label manufacturers to shift manufacturing operations to rights-compliant South Asian countries. Sri Lanka's tourism industry will be a main target of the economic boycott, according to diaspora activists.

Britain maintains warning against Sri Lanka travel

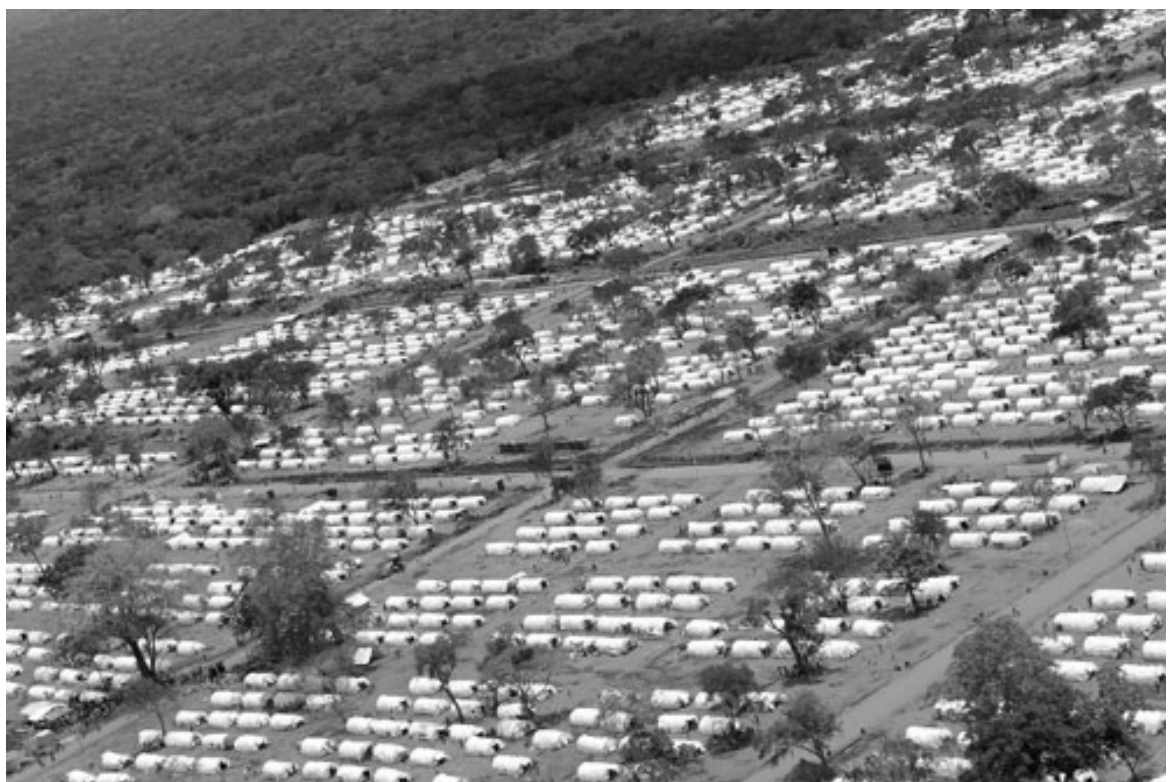
UPDATING its travel advisory to Sri Lanka, Britain warned its nationals "against all travel to the north and east of Sri Lanka, and to Yala National Park and the areas around it."

A statement by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office published on Wednesday June 1, said: "For the purpose of this travel advice we consider the north to be all areas north of the A12 road (which runs from Puttalam in the west to Trincomalee in the east) including the Jaffna peninsula. We consider the east to be the districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa, as well as coastal areas of Ampara district east of the A25

and A27 roads. We define the areas around Yala National Park as those east of the A2 and south of the A4."

Noting that "the government of Sri Lanka's security legislation provides wide-ranging discretionary powers," the statement urged nationals to be careful.

"There have been detentions, particularly of people of Tamil ethnicity, including foreign nationals. You should avoid wearing or carrying clothing or goods which are military or camouflaged in appearance. You should ensure that you carry some form of official identification with you at all times."



Tamils continue to live in the camps, which now look like they are being made permanent, as Sri Lanka spends its money on increasing the military so as to occupy all the lands the displaced fled from

Rajapakse happy for Tamils to leave Sri Lanka

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse has told a Cabinet meeting that he would not be averse to Canada and the European countries granting asylum to the internally displaced Tamil civilians.

