

# TAMIL GUARDIAN

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## Tamil's suffering in camps as Sri Lanka gets aid

DETAILS INSIDE



Tamils continue to suffer disease and overcrowding in the concentration camps built for the government by foreign aid agencies. File photo Pedro Ugarte / AFP/ Getty Images



### 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 6 மணி  
16-07-2009 வியாழன் ஆடிப்பிறப்பு மாலை 6 மணிக்கு 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

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## NEWS

# War refugees interned in camps built by donors

Ravi Nessman

The Associated Press

IN just six months, one of the world's largest camps for war refugees has been carved out of the jungles of northern Sri Lanka, complete with banks, post offices, schools and a supermarket. But no one is allowed out, and hardly anyone is allowed in.

Aid workers and foreign diplomats increasingly fear that Manik Farm, a facility they helped build, is actually a military-run internment camp where 210,000 ethnic Tamil civilians displaced by the civil war are being held indefinitely.

Government memos and U.N. documents obtained by The Associated Press, as well as interviews with more than two dozen aid workers, U.N. officials, diplomats and rights advocates, detail how the international community poured tens of millions of dollars into these camps, despite their concerns.

"At best, it is at the edge of all kinds of international principles," said one Western diplomat based in Colombo, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals from the government. "But more likely, it is illegal."

The documents and interviews also reveal what appear to be worsening conditions at the camp, which houses civilians displaced in the final, bloody battles of the quarter-century civil war that ended two months ago.

In June, chicken pox was rampant and cases of typhoid, tuberculosis, skin and respiratory infections, hepatitis A, scabies and diarrhea have begun cropping up, according to U.N. reports.

More than 35 percent of children under 5 are suffering from wasting, or acute malnutrition, according to a July 3 government presentation leaked to the AP.

Tents meant for five are packed with up to 15 people, water is

scarce and the seasonal rains expected in the coming weeks could create a health nightmare, several foreign aid workers said.

Relatives are not allowed to visit, although many gather at the barbed wire fence hoping to get messages to their loved ones.

Opposition lawmakers are barred as well, and independent journalists are only allowed in on rare, military-guided tours.

Signs of unrest are growing.

Several weeks ago, inmates held a protest demanding they be reunited with family members in other fenced-off sections of the camp, aid workers said.

Military troops shot in the air to disperse the angry residents.

The Sri Lankan government has branded Manik Farm a "welfare village," where children can go to school, parents can get vocational training and those traumatized by the war can get medical and social care.

Sri Lankan officials say most of the refugees will be able to return to their homes by the end of the year, and that they will open up the camps after they screen out former Tamil Tigers who could stir up trouble.

However, aid workers say the military officer in charge told them almost no war refugees would go home this year, and the screening process is dragging on, with even civilians who fled the war in January still confined to the camps.

Mano Ganesan, an ethnic Tamil parliamentarian, said the government sealed the camps to keep those inside from telling the world about the final months of the war, when human rights groups say the military killed thousands of civilians with heavy shelling.

"There is no other logical reason to understand the govern-



Foreign aid agencies built the camps in which over 300,000 Tamil civilians continue to languish

ment's position," he said.

In January, the government asked international donors to help build five camps - with 39,000 semi-permanent homes, 7,800 toilets and 390 community centers - to hold civilians for up to three years.

Aid workers feared they were being asked to build military-run prison camps to indefinitely detain hundreds of thousands of civilians, according to an official who took part in meetings with the government.

They decided to provide temporary tents instead of shacks and to make only a three-month commitment to the camps.

In four days in the middle of April, more than 100,000 civilians escaped the war zone. The same month, a U.N. document reported that armed soldiers and some paramilitary groups were stationed inside the camps.

In a private memo written at that time, Walter Kaelin, a senior U.N. official, demanded a time frame for the civilians to be freed from the camps. By the end of the war in May, nearly 300,000 civilians were living in schools and displacement camps. The largest was Manik Farm, so densely populated it would stand as the second-largest city in the country.

Aid groups put up 43,000 shelters and tents, 8,761 latrines, 339 places to bathe, 12 nutrition centers and 132 temporary learning spaces for students, according to the U.N.

Aid groups continued to help

well after their initial three-month commitment expired, despite ongoing concerns.

The head of one group said the major agencies and the U.N. "are incapable of negotiating or playing hardball with the government."

The conflict exposes a major dilemma aid groups and donors worldwide face: They feel bound to assist desperate civilians, yet such work might support government policies they strongly protest.

Most of the aid officials spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity out of fear the government would further restrict their access to the camps or expel their organizations from the country.

In recent weeks, the government demanded agencies sign agreements promising not to make "public comments" about camp conditions without authorization.

It asked the Red Cross, one of the more critical groups, to "scale down" its operations.

As an AP journalist interviewed one agency head, five immigration officials raided his office to ensure his foreign staff had the proper visas.

The AP has not been allowed into the camps since May, and requests to interview Maj. Gen. G. A. Chandrasiri, the military official who ran the camps until he was named governor of the Northern Province, have gone unanswered.

"We are doing a great wrong

to these people," former Chief Justice Sarath Silva said after a visit to Manik Farm last month, just days before his retirement.

Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Center for Policy Alternatives, a local public policy group, said Manik Farm and the other facilities are "internment camps or detention camps."

His group filed a suit in the Supreme Court last month accusing the government of illegally detaining hundreds of thousands of its own citizens.

Ganesan filed a second suit, with four other opposition lawmakers, demanding access to what he called "more or less prison camps."

That description angered Resettlement Minister Rishard Badurdeen.

"That is wrong. People are very happy there," he said.

Badurdeen said the government has allowed more than 3,000 people over the age of 60 to leave the camps and resettled several thousand people since May who were displaced in fighting in 2007.

He said the government needs to finish registering and screening the camp residents, and that authorities have already pulled out nearly 10,000 former insurgents for rehabilitation.

Badurdeen declined to give a time frame for when the refugees can be released: "After the regis-

*continued on p4*

## UNICEF says TMVP has child soldiers

EVEN as Sri Lanka's new Chief of Defence Staff announced that 800 cadre belonging to the paramilitary group, Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), have been inducted into the Army, UN Children's agency UNICEF has announced that the outfit has more than 100 child soldiers.

According to Colombo based Daily Mirror, the latest UNICEF database, as of May 31, shows 107 outstanding cases of child soldiers with the TMVP of which 30 are under the age of 18 and 77 were underage at the time they were recruited but are now adults.

The TMVP had announced a

few months back that it had handed over the last of the remaining child soldiers to UNICEF who in turn placed them at rehabilitation camps where several child soldiers, mostly from the LTTE are being rehabilitated, reported the Daily Mirror.

The newspaper further said,

that when it contacted TMVP spokesman Azad Maulana, he confirmed that UNICEF had in fact contacted them over an outstanding number of child soldiers but added that the children may have been recruited by "other groups" operating in the East.

"We don't have any child sol-

diers with us. We have been approached by UNICEF over some 30 cases. We feel there might be some other groups taking these children using our name. Our party leader Chief Minister Chandrakanthan will meet UNICEF to discuss the issue," Maulana told the Daily Mirror.