However, according to Daily Mirror newspaper, Rajapakse told his ministers that he would not allow Tamils to go to India any-

more because that country was not willing to accommodate them.

"Canada has pledged to accept any number of IDPs (Internally Displaced People). I do not mind these countries putting up visa offices in the welfare camps to facilitate people willing to leave the country," Daily Mirror quoted Rajapakse as saying.

According to the paper, Raja-

pakse charged foreign diplomatic missions of making malicious allegations against Sri Lanka.

Rajapakse pointed out that the US State Department had now put up a news item regarding some Sri Lankan soldiers who were facing charges during their peace keeping mission in Haiti a few months ago, Daily Mirror further said.

SLA to swell by another 50,000

DESPITE the end of the long drawn conflict, Sri Lanka will recruit 50,000 personnel to increase security in areas captured when Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were defeated last month, the military has said.

"We are planning to recruit at least 50,000 for army, navy, air force and police," Keheliya Rambukwella, defence spokesman and a government

minister, said in the first security media briefing since the end of the war.

Foreign diplomats have questioned the need for an increased post-war military, already boosted since 2005 to the size needed to finish off the LTTE's de facto standing army of fighters, replete with artillery, boats and planes.

Stating that the LTTE held more than 1600 square kilometers of territory as well as two-thirds

of the coast in the north before end of the war, Rambukwella said: "Now these areas have to be maintained and administered by troops," Rambukwella said.

"We need the security forces and police to be in action to safeguard our country."

Sri Lanka's military and police, with a combined strength of 350,000, won one of the Asia's longest modern wars and declared total victory over the LTTE.

SLA commanders become envoys

THE 57-division's Commanding officer Jagath Dias has been appointed as Sri Lanka's Deputy Ambassador to Germany.

Making the announcement, a government official said Dias would leave the country to take over his duties shortly.

Dias led the 57 Division from the beginning of the Wanni operation three years ago and directed

the capture of LTTE administered areas such as Madhu, Kokavil, Thunukkai and Mallavi and Kilinochchi.

Some weeks ago, another Sri Lankan Army commander Major General Udaya Perera, who was the Director Operations of the Army was appointed Deputy Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Malaysia.

There are varying views on the reasoning behind these appointments ranging from the commanders being rewarded for their service in the fight against the LTTE and commanders loyal to opposition being sidelined from a future military or political role to commanders being sent to coordinate actions to check Tamil Diaspora activities.

NEWS

Sinister thought behind Tamil incarceration charges Whitehall

THE Sri Lankan Governments thinking that "the concept of Tamil autonomy or freedom or even culture should be beaten to its knees and never rise again" can be compared to the actions of Joseph Stalin, said leading Australian Pediatrician Dr John Whitehall, describing government internment facilities as "concentration camps", and saying the imprisonment of 300,000 refugees was much more sinister than he originally thought.

"The concept that you can indefinitely incarcerate a population to change their thinking is frightening," he observed.

Speaking at a forum held in Parliament on 17 June, discussing human rights in Sri Lanka and Australia's need to act, Whitehall, the director of Townsville Hospital's Neonatal Unit who visited Kilinochchi in 2004 to train medical workers, also described the LTTEs former governance over the traditional Tamil homeland as an established civil administration. "In my observation, The Tigers were not similar to the Vietcong, whom I had observed from a distance when we worked in Vietnam many years before. They [the Tigers] did not emerge from holes in the ground at night to do their business. This was in fact a practicing established civil administration. It wasn't perfect of course. It was to say the least autocratic. Nevertheless, there was the ability to discuss [...]," said the doctor.

Victimization must stop - Elie Wiesel

HOLOCAUST survivor, Jewish icon, and Nobel laureate, Professor Elie Wiesel, in a message posted on his website said: "Wherever minorities are being persecuted we must raise our voices to protest. According to reliable sources, the Tamil people are being disenfranchised and victimized by the Sri Lanka authorities. This injustice must stop. The Tamil people must be allowed to live in peace and flourish in their homeland."

For his literary and human rights activities, Prof. Wiesel has received numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal and the Medal of Liberty Award, and the rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honor.

Dr Elyn Shander, a Connect-

Highlighting conversations with LTTE officials, over the future plans of improving governance if autonomy was achieved, Whitehall said support for the liberation movement was founded within the "concept of self preservation of their race, of their religion, of their culture".

"The people were thinking we want our freedom, we want autonomy, we want respect of our culture. These things are not easily or ever eradicated. But the concept that you can indefinitely incarcerate a population to change their thinking is frightening" Whitehall said, comparing Sri Lanka's imprisonment of refugees to Joseph Stalin's execution and starvation of thousands of Ukrainians.

Urging the Australian Government to involve itself in the crisis "for the humanity of it as a nation", Whitehall said allegations of war crimes by human rights commissions made the need for access to camps vital.

In a wide ranging address, Dr Whitehall also highlighted the role of China, Cuba and Russia in the United Nations Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) regarding the "pusillanimous decision by the human rights council to ratify the behaviour of the Sri Lankan government", which has established an "international precedent that these countries can wage ruthless and unrelenting war on their minorities using all kinds of weapons to do the job."

icut physician and a member of US-activist group, Tamils Against Genocide, has been working with the Elie Wiesel Foundation, updating the organization on the situation in the NorthEast.

"We are very grateful that he [Prof. Wiesel] has responded to our request to support the Tamil people. Now that it is official on his website, we are certain that other institutions that are involved in holocaust and war-crime research will take up Sri Lanka case," Dr Shander told TamilNet.

Elie Wiesel is the Chairman of The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, an organization he and his wife created to fight indifference, intolerance and injustice. He won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1986 and has received more than 100 honorary degrees from institutions of higher learning.

Other countries should 'protect Eelam Tamils' - ICJ

"I call upon the Australian government to stand up and complain bitterly until something is done", said Justice John Dowd, Vice President of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), stressing his point that it is "to not speak up but yell" in order to save the Tamils in the concentration camps.

He was addressing a forum in Federal Parliament, Canberra, discussing Australia's role on human rights in Sri Lanka.

Sceptical of United Nations and questioning why Commonwealth is aloof, the jurist mooted an idea for governments such as Australia to hold hearings against those who violated the Genocide Convention, warning what is happening in the island is ethnic cleansing of an ancient people in their homeland.

"We need to go to our parliamentarians to find out why things are not happening, why we are not pressuring the Sri Lankan government", the jurist asked, urging everyone concerned: "pressure the UN agencies, the NGOs to get people in there as witnesses, the lawyers here will tell you, the most important witness in a civil case is the ambulance officer, the first person on the spot to find out what is happening. We want agencies in, we want governments in, we want the Red Cross in, so they can report what is happening and prevent the terrible things that are happening to these people".

"If you expose something, if you show something visual, then you get the chance of getting justice."

"Remember, of the 300,000, something like 80,000 of them are children. They are not combatants. They are not criminals. Lot of them are under-nourished and a lot of them will fail, will die through illness if there is no proper protection. It is up to us, and the media, to let the government know that we want something done, we want some protection for the Tamil people and we want exposure of what is going on now", he said lamenting that the world spent World War II in learning about such crimes, implemented treaties, but now breaches them.

"Australian public through the media need to understand who the Tamil people are: a minority, but an ancient and a cultured minority in their homeland. The British with their flat-map approach and administrative convenience created the disaster in the same way as we created a disaster in Yugoslavia after the World War I by adopting a 'convenience of administration' approach", the jurist pointed out saying that the Tamils, having a history of some 5000 years, lived in South India and Sri Lanka all the time.

"We have to have a reasonable suspicion that there is going to be



Mass displacement of Tamils, internment in camps and killing of civilians is 'ethnic cleansing of an ancient people in their homeland'

more ethnic cleansing", warned the jurist of the possibilities of Colombo using 'resettlement' for infiltration of Sinhalese and repopulation of Tamil areas as a form of ethnic cleansing. "Movement of peoples against their will, destruction of culture is a breach of the Genocide Convention, which Australia signed", he said.

"We need to find out why it is now suggested it will take at least 6 months for the civilians to be released. Why can't they be released back to Jaffna? You get the lie told, oh we are looking for the minefields! Absolute rubbish! There are no reasons why these people from Jaffna, an area under military occupation can't be returned there, and to most of the other areas formerly controlled by the LTTE", the Justice said.

Asking the question "Why is the Sri Lankan government not allowing people in, to look after them [in the concentration camps]", Justice John Dowd explained: "Because they want to ensure that every possible person they can identify as a combatant is treated as such - they are examining people for wounds, for evidence of fitness or military activity, and they will use torture to do it".