## NEWS

# LTTE announces restructure process

"THE Executive Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, wishes to officially let our beloved Tamil people and the international community know that Mr Selvarasa Pathmanathan, who had been appointed as Head of International Relations by our National Leader, will lead us into the next steps of our freedom struggle according to the vision of our esteemed leader", said LTTE's Executive Committee in a press statement released today.

Full text of the statement by the Executive Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is as follows:

The Eelam Tamil people are in the midst of a critical and sorrowful period in the history of the struggle for freedom of our Nation, Tamil Eelam. No one can deny the fact that we have experi-

enced massive and irreplaceable losses, losses we would not accept even in our worst dreams.

Against the backdrop of Sri Lanka's boastful propaganda that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have been annihilated and destroyed, it is our historic duty to rise up and fight for our legitimate rights - a duty that has been left in our hands by our peerless leader and those martyred heroes and civilians who have given their lives in defending our soil.

At this historic juncture, cognizant of the new circumstances, we have set out to take our freedom struggle along new pathways.

Accordingly, we humbly announce to our beloved Tamil people that we have reformulated the administrative structures of our liberation movement.

Like all liberation struggles, we will modify the form and strategies of our struggle according to times and demands. Yet, our ultimate goal of a free Tamil Eelam does not ever change. In view of this, we, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, wish to join hands with our people in order to take forward our freedom struggle to its next phase. Hon Mr Velupillai Pirabakaran was then, now, and shall remain forever, the leader of Tamil Nationhood.

We are determined to overcome all the hurdles ahead of us in order to strengthen our actions towards our liberation. We have undertaken a long, elaborate and deep process of consultation among our members, including our cadres who bravely fought their way out of the battlefield and our representatives abroad

and in the Diaspora, in order to make some firm decisions. According to this collective decision, we, the Executive Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, wish to officially let our beloved Tamil people and the international community know that Mr Selvarasa Pathmanathan, who had been appointed as Head of International Relations by our National Leader, will lead us into the next steps of our freedom struggle according to the vision of our esteemed leader.

We have set up a head office for our liberation movement, and formulated various sector-based working groups and an executive committee, in order to take our struggle vigorously forward. We shall share the details of these in due course. We look forward to the support and wise counsel of

the Tamil people in realising our future plans.

If the Sinhala nation and those countries that support it consider that the Tamil people's freedom struggle has been defeated through the capture of historical homeland areas of the Tamil people and the massacre of thousands of Tamil civilians, we shall shatter that illusion.

Let us demonstrate to the world through our actions that the fire of freedom awakened by our great leader V.Pirabakaran continues to burn in the hearts of all Tamils, and that only a free Tamil Nation has the power to extinguish it."

Thank you

Mr. Suresh (Amuthan), Mr. Ram, On behalf of Executive committee, Headquarters, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

## Sri Lanka's endless war

Robert Templer  
New York Times

THE guns have fallen silent in Sri Lanka's bloody civil war, but the deep wounds of ethnic animosity have not even begun to heal. An estimated 300,000 Tamil civilians remain essentially prisoners in internment camps run by a Sinhalese-dominated government.

To begin easing the deep mistrust between the communities, donor countries will have to pressure the government to be as serious about securing a just peace as it was earlier this year about winning the war.

The final months of combat in the decades-long war between the Sri Lankan Army and the rebel Tamil Tigers were brutal. As government forces tightened a noose around insurgent positions, hundreds of thousands of civilians were caught in the middle.

The army was indiscriminately launching artillery shells and air strikes into mixed areas of insurgents and innocents, and the Tigers shot at people who tried to escape. The U.N. estimated some 7,000 civilians, including at least 1,000 children, died and more than 10,000 were injured in the last few months of the war.

The legacy of atrocities on both sides clearly needs to be investigated if the Tamils and Sinhalese are to share the same island peacefully in the future. The immediate concern is for the 300,000 Tamils still interned behind barbed wire in camps with no government plan for returning them to their homes. Up to two

thirds of them are in the giant camp at Manik Farm, where lives are lost every day to overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of clean drinking water and inadequate medical services.

The government has blamed the United Nations and international aid agencies for the poor conditions, because those organizations are reluctant to build permanent or semi-permanent shelters to house the displaced. The real origin of the problem, however, is the government's refusal to expedite its "screening" process and allow tens of thousands of the displaced to live with relatives or host families.

Furthermore, access for international agencies is restricted in ways that limit the effectiveness of aid delivery. Many of the restrictions appear designed to prevent the disclosure of conditions in the camps or the situation that civilians faced during the final months of the war. No private consultations with the displaced are allowed in the camps, and no cameras or recording equipment can be brought in.

Many of the displaced remain uncertain about the whereabouts or fate of family members from whom they have been separated. Many suspected of involvement with the Tigers have been separated from their families and detained for further questioning, some in undisclosed locations. Some end up in detention and rehabilitation centers that the Red



**Sri Lanka has asked aid agencies, including the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC), to scale down operations, raising concerns among aid groups about the care of the 300,000 Tamils who are now being held in government-run concentration camps. The ICRC said it had been ordered to scale down relief operations, and as a result it was withdrawing expatriate staff from the battle-scarred northeast.**

Cross and Unicef have access to.

One case deserves special mention. Three Tamil government doctors and one senior health official are known to be in government custody and are now threatened with prosecution for cooperating with the Tamil Tigers. As just about the only remaining officials inside the war zone in the final weeks, they worked heroically to save lives and alert the world to the humanitarian disaster endured by civilians trapped in the fighting. On July 8, their captors forced them to recant their stories. This farce should end: They should be freed.

After winning the war, the Sri Lankan government now risks losing the peace with its approach toward ethnic Tamils displaced by the conflict. Colombo needs to

alter course if the country is to begin overcoming years of animosity and avoid having old hatreds and current antipathy turn into the next Tamil rebellion.

Specifically, the government needs to provide a clear timetable for rapid and full resettlement of those currently interned in all the camps. It also has to make significant improvements in access to and conditions in those camps. Colombo should make public its lists of the interned and allow the Red Cross access to all places of detention and all aspects of the "screening" process conducted by the military and intelligence agencies.

The international community has a clear role to play in convincing the Sri Lankan government to take these steps. The

cochairs of the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka - the United States, the European Union, Japan and Norway - have particular responsibility as they prepare to meet in August. They must send an unequivocal message.

All donor countries, both acting alone and using their influence in key institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, should condition all new non-emergency economic assistance to the country on their implementation. Creating the basic conditions necessary for a sustainable and equitable peace demands no less.

*Robert Templer is Asia program director of the International Crisis Group.*

## NEWS

# Deadly diseases erupt in internment camps

TamilNet

MENINGITIS and encephalitis have erupted in Sri Lanka's northern Vavuniya district where over 300,000 Tamil civilians forcibly held in temporary shelters behind barbed wires, a local newspaper has reported.

Encephalitis is an acute inflammation of the brain. Meningitis is inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, known collectively as the meninges. Also, encephalitis with meningitis is known as meningoencephalitis.

Encephalitis has been on the increase among Vanni Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) held in internment centres located in Vavuniya, according to medical sources in the district hospital. Thirty-four Vanni IDPs of the 64 afflicted by encephalitis have died in three months. Majority of them who succumbed to brain fever were less than 24 years of age, medical sources said.

Over the past week 14 new

encephalitis cases were detected in the hospital.

Vavuniya-based United Nations staff providing relief services to the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) have been advised to keep away from the Vavuniya General Hospital due to the outbreak of meningitis and encephalitis, health officials in Vavuniya said.

The UN warning to staff came amidst reports that hospital employees at Vavuniya had failed to inform authorities of the outbreak, the Sunday Times reported.

Dr. Hemantha Herath, Health Coordinator of the IDP camps, told the newspaper, "It is only now that we are getting a regular feedback from the hospital. They have not done in-depth investigations into these cases."

A team sent by the Health Ministry is studying the causes for the outbreak of these diseases.

Meanwhile, according to a World Health Organization report, diarrhoea and hepatitis A are

still prevalent in some of the IDP camps. Dr. Herath said the number of cases of diarrhoea and hepatitis A was not going down and they were closely monitoring the situation.

According to the report, health care, water distribution and supply of food items still need more attention. The report has warned of the effect the approaching rainy season might have on the camps, especially in low-lying areas. It has called for an improved drainage system and shelters before the rainy season begins.

The paper also reported that there is a shortage of complementary food items in the camps as NGOs which were supplying such items are pulling out.

The report said there is not enough suitable land to build more toilets. The camps currently have only about 9,215 toilets while 15,000 are needed.

In June, chicken pox was rampant and cases of typhoid, tuberculosis, skin and respiratory infections, hepatitis A, scabies and diarrhoea have begun cropping up, according to U.N. reports.

## War refugees interned in camps built by donors

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tration, we can consider it, along with security concerns."

Government officials say they cannot return the civilians to their former homes until the north is demined and certified safe by the United Nations.

"Every square centimeter has been mined by the LTTE. If something happens, I am responsible," President Mahinda Rajapaksa told the Indian newspaper The Hindu in a recent interview.

Demining experts say Rajapaksa is grossly exaggerating the problem, with one estimating that only 2 to 3 percent of the region might be mined.

Experts said it would take about six months to remove unexploded shells from towns and fields and to mark off the minefields so residents don't wander into them.

But deminers have been barred from all but a tiny corner of the former war zone, said three people involved in the demining process.

Ganesan said he feared the government was using the mines as an excuse to keep civilians out so it could set up armed military camps across the north.

In the meantime, military offi-

cials are pushing to make the facilities at the camps more permanent - a move many aid workers had long feared.

When temporary latrines overflowed from use by more than 100 people each - 2 1/2 times their intended capacity - military commanders demanded concrete latrines. The aid groups offered to build more wooden latrines instead.

With heavy rains expected in the coming weeks, military commanders suggested giving residents bags of cement to pour foundations for their tents.

The aid groups protested that cement floors could become the foundations for permanent structures.

Some infrastructure is going up. The army ran electricity lines to power lights and loudspeakers. UNICEF laid pipe to bring in water from a nearby river.

The government says 80 percent of those in the camps will return home by the end of the year. But Chandrasiri told aid officials that no more displaced families would go home in the next six months and only 20 percent within a year, said an official at the meeting. Meanwhile, the government is clearing more sites and building more camps.

"At the current rate, they will still be building the camp at the time they should be taking it down," the official said.

The pressure is growing on the government to compromise.

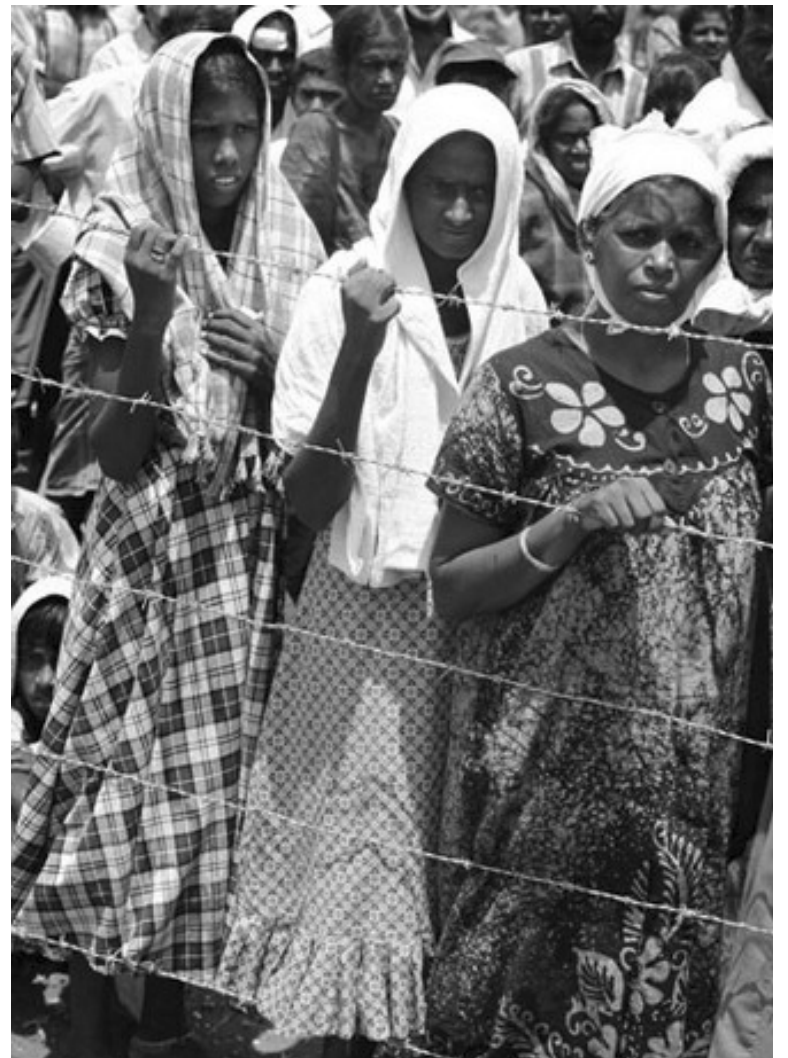
The U.N. called for \$270 million in aid to Sri Lanka this year, but only \$96 million has been promised. The lack of funds forced aid groups have cut back on fruit and vegetables for the camps, leaving many with little more than rice and lentils.

The camps cost nearly \$400,000 a day to operate. Foreign governments will be hesitant to pledge more if conditions don't change, and Sri Lanka would be hard pressed to pay on its own.

"We can't keep these people very long in a refugee camp. We don't have the resources," said Badurdeen, the resettlement minister.

Neil Buhne, head of the U.N. mission in Sri Lanka, said aid agencies would review the situation in the camps in mid-August, but declined to say whether they would pull out if the gates remained shut.

For now, those trapped inside worry about their future, Buhne said. "Every time I go to the camps more people ask me, 'When are we going to be let out?'"