"We need to find out about those", he said in the context of asserting that prisoners of war have to be protected by the four Geneva conventions.

Condemning the attitude of

governments favouring another government, the jurist said that governments are the greatest invaders of human rights and the United Nations is not an organisation of nations but governments.

Citing China's friendship to Sri Lanka and the attitude of Russia, Justice John Dowd said the Security Council is no longer a forum of assistance (to Tamils) and the Human Rights Council "is now effectively, totally, useless as a forum for defending persecuted minorities, but worse, it is now a rubberstamp for approving totalitarian regimes".

Totalitarian regimes in the Human Rights Council use the misused word 'sovereignty' for their protection and thus the HRC is a disaster, he said.

"The Commonwealth is not used as a vehicle it should be", John Dowd said.

Talking on media, he said they tend to carry only the story of the government. "It's called the 'big lie technique' and if you keep telling the big lie and show photographs of Sri Lankans handing out food, that's the impression that is left."

As free people, and as one in ten in Australia is a refugee or descended from refugees, Australia has to do something for the cause of minorities who don't have a forum or voice and offer them a platform until the world evolves a body for that purpose, was the position of the international jurist.

NEWS

Sri Lanka unsure of need for IMF loan

TamilNet

EVEN as Sri Lanka's central bank chief announced that the country was in a 'comfortable position right now' and can go on without a major IMF bailout, the country's trade minister toured Western states pleading for financial assistance to take care of the Tamils.

Sri Lanka in March sought a \$1.9 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan to avert a balance of payments crisis, after spending half its reserves defending the rupee and paying foreign investors who sold off treasury securities after the global downturn. However, Sri Lanka's request for IMF financing was delayed after the United States and other Western states became hesitant to support it after the Sri Lankan state's conduct over the final phase of the war against the Tamils. Observers say Sri Lanka not doing enough to avoid civilian casualties in the last few months of the war and not allowing aid agencies access to the 300,000 Tamil civilians held in internment camps has raised concerns amongst Western states.

Realising that the IMF loan is not going to be made available soon, Sri Lanka has changed tactics and is now asking for financial assistance to support the war ravaged Tamil population, observers added. Speaking to media, Central Bank of Sri Lanka Governor Nivard Cabraal said the final defeat of the Tamil Tigers had helped alleviate the island's balance of payments concerns.

"The reserves are now at over \$1.6 billion as of today and it is enough to finance more than two

months of imports," Cabraal said.

"We have over 1.6 billion dollars in reserves, enough to pay for over two months of imports. And the figures are steadily climbing," Cabraal said. Foreign reserves, which fell by more than two thirds when the central bank sold dollars to defend the local rupee last year, had climbed to 1.3 billion dollars by the end of April, according to central bank figures.

Cabraal said inflows had come from higher remittances, donor funds and foreign investors buying rupee-denominated treasury bills and bonds. The bank has also raised cash by selling dollar debt. But he said some investors would still be more comfortable with an IMF loan. "If the IMF funds come, it will give us a comfortable buffer stock. I hope we get it. But we are otherwise in a comfortable position now."

Meanwhile, G.L. Peiris, Sri Lanka's minister of export development and international trade who is in Washington for meetings with the IMF, World Bank and the U.S. government said post-war reconciliation process needs international financial support, urged swift assistance. "If the developed countries are going to cut off resources at this time, that is ironical, because now is a time to infuse greater resources," Pieris said. Peiris said he delivered a similar message in London and other European capitals, where some governments angry at Colombo's war conduct have threatened to suspend the "GSP+" scheme that allows duty free exports from Sri Lanka.



Sri Lanka's trade minister G.L. Peiris is touring Western countries urged financial assistance to deal with the aftermath of the war, even as Sri Lanka prevented Tamil aid from entering the country

US 'bully' over IMF loan delay charges Colombo

AFTER more than three months of delay by the International Monetary Fund in considering Sri Lanka's urgent request for a \$US1.9 billion loan, Sri Lanka labelled the United States obstruction of the loan 'deplorable' and publicly accused the super power of being a "bully".

Speaking at a Colombo seminar organised by the Institute of Policy Studies and the World Bank on Wednesday, July 1, Deputy Finance Minister Sarath Amunugama said: "The US has no business obstructing a project that is technically sound on the basis of its misinformation. This is an unacceptable case of the bullies trying to run the World Bank and the IMF".