Camp inmates live behind barbed wire, queuing for hours for food

## Anger brews among Tamil civilians held 'like animals'

Lydia Polgreen  
New York Times

HUNDREDS of thousands of Tamils remain locked in camps almost entirely off-limits to journalists, human-rights investigators and political leaders. The Sri Lankan government says the civilians are a security risk because Tamil Tiger fighters are hiding among them.

But diplomats, analysts, aid workers and many Sri Lankans worry the chance to finally bring to a close one of the world's most enduring ethnic conflicts is slipping away, as the government curtails civil rights in its efforts to stamp out the last remnants of the Tigers.

"The government told these people it would look after them," said Veerasingham Anandasangaree, a Tamil politician who has been a staunch supporter of the government's fight against the Tamil Tigers. "But instead they have locked them up like animals with no date certain of when they will be released. This is simply asking for another conflict later on down the road."

The Sri Lankan government has portrayed its final battle against the 26-year insurgency by the Tamil Tigers, which ended in late May with the killing of the

group's leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, as a rescue mission to liberate civilians held hostage by one of the world's richest and most ruthless armed groups, branded terrorists by governments around the globe.

"We can't say this was a war; it was a humanitarian operation to safeguard the people of the area," President Mahinda Rajapaksa said in an interview last week. "They knew we were not against the Tamil people, against the civilians. This was only against the terrorists."

Although many of the camps' residents are grateful to the government for freeing them from the rebels, frustration and anger are building as it becomes clear that reconciliation and finding a political solution to the grievances of the Tamils and other minority groups in Sri Lanka will have to wait.

Rajapaksa said the residents of the camps, which the government refers to as "welfare villages," must be confined because anyone could be a hidden rebel. The government says about 10,000 fighters have been identified so far, most because they turned themselves in.



## NEWS

# 'Confessions' by doctors raise doubts over peace

The Times

FIVE Sri Lankan doctors who witnessed the bloody climax of the country's civil war in May and made claims of mass civilian deaths as a result of government shelling of Tamil Tiger positions recanted much of their testimony.

Their U-turn raises fresh fears that Sri Lanka, known as a holiday paradise to millions of Western tourists, has quietly become a quasi-Stalinist state.

The doctors, who appeared physically well but extremely nervous at a press conference on Wednesday, July 9, claimed that they had deliberately overestimated the civilian casualties suffered as the war reached its bloody endgame.

The Tigers had forced them to lie, they said as government officials looked on from the sidelines, adding that only up to 750 civilians were killed between January and mid-May in the final battles of the war.

The five men were taken back to prison, where they have been held for the past two months for allegedly spreading Tiger propaganda. The doctors added that they now hoped they would be released.

The number was far below the 7,000 fatalities estimated by the United Nations. An investigation by The Times uncovered evidence that more than 20,000 civilians were killed, mostly by the Army, which has claimed, incredibly, that it did not harm a single civilian.

As occupants of the tragically misnamed "no-fire zone" - a strip of coconut grove and beach in the northeast which was the last redoubt of the Tigers and where government guns directed a vast amount of ordinance - the doctors would have come under the control of the rebels.

It would be surprising if the Tigers, who were no slouches when it came to the manipulation of the media, had not attempted to modify the doctors' testimonies.

The tragic thing is that having been picked up by the Sri Lankan Army and kept in custody for the past two months, the doctors find themselves in a terrible mirror image of their previous predicament - under pressure from the Government to deliver a story that fits its own agenda.

The doctors now deny former testimony - such as the government shelling of a hospital in the

conflict zone on February 2 - for which there are also witnesses from the UN and the Red Cross.

"I have serious doubts over the latest statements," one senior Sri Lankan journalist said.

"What we're seeing is that the LTTE and the Government are in some respects mirror images of each other."

There is little to surprise those familiar with Sri Lankan politics. Dissent is not tolerated by President Rajapaksa, who enjoys a massive amount of support from the Sinhalese Buddhist majority.

Journalists who have disagreed with his policies have regularly been abducted or killed. "The discourse used by the Government is of traitors and patriots," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuthu, of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, a Sri Lankan analyst who himself has received threats. "There is no indication yet that this mode of thinking is slipping."

Sam Zarifi, the Asia-Pacific director for Amnesty International, said that the statements from the doctors were "expected and predicted".

"There are very significant grounds to question whether these statements were voluntary, and they raise serious concerns whether the doctors were subjected to ill-treatment during weeks of detention," he said. "From the time the doctors were detained, the fear was that they would be used exactly this way."

The methods used by the President's regime have raised doubts over the sincerity of his pledge to forge a lasting peace by reaching out to Sri Lanka's minority Tamils.

A slew of poisonous proposals from prominent Sinhalese figures - such as the suggestion that Tamil villages could be renamed after Sinhalese generals - have done little to soothe those fears.

Suggestions that the internment camps set up in recent months to house an estimated 300,000 displaced Tamils will be made permanent have also stoked concerns.

Meanwhile, in between the two distortions generated by the Tigers and the Government lies the truth.

If ever there was a demonstration of why an independent enquiry is needed into the end of the war, the oscillating doctors' testimonies is it.



Tamils queue for hours to get meals and access to medicine is limited, even as Sri Lanka claims these are the best in the world, comparable to camps for disaster victims in Italy

## Aid workers concerned about Sri Lanka's camps

Anjana Pasricha  
Voice of America

SRI LANKA has asked aid agencies to scale down operations on the island. The government claims that now it has claimed victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), there is no longer a need for agencies like the Red Cross.

The move has raised concerns among aid groups about the care of the 300,000 Tamils who were uprooted during the last phase of the fighting that ended in May and are now being held in government-run concentration camps.

Although the government has announced its intention to dismantle the so-called "welfare villages" as soon as possible and plans to return the displaced in six months, aid workers are worried about Sri Lanka's treatment of its displaced, according to press reports. These concerns include the lack of access to camps, continuing restrictions on aid going into the camps and the lack of movement to resettle the inmates of the camps.

Aid workers have complained about a lack of access to the camps which are run by the military. Sri Lanka's military has already been accused by rights groups of abuses against the Tamil population, and are known for their poor record in dealing with civilian populations, both in Sri Lanka and overseas - Sri Lankan soldiers on a UN mission in Haiti were accused of rape and running prostitution rings, while Tamils have documented numerous instances of human rights

abuses including rape, torture, disappearances and murder.

Many aid workers view the government's call for a scaling down of aid operations as a deliberate move to prevent outsiders from witnessing conditions inside the camps, saying that the lack of free movement for the displaced in the camps is tantamount to arbitrary detention.

Aid workers and rights groups are also concerned about violations such as abductions and disappearances that are reportedly taking place in the camps.

Separately, many aid workers say their ability to work continues to be hampered by the government denying visas to colleagues, interfering in recruitment and setting out rules that lead to a quick turnover of staff.

The restrictions on the types

and quantity of goods that can enter the camps is an further hindrance they say.

According to a report in The Times, the government has imposed a 0.9 per cent tax on all funding for aid groups, saying the tax is designed to crack down on non-governmental organisations that abused Sri Lankan law and squandered their funds on their own staff after the tsunami.

Aid workers are also concerned the Colombo government intends to keep the camps running indefinitely despite its vow to resettle most of the displaced in six months. They say the government has been pushing for semi-permanent structures to be built in the camps and are worried the government may use slow progress on de-mining as a pretext for stopping people from going home.

## 'Best camps in world'

EVEN as concerns are being raised by aid workers about the conditions in the internment camps the Sri Lankan government is running in the NorthEast, President Mahinda Rajapaksa spoke of how good life was in the camps.

"I would say the condition in our camps is the best any country has," President Rajapaksa told The Hindu newspaper in an interview.

"We supply water. There is a problem with lavatories. That is not because of our fault. The money that comes from the EU and others, it goes to the NGOs

and the U.N. They are very slow; disbursing money is very slow.

"We supply the water tanks. We have spent over 2 billion rupees. Giving electricity, giving water, now we are giving televisions to them. They have telephone facilities.

"Schools have been established. Some of the leaders are using mobile phones. I had a special meeting on the disposal of waste. I sent a team of specialists to see how mosquitoes can be eradicated.

"We know there are shortcomings

*continued on p12*

## EDITORIAL AND OPINION

## TAMIL GUARDIAN

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## Extortion Economy

## Sri Lanka's crisis was made possible by international engagement.

While deliberately perpetuating and sustaining the humanitarian crisis engulfing the Tamil people, Sri Lanka's ultra-Sinhala nationalist government is (again) demanding international aid to alleviate their suffering. This is a ruse undertaken by Sri Lanka's ruling elites and Sinhala-dominated state bureaucracy for decades: exploiting the international desire to help end suffering to instead fund the further consolidation of Sinhala hegemony over the Tamils - and line their pockets.

The international donor community must now insist on close monitoring and micro-supervision of how every penny Sri Lanka receives is spent. As a range of international monitors have recently outlined, Sri Lanka is simply not a responsible member of the international community. It must not be treated as such. The present crisis - that of a rampant, chauvinistic state undertaking a slow genocide - could not have come about without donors' reluctance and refusal over the years to accept the signs of its emergence.

Despite near-universal condemnation, the Sri Lankan state is brazenly continuing its internment and brutalization of over 300,000 Tamils in over-crowded, diseased and violent camps. Dozens of people are dying of sickness and starvation each day. Others are being 'disappeared' and raped. Sri Lanka's response to international demands for humanitarian access is to impose further restrictions on aid workers. Sri Lanka's response to the ongoing flow of horrific reports is to throw foreign journalists out and intimidate their local counterparts.

In the meantime a macabre shadow economy has emerged around the plight of the inmates. Government and military officials are taking massive payments to release those able to raise the money. A prostitution ring run by government officials has been identified in at least one of the camps. The feeding of the hostage population has spawned a network of payments to officials. The intolerable conditions in the camps are being made gradually worse, making escape worth any price.

At the same time, Sri Lanka's broader economy of extortion turns on international funding to alleviate and repair the damage the Sinhala leadership has itself consciously and actively brought about. Sri Lanka is again seeking foreign 'reconstruction' aid ostensibly to repair the very towns and villages that its military has systematically destroyed. It wants funding

to build infrastructure that have been funded before and never built or poorly constructed. The money vanished into elites' pockets and patronage networks. The political system turns on clientelism.

For years, donors have been stuck in a logic that has reinforced the very problems they have sought to alleviate. Since 1977 donor money has flowed largely uninterrupted into this country - in the same period that ethnic polarization, and Tamils' alienation from the state has inexorably reached today's crisis. Meanwhile, Sri Lankan elites have always done well out of their terms in office and Sinhala supremacy has been entrenched in the state bureaucracy and the wider economy.

That free markets and democracy have not lifted Sri Lanka out of ethnic antagonism and poverty, despite the billions of dollars poured into the state, has less to do with these goals than with how donors have actually pursued them. It was four years into her rule that donors decided President Chandrika Kumaratunga - then a darling of global liberalism - was actually no different to any other authoritarian kleptocrat. As the World Bank noted, without any irony, when they visited Jaffna (four years into the peninsula's 'liberation'), they couldn't find a single person who had been helped by foreign funding. The World Bank called this a 'disconnect' between expectations and reality.

Not that foreign aid had no impact on the ground. On the contrary. Sinhala colonization of traditional Tamil-speaking areas has been made possible primarily by international donor money allocated to the supposedly 'apolitical' projects of reviving local agricultural economies, building roads and so on. The expansion of the state's bureaucracy has been made possible by the varying, but uninterrupted flow of foreign funds.

Now, of course, things are blatantly much worse. The marginalization, immiseration and genocide of the Tamils is now an open, rather than surreptitious, project. But the Sri Lankan state, for all its bluster, is vulnerable to international pressure. If donors carry on with past policies and hope for the best, the crisis will simply get worse. Unless donors are prepared to exploit Sri Lanka's vulnerability and deploy sanctions and conditionalities - rather than the ineffective incentives for reform as in the past - neither peace nor stability will emerge in the coming years, but the reverse.

## Holding grounds is fundamental to everything

## Editorial Board

TamilNet

THE Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu N. Ram's questions or rather 'leads' and Rajapaksa's elucidations that appeared in The Hindu for three consecutive days are not an ordinary media interview. Timed with the interview came the statements of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi and External Affairs Minister of India S M Krishna.

The whole exercise orchestrated by the Colombo-Chennai-New Delhi axis was primarily meant for nullifying the liberation struggle of Eelam Tamil nationalism.

Shielding the guilty party and victimising the victimised for the war crimes, imposing post-war subjugation on the 'defeated' people, waving aside the seriousness of the crime of keeping people perishing in the concentration camps and pretending no solutions as fantastic solutions, echoed in the orchestrations are the workings of fascist and Stalinist minds in collaboration.

Mahinda Rajapaksa, the most explicit among the lot, rules out federalism, even rejects the existence of minorities and envisages 'ethnic mix' for what he thinks reconciliation.

He wants the UN, which he was keeping out during the war, to certify de-mining for resettlement, talks of the need of increasing the number of military and wants his re-election to implement what he is having in his mind - a 'home-grown solution'.

Karunanidhi rules out Tamil Eelam, envisages struggling for regional autonomy and advocates appeasement with the Sinhala state.

In a statement in the Indian parliament last Thursday, Krishna is convinced of the 'closure to the cycle of violence and terrorism' in the island, viewed the crisis in the island not as a national question but 'aspirations of the minorities' and wanted the full implementation of the 13th amendment and go beyond.

It is clear Colombo and New Delhi have nothing new to offer, after what they see as 'end of terrorism', but are at a dangerous track of proclaiming a new phase of war against Eelam Tamil nationalism, covertly conducted through structural genocide and

annihilation of the Tamil homeland in the island.

As privately revealed by certain diplomatic circles, India has no positive or innovative programme of its own for Eelam Tamils beyond allowing Colombo's agenda with superficial restraints and gaining its interests in the island.