He claimed that "President

Obama is very badly misinformed" and "for the first time, in a very ugly way, the US is trying to bring a palpably political agenda into the IMF."

On June 23, US State Department official Gregg Sullivan said US assistance to Sri Lanka would depend on the government providing access to the war-ravaged north, sending Tamil people back to their homes and allowing aid groups to "operate effectively".

He insisted that the US "expects the Sri Lankan government to hold accountable those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law".

Asked by journalists about the IMF funds, Sullivan denied that the US was "threatening to block the loan". In the same breath, ho-

wever, he noted that the US "will carefully assess any program in light of the conditions in Sri Lanka at the time." On the same day, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake made a similar statement before the US Senate foreign relations committee, adding that the US was pressing Sri Lanka "to engage in political reconciliation with Sri Lanka's Tamil minority".

On July 2, however, at a bi-weekly press meeting, IMF spokeswoman Caroline Atkinson indicated that a decision on the loan would be further postponed.

"We don't have a date for an Executive Board meeting at present on Sri Lanka," she said, adding that "discussions are continuing" on the loan.

Sri Lanka accuses IMF of playing politics

AFP

SRI LANKA has accused the International Monetary Fund of politicizing financial aid following the fund's delay in considering a 1.9 billion dollar bailout for the war-ravaged economy.

"Never ever has the IMF taken political factors into account. Now, it seems for the first time they are doing that - indirectly," Sri Lanka's trade minister G.L. Peiris told AFP in Washington ahead of talks with fund officials, on Friday, July 3.

Sri Lanka tapped the IMF for aid in March in a bid to stave off

its first balance of payment deficit in four years after the island's foreign currency reserves fell to around six weeks' worth of imports.

The loan has been put off due to political pressure from the United States, Britain and other Western nations over Colombo's handling of the final stages of the battle against Tamil Tigers and charges that thousands of civilians were killed.

Peiris said the IMF and Sri Lankan authorities had completed what he called "tactical discussions" over the 1.9 billion dollar standby facility as early as April but that the fund's board had still not met to consider the issue.

"So we think that it is wrong

and apart from the fact that it is unfair because Sri Lanka has to be helped in this situation, not obstructed, it is a very unsound and dangerous precedent for the future," he warned.

"The IMF is now going to be embroiled in controversial political issues as part of the criteria governing their judgment in respect of particular transactions. That is very much our view," Peiris said.

The United States, the main shareholder in the IMF and whose approval is key to the release of the money, has welcomed the end to the fighting in Sri Lanka but urged Colombo to meet the needs of the displaced masses and

engage with all communities to protect their rights.

Washington has also supported calls for a probe into alleged war crimes committed by Sri Lankan government troops.

The IMF said on May 15 that it was in "advanced stage" of discussions with the Sri Lankan authorities on the bailout prospects and that it looked forward to having a program brought to the board for approval "in the coming weeks."

Peiris remained confident however that the bailout funds "will come through" to Sri Lanka eventually.

Human rights organizations have reported that thousands of

Tamils had been taken from the state-run camps for those displaced by fighting.

The United Nations also has often been at odds with the Sri Lankan government over Colombo's handling of the treatment of 300,000 people displaced by the fighting and detained in temporary shelters.

Peiris responded to allegations by some human rights campaigners who compared the plight of the displaced Tamil civilians in government camps to that under Nazi Germany.

"This connotation of a Nazi concentration camp is a figment of their imagination. It is not true," he said.

NEWS

TNA to contest local polls in North

THE Tamil National Alliance, the largest Tamil political party in Sri Lanka, has submitted its nominations for the forthcoming municipal council elections in Jaffna and Vavuniya.

The local government polls will take place in Jaffna and Vavuniya, on August 8. Both municipalities last held elections 11 years ago, and the election date will coincide with a provincial-level poll in the southern province of Uva, the Elections Department said.

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Jaffna district parliamentarian, Mavai Senathirajah submitted Thursday, June 25 the list of TNA nomination list of 29 candidates contesting Jaffna Municipal Council (JMC) election with Mudiappu Remedius, a leading lawyer and a human rights activist as its principal candidate, under 'House' symbol of Ilankaitham Thamizh Arasuk Kadchi.