Whatever the feelings of the Eelam Tamils to look upon India as the ultimate 'deliverer' of their legitimate aspirations, the Indian Establishment is consistently not convinced of the need to identify any overlapping interests with Eelam Tamils, thanks to the docility of the leadership in Tamil Nadu.

Hitherto, in waging the war against Eelam Tamils, neither Colombo nor any of the powers abetting Colombo had the guts to say that they do it against a national liberation struggle. They had to go for the smokescreen 'terrorism'.

As they now claim 'terrorism' is over, nothing should actually prevent them from recognizing the legitimacy of the concerned people upholding their national liberation struggle.

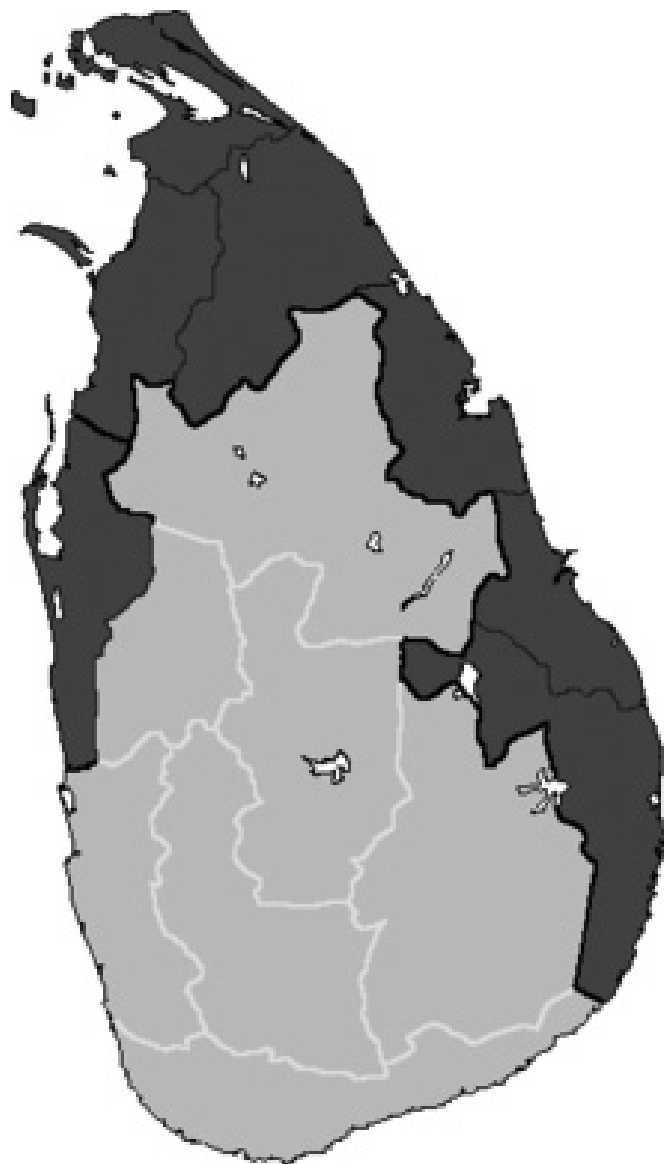
What the Eelam Tamils have to understand is that the war was not against the LTTE or terrorism, but against the national liberation struggle of Eelam Tamils. The Tamil struggle was found conducive neither to the geopolitical interests of powers eying on the strategic island in order to have a hold on South Asia and the Indian Ocean, nor to the interests of India in defending its surroundings.

While time will tell whether India was right or wrong in its modus operandi, the reality for Eelam Tamils today is that both Colombo and New Delhi have come open in waging a war on the nationalism of Eelam Tamils and they have found a suitable person in Karunanidhi to inaugurate it.

What is at stake is even the democratic right of Eelam Tamils to open their mouth and tell what they want.

Tamils have to carefully note that even the West, which in contrast to India, belatedly show hostility to Colombo, talk about war crimes and human rights, once again for its own interests, has not

## OPINION



principles such as independence and sovereignty found in the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution to achieve the goal at home, needs a popular participatory structure beginning from grass-root democracy in the diaspora and the initiation of it needs to be above controversy for convincing the participation of people.

There are some efforts in the diaspora to begin this exercise country wise.

Transnational government is not merely for the immediate need of international negotiation, but to sustain the struggle that may take years and to look after the well-being of the people in the diaspora and at home for long times to come, in the context of unfolding global scenario.

The West should think of regaining its international credibility by recognising nations such as the Eelam Tamils and promoting their democratic moves struggling against genocide and oppression. This will bring in more durable acceptance of it and its civilization than what petty geopolitics could bring in.

A Tamil housewife in New Zealand was recently heard saying that she stopped buying Sri Lankan tea as a protest possible within her means for what the Sri Lankan state did to her people. Another person in the diaspora said that he will never claim himself a Sri Lankan hereafter and will stick only to his Eelam Tamil identity.

Such individual sentiments and protests may look insignificant but when organized they can become something like Mahatma Gandhi's Khadar movement. Imagine global Tamils deciding not to buy Chinese goods and they joining hands with Tibetans and others affected, in campaigning against Chinese economic interests!

The diaspora, especially the younger generation, is sure going to tell the West to stop hoodwinking and to come out with substantial solutions, beginning from the recognition of Eelam Tamils as a nation and their struggle a national liberation struggle.

India is a unique issue for Eelam Tamils. They always look upon the country and its people. Its Establishment wouldn't have dared to embark upon betrayal, had there been an intelligent show of strength and solidarity in Tamil Nadu. But forces of deception were at work from media to political parties. India has to be addressed internally by Eelam Tamils. Much anger is simmering in Tamil Nadu but it expects the Eelam Tamils to come out with their position on the national question.

The Eelam Tamils, especially the diaspora need to play the cards carefully.

Let there be negotiation on all fronts. But the national grounds for negotiation should not be lost, just because some ask for it. If it is lost it can't be regained even if there are going to be favourable geopolitics.

Even after 2000 years the Jews were able to regain their land because they never lost their nationalism or the thought of Israel.

# Time for India to start saying yes

Sunil Khilnani  
Newsweek

INDIA has long aspired to a role in redefining the global order. Ask why they deserve it, and most Indians will point to their nation's size, its rich culture and tradition, and its special legitimacy-the product of the nonviolent freedom struggle against British rule and India's triumph as a secular democracy.

Ask for more detail on exactly how India should redefine the global system, however, and things get murkier. That's because, for much of its life, India's foreign policy has been about saying no-playing out a Gandhian boycott on the international stage. Throughout the Cold War, New Delhi refused to take sides, avoiding international pacts and steering clear of markets and trade, all of which it saw as skewed in favor of the powerful.

This approach was initially a product of India's economic and military weakness. Today, however, India is an economic powerhouse and, increasingly, a diplomatic one as well. The country's economic boom seems likely to continue, thanks to a high savings rate, strong investment, and a young population. The global crisis will temporarily slow India's rapid growth, but its economy is less export-dependent, and its financial system is more regulated than many, ensuring a quicker recovery. The country may not be poised to become a superpower, as some of its citizens like to imagine. But as its might expands-including military muscle (defense spending is up by a third this year)-New Delhi needs a clearer sense of how to use it.