The list includes one Muslim and four women candidates.

Besides Mavai Senathirajah, TNA MPs Suresh Premachandran, Gajendrakumar Ponnampalam and Solomon Cyril were also present at the event in Jaffna.

Meanwhile, the TNA parliamentarians N. Sivasakthy Ananthan and S. Vino Noharathalingam fielded S.N.G Nathan as principal candidate for the list for Vavuniya Urban Council Wednesday, June 23.

After filing nominations in Jaffna the TNA held a press conference. In the press conference, declaring that a liberation struggle never fails, Premachandran added that the struggle will be spearheaded in democratic ways

and new strategies will be designed soon in this regard.

"A vicious propaganda is being made that the TNA is divided, but we stand together in all respect and take decisions in our central committee," Suresh Premachandran told reporters.

The government wants to fake the elections in Jaffna just like it faked the elections in the Eastern Province. The aim of the government, which is facing an economic crisis is to show 'support' of Tamils to it to the outside world and to beg for money. People have to strengthen Tamil hands and defeat the duplicity of the government begging in the name of Tamils, the TNA parliamentarians said.

"We have a three point agenda of demands in the election: immediate attention to the human catastrophe caused by the war, political solution and re-building the Jaffna city," the parliamentarians said.

Earlier, ruling UPFA, United National Party (UNP), Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and two independent group, one headed by Abimanasingham Manickasothy and the other formed by displaced Muslims of Jaffna have tendered their lists of nomination.

A three-party coalition consisting of EPRLF Varathar front, PLOTE and Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) also tendered its nomination list with Veerasingham Anandasangaree as its principal candidate. Another independent group submitted its list of nomination with Arumugam Sellathurai as its principal candidate to the election officer in Jaffna Secretariat Thursday.



Rajapakse's government found a way to end the APRC, which threatened to give powers to Tamils

Peace secretariat shuts down, APRC in doubt

SRI LANKAN president Mahinda Rajapakse's office has ordered the closure of the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) by the end of July, according to SCOPP Director General Rajiva Wijesinghe.

"We have not been told of any specific reason for the decision although we have been discussing such a scenario since last week," Wijesinghe said.

"I don't want to speculate on the decision neither comment on it or appeal for a reconsideration."

He added that SCOPP was going ahead with the process of closing down but the future of the SCOPP staff was uncertain since most of them were employed on a contract basis. He said about half of the operational staff had been laid off a few weeks ago and it was still not clear whether they

would be absorbed into public service.

The All Party Representative Committee (APRC) set up in June, 2006 to work out proposals to solve ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka also uncertain future after the closure of SCOPP.

"APRC has been given one month notice to complete its deliberations and submit a final document," Wijesinghe told the media Tuesday, June 30.

Other alternatives would be decided if the APRC fails to conclude its activities within the stipulated time, he added.

The SCOPP has been the main force behind co-ordinating the APRC sessions providing translators and interpreters.

Political sources said SCOPP's demise certainly leaves the future of APRC tenuous. The

axe is likely to fall on APRC's neck at the end of the month, sources added.

The farcical game of APRC was repeatedly exposed by political commentators in the past. Prof. Kumar David in an opinion column on February 2008 said: "The Interim Report is a sham for two reasons; the Committee set aside its previous 18 months and 63 meetings of deliberations and trotted out the Presidential diktat pretending it was its own finding, and secondly the APRC is collaborating in a deception game since this interim palliative is all that the government will ever want out of these worthies; the government will sell this interim hogwash to India and the Co-Chairs."

SCOPP was established on 06 February 2002 with the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers.

EPDP to contest elections under UPFA's 'betel leaf' symbol

SRI LANKAN Minister and General Secretary of Eelam Peoples' Democratic Party (EPDP), Douglas Devananda, announced that his party will contest the local government elections of Jaffna Municipal Council and Vavuniya Town Council under the 'Betel Leaf' symbol, the common symbol of the ruling United Peoples' Freedom Alliance (UPFA).

Devananda has been under pressure from the ruling SLFP to join the party in recent times, giving up the "Eelam" identity, according to informed sources, who also revealed that Devananda was forced to give up his plan of contesting under his party symbol of

'Veenai'. 20 EPDP candidates and 9 from other coalition parties in the UPFA will consist of the total 29 contesting JMC election while 6 EPDP candidates will contest in Vavuniya TC election.