Analysts like to lament the fact that India lacks a grand vision on the scale of Beijing's "peaceful rise" doctrine. But formulating a decisive strategy is much more difficult in an open democracy with many different definitions of the national interest. This lack of cohesion is not necessarily a disadvantage. It ensures that when India does finally get around to defining its world view, that will be after intense debate among its diverse social and economic groups, which should ensure that the new policy reflects something like the true will of the people-not just that of policy wonks in New Delhi. For a sense of how this process works, consider the bruising battle over confirmation of the U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Agreement: what may have sounded like cacophony actually helped to refine the terms, ensuring that the final deal better reflected India's interests-for instance, by keeping several plants off-limits to inspectors.

Given the complex nature of Indian politics, it's too soon to say what any grand strategy will

eventually look like. But one can get at least a sense of it from looking at the various external pressures it will have to account for. Here several facts are key. First, India is still home to the world's largest concentration of poor people. New Delhi is going to have to use its growing global clout to inject their interests into international debates. As India negotiates on agricultural terms of trade, access to energy, or climate change, this or any future government must push for greater equity-not by rejecting globalization, but by making it more inclusive.

Second, India finds itself in the world's most threatening regional environment, surrounded by unstable or authoritarian states: Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, and, above all, Pakistan. To manage, New Delhi will need to balance toughness with magnanimity; unilaterally offering trade liberalization, for example, could help integrate the fractured region.

Finally, whatever policy India adopts will have to take into account Asia's two other great players: China and the United States. New Delhi is currently building strong ties with both Beijing and Washington by following the "Manmohan Singh doctrine," which stresses economic diplomacy and engagement. But this doesn't guarantee that relations with either country will be easy. India's bond with the U.S., though strong, will be seriously tested if India suffers another terrorist attack originating in Pakistan. As for China, Asia's other most dynamic economy and dominant civilization, the potential for conflict is greater. The two countries may share many interests on economics and trade, but experience shows how easily nationalism can trump such rational concerns.

India's emerging strategy should not try to balance these or other great powers. Instead, Delhi should use its diplomatic skills to strengthen its voice-in order to win permanent membership to the U.N. Security Council, for example. But India must also show the courage to venture into zones of conflict and meet threats with vigor. It is as a bridging power-between rich and poor, between the world's most powerful state (the U.S.) and its most populous one (China), and between the various religions that make up its own rich mosaic-that India can best define its new global identity.

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come forward after the war at least to recognize Eelam Tamils as a nation - leave apart the national liberation struggle.

Tamils don't have the folly of expecting political solution from the rogue imperialism of China, but are concerned of Japan reassuring faith on the 'vision' of Rajapaksa.

All make mistake in looking at the issue something like post-war Germany or Japan for everyone to poke nose to make 'economic miracles'. Neither the Tamils were fighting for aggressive empires nor the war ended like the Mikado surrendering after the two atom bombs.

It was a humble liberation struggle of people oppressed for ages who are now hardened than ever in the consciousness of their identity, thanks to the collective oppression of all the powers.

The important point is that the war didn't end in surrender.

Perhaps the most memorable act of the LTTE under Pirapaharan that will be remembered forever is that other than running a de-facto independent state, it didn't surrender the liberation struggle of the Eelam Tamils to anybody at anytime.

The struggle needs to continue from that point, as it has become clear that 'reconciliation' is only an honourable term used by Colombo and abettors to mean a suicidal course set for the Eelam Tamil nation.

But continuing the struggle in ways anew, now perhaps through democratic means, could neither begin nor could sustain itself with the masses, by professing defeatism or by surrendering the basic grounds.

Talking on the need to contin-

ue the struggle is not to rule out the need to negotiate.

But negotiation is not collaboration.

Negotiators need a firm platform supported by the hearts of the masses on behalf of whom they negotiate. Negotiation cannot take place when the platform is surrendered.

We don't live in feudal times when a group of Muthaliyars of Jaffna signed a document with the Portuguese or the chieftains of Kandy signed the convention with the British, in renouncing sovereignty and confirming the setting in of colonialism.

It is to safeguard the platform for struggle and negotiation the Tamil circles are now keen in reaffirming the democratically mandated Vaddukkoaddai Resolution of 1976 that upholds independence, sovereignty and self-determination of Eelam Tamils, at least in places where there is freedom of expression. They have already demonstrated that in Norway and France and it is set to take place in the rest of the diaspora. But it is with sadness the Tamil circles note that exercising such a basic freedom is not possible today for Eelam Tamils in India, the greatest democracy in the world.

It is again impelled by the same need the Eelam Tamils think of a transnational government of them. The diaspora need not be apologetic of it as their issue is actually international but refused to be addressed as international even by the apex international body, the UN.

However, transnational governance is a novel democratic exercise. It needs firm theoretical basis to function as a transnational body, needs firm adherence to



# Poor facilities in IDP camps - doctors

Rediff

DOCTORS treating displaced Tamils in the government-run camps in Sri Lanka's north have written a letter to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse complaining about the inadequate facilities and shortage of medical staff.

"It is difficult to stay in these shelters. The doctors examine patients from 7 o'clock in the morning to 7 o'clock in the night (in the Menik camps in Vavuniya). They need a proper place to sleep. The doctors do night shift.

They are virtually alone there. There is no adequate nurse or staff members," a representative of the doctors told media persons in Colombo.

Spokesman for the Government Medical Officers Association Upul Gunasekara said that only 50 doctors were available for treating over 250,000 Tamils in these camps.

The doctors even had to perform the duties of nurses as there was a shortage of medical staff, he said.

Gunasekara said though the government has increased the number of camps to minimise the congestion, it was essential to have more medical officers.

"What plans does the health ministry have to provide doctors?" he asked.

Gunasekara said the GMOA had written to President Mahinda Rajapakse requesting him to appoint a high-level committee to manage the healthcare needs of the Internally Displaced Persons living in those camps.

Meanwhile, a Sri Lankan Health Ministry official assured that measures will be taken to provide facilities for the doctors with the support of the World Health Organisation and the state pharmaceutical corporation.