Meanwhile, the government is actively engaged in launching some 'development' activities in Jaffna peninsula with the view to luring in voters.

Opening up of roads which had remained closed for public use for a long time, lifting fishing ban and announcing to resume 24 hours electricity supply to the peninsula are also some of the propaganda activities launched by Colombo.

Douglas Devananda handed over 5 omnibuses to Koondaavil Depot of Sri Lanka Transport Board to be used in local transport services and gave agricultural implements to the farmers in Jaffna Tuesday.

"Though the parties contesting along with EPDP have different aims of their own, here we stand united to achieve a common goal," Douglas told his supporters. "We are contesting these elections not for the sake of us but for the people to live freely and that is why we had chosen to contest under the Betel Leaf symbol", he further said attempting to justify his decision.

Solution for Tamils after Presidential poll

IN a step seen as another delaying tactic, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has said a political solution to the civil war must wait for presidential elections.

Referring to sharing power with Tamils, Rajapakse said: "I know what to give and I know what not to give ... I am waiting but it will be after my (re-)election. I must get the mandate. After that, the political solution comes."

Rajapakse won a six-year term in 2005, but under Sri Lankan law could call a fresh presidential election as early as this November and a parliamentary election sooner.

The government says it aims

for a home-grown solution to issues involving the Tamils and other minorities.

However the future of the committee setup to examine the problem and propose a solution looks uncertain with the government announcing the shutdown of the Peace secretariat which manages the committee.

Rajapakse, who had strong backing for his tough military approach from hard-line members of his ruling coalition, will have a tougher time getting them on board with a political solution if it involves significant concessions to the country's Tamil and other minorities, political analysts say.

NEWS

'India did PR for Rajapaksa govt'

NOTED Indian journalist Satya Sivaraman said his country became just a public relations manager for the Sri Lanka's Mahinda Rajapaksa government in their war against the LTTE.

Delivering a speech at a function on "What next in Sri Lanka", he said instead of trying for a democratic solution for the ethnic crisis, India was protecting the Lankan government from the international community by whitewashing all the war crimes committed by that country.

He said India was directly involved in helping the Sri Lankan army along with nations such as Israel, Pakistan, and China.

"But the Indian involvement were very secretive and would never come out," he said.

The noted political commentator said India was trying to play up the China's involvement "just to justify their action" in the island nation.

He said Indian government did not favour a separate Tamil Eelam in that country as "it feared that would have encouraged the sub-national groups demanding separate states in the country".

Sivaraman said the political parties which were ruling at the Centre and the State were playing football game in the Sri Lankan ethnic issue, in which "the football was Lankan Tamils".

K Balagopal, Human Rights Forum, Hyderabad, said the Rajapaksa government was taking it easy on the rehabilitation of

the displaced Tamils. "They are in no hurry for it as they are in a victorious mode.

And they know well that there is nobody to put pressure on them," he said.

Balagopal said there are serious doubts raised by the international community about the resettlement.

"Nobody is sure that whether they are going to be rehabilitated in their original habitats because most of the areas are given to International firms," he said.

He said that the need of the hour was the democratisation of polity and not just the devolution of powers.

"Steps should be taken to ensure the ethnic communities, Tamils and Muslims, live with dignity, free of fear and with equal rights."

Meanwhile, the central Indian government said Sri Lanka has not done enough to rehabilitate displaced Tamils and asked Colombo to allow the Red Cross to take up relief and give media access to refugee camps in the strife-torn areas.

India had allocated Rs 500 crore for rehabilitating Lankan Tamils, but the rehabilitation plan was not ready in Sri Lanka, Union Home Minister P Chidambaram said on Monday June 29.

"We regret this," he told mediapersons at Karaikudi in his constituency, Sivaganga.

He said Sri Lankan Tamil refugees would not be forced to go back. "The government will however make all arrangements for them to return if they voluntarily want to go back."

Denying that India had not done enough to safeguard Lankan Tamils, he said, "We spoke both to LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. But they did not listen."

Lankan officials had told him recently that steps were being taken to hold elections in Tamil areas under the 13th Amendment of the Constitution on devolution provisions under the Indo-Lanka accord.

Referring to reports that China was helping Lanka build a Naval base at Katchatheevu, an islet ceded by India to Lanka, he said, "It is only an unconfirmed report. It is not so."

He also said that government was taking steps to prevent Indian fishermen from being attacked by Lankan Navalmen in mid-sea.

Noting that there was a request for more patrolling vessels, he said, "They (Tamil Nadu's Coast Security Group and Coast Guard) had asked for 10 boats. Each boat costs some crores. The government will give them the facility one by one."



Bogollagama and Li in cordial discussions as the relationship between Sri Lanka and China strengthens

Sri Lanka, China strengthen economic ties

CHINA and Sri Lanka celebrated their increasing closeness during a week in which the island announced an exclusive economic zone for the Asian giant and China responded by promising to take their partnership to new heights.

China would work with Sri Lanka to promote the comprehensive and cooperative partnership to a new height, said Chinese Vice Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing on Friday, July 3.

"We attach great importance to the traditional friendship with Sri Lanka," Li told visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama.

Hailing the China-Sri Lanka good-neighborly friendship, Li said the two nations had enjoyed smooth development of cooperation since forging diplomatic ties in 1957.

"The China-Sri Lanka relationship set a good example for the friendly ties between countries with different social systems," Li noted.

Bogollagama was on an official visit from July 1 to 5 at the

invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. Yang held talks with Bogollagama earlier Friday.

"China stands ready to expand cooperation with Sri Lanka, so as to consolidate the traditional bilateral friendship and breathe new life into the cooperative relationship," Yang said.

Bogollagama spoke highly of the "close and productive" relations between the two nations, and applauded China's support for its struggle to safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Bogollagama reiterated Sri Lanka's adherence to the one-China policy and would push bilateral relations forward.

Earlier in the week, Sri Lanka had granted Chinese companies a separate economic zone on the island.

China's Huichen Investment Holdings Limited will manage and bring new investments into the Mirigama zone, some 55 kilometers (34 miles) north of Colombo, for a period of 33 years, officials said on Tuesday, June 30.

Over the next three-years,

Huichen will invest US\$28 million to develop roads, power and sewerage facilities in the zone, said Sri Lankan Investment Promotions Minister Anura Priyadharshana Yapa.

Separately, Sri Lanka and China signed an agreement on the second and third stages of the \$891-million Norochcholai Coal Power 600 MW Project on Monday June 29.

The Information Department said phase two and three of the Norochcholai project would be completed by 2013.

The 300-MW first stage commenced in 2006 and is to be completed next year. The Chinese government facilitated long-term loans at a low interest rate for implementation of the project.

Power and Energy Minister John Seneviratna said the government was keen on importing sophisticated coal power infrastructure to minimise environmental hazards and that the project would be 98.8 per cent environmentally efficient, reducing the risk of pollution to mere 1.2%.

Plea ...

Continued from p2

political disappearances in the camps. It said the refugees yearned to get away from the barbed wire enclosures where they are detained, adding that there must be steps to erase "their sense of being held captive".

The group urged that timetables be drawn up for ongoing screening of refugees for possible Tamil Tiger affiliation and for the de-mining of their home areas. Then people could be given a release date which would ease camp congestion and remove "any fears of indefinite detention".

But the government's human rights secretary, Rajiva Wijesinha, told BBC he believed many people were "quite relieved" to be in the camps and that on his recent visit to them people looked less miserable and less frail.

Eelam no longer possible - DMK

ADVOCATING a fresh approach to the Tamil national question in Sri Lanka in the post-LTTE era, DMK president and Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi on Wednesday, July 1, declared that achieving 'Tamil Eelam' was no more a realistic possibility. He said Tamils should henceforth work for their livelihood rights in the island nation and struggle for equal rights, equal status for the language and devolution of powers at the regional level. "Only

this is possible, not Tamil Eelam," he said, responding to views of members from various parties on a special mention on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue.

Counselling Tamil parties to adopt a flexible stand on the issue, Karunanidhi recalled that DMK founder C N Annadurai had shelved the party's core demand - creating a separate Dravidian state (Dravida Nadu) - in 1962 to avoid proscription.

There was nothing wrong in

changing stands for the "welfare of the people", he said.

He said the conflict in Lanka was taking place for more than five decades now.

"I am the one who is aware of this problem since its beginning. I had even penned it in a detail way in my novel Pandaraka Vannian," the Chief Minister said and added: "Both the Union and Tamil Nadu governments are keen to help the Lankan Tamils."

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