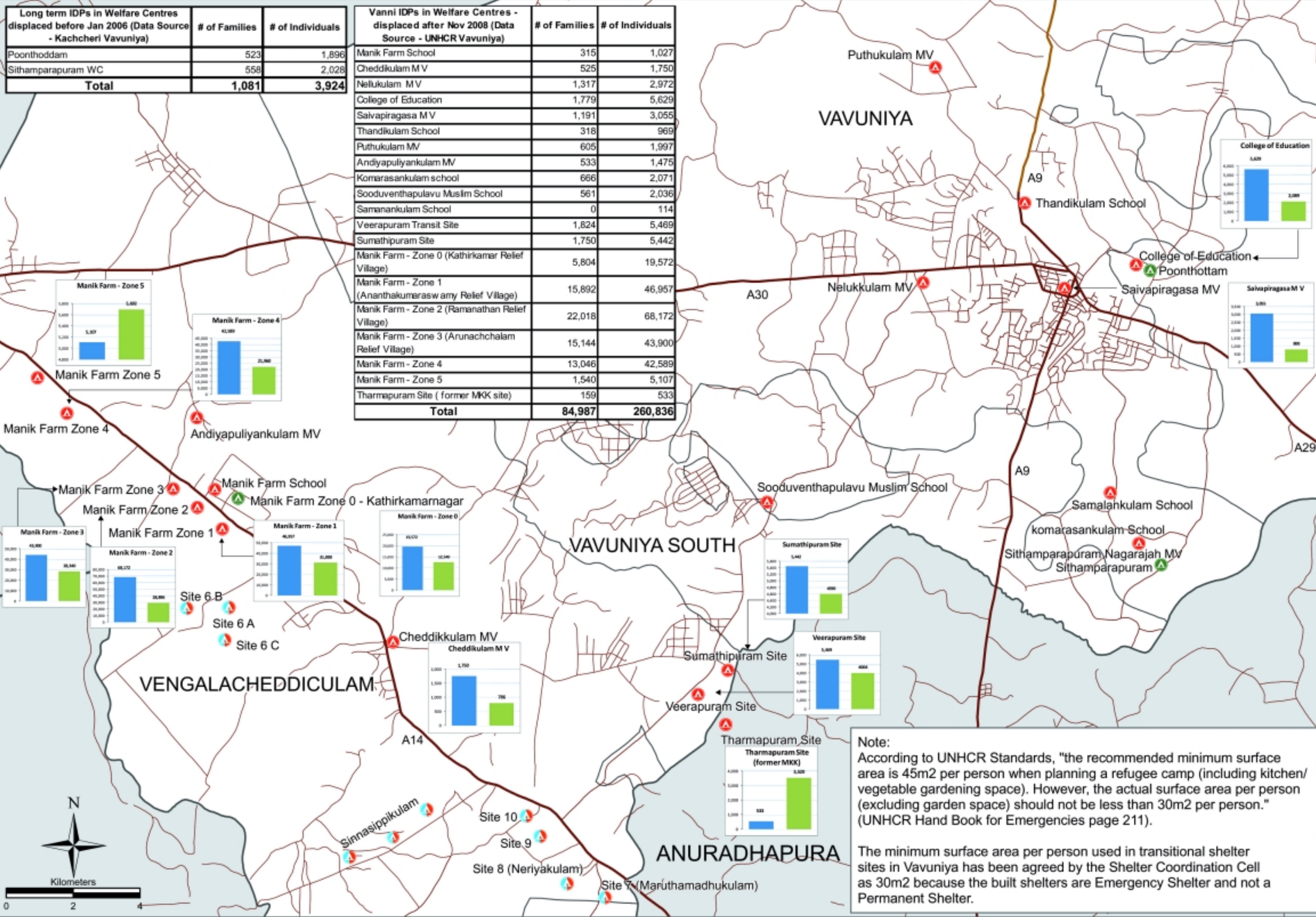
The ministry spokesperson said that construction work on the two official residences for doctors serving in the Menik welfare camp in Vavuniya is near completion.

However, Gunasekara said the lives of these IDPs at the camps in Vavuniya and Chetukulam (in Vavuniya district) were at risk as the health ministry had failed to deploy enough nurses, pharmacists, family health workers and midwives in the welfare centres.

Though services of 300 nurses were required for the camps, only five to 10 nurses had been deployed and that too without adequate pharmacists, he said.

## IDP Site Locations and Capacity as of 09 July 2009

DISTRICT : Vavuniya



Area Detail

**Legend**

- Semi Permanent Shelter Sites
- Emergency Shelter Sites
- New sites identified for Emergency Shelter
- Partial Access Road
- Track Road
- Minor Road
- Main Road
- DS Boundary

**In the Bar Chart**

- IDPs in Site
- Capacity (UNHCR Standard)

Data source:  
**Kachcheri Vavuniya, UNHCR Vavuniya.**

Updated as at:	<b>09-Jul-2009</b>
Produced on:	10-Jul-2009
Projection / Datum	Transverse Mercator Kandawala
Admin boundaries provided by:	Survey Department, Government of Sri Lanka

MapNumber: OCHA/UK/ Vavuniya/ IDP Site Locations/ 001/VZT

This map is designed for printing on A3 size

The boundaries, names and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



## NEWS

# 1,400 dying each week in Manik Farm

ABOUT 1,400 people are dying every week at the giant Manik Farm internment camp set up in Sri Lanka to detain Tamil refugees from the nation's bloody civil war, senior international aid sources have told The Times.

The shocking toll lends credence to allegations that the Government, which has termed the internment sites "welfare villages", has actually constructed concentration camps to house 300,000 people, the paper said. Most of the deaths are the result of water-borne diseases, particularly diarrhoea, a senior relief worker told The Times on condition of anonymity.

The death toll will add to concerns that the Sri Lankan Government has failed to halt a humanitarian catastrophe after announcing victory over the Tamil Tigers, the paper said.

The Manik Farm camp was set up to house the largest number of the 300,000 mainly Tamil civilians forced to flee the north-east as army forces mounted a brutal offensive against the Tigers.

Aid workers and the British Government have warned that conditions at the site are inadequate.

Witness testimonies obtained by The Times in May described long queues for food and inadequate water supplies inside Manik Farm.

Women, children and the elderly were shoved aside in the scramble for supplies. Aid agencies are being given only intermittent access to the camp. The Red Cross was not being allowed in Thursday, the paper said.

In late June, the Colombo based NGO Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya said tens

of thousands of Tamil children were malnourished with many acutely malnourished.

"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 the NGO said.

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

In mid-June the international charity World Vision warned that more impending monsoon rains could spread diseases if sanitation and drainage were not improved quickly.

When the rains come in two weeks or so, I can't imagine what conditions will be like due to the lack of any proper drainage and toilet system," Suresh Bartlett, World Vision's country director was quoted as saying.

News of the horrific death rate at Manik Farm came as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was asked to scale down its operations by the Sri Lankan authorities.

Thursday night, the Red Cross was closing two offices, The Times reported.

One of these is in Trincomalee, which had helped to provide medical care to about 30,000 injured civilians evacuated by sea from the conflict zone in the north east.

The other is in Batticaloa, where the Red Cross had been providing "protection services".



The Times claims up to 200 Tamils are dying each day at Manik Farm camp alone, but even the JVP admits about 10 people a day are dying due to the conditions in the camp and lack of access to aid

This involves following up allegations of abductions and extrajudicial killings, practices that human rights organisations say have become recurring motifs of the Sri Lankan Government, The Times pointed out.

Meanwhile, Mangala Samaraweera, a former Foreign Minister and now an opposition MP, told The Times that the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse is deliberately seeking to efface the Tamil identity of the

north.

"There are allegations that the Government is attempting to change the ethnic balance of the area. Influential people close to the Government have argued for such a solution," he said.

## The time for silence is over

### Editorial New York Times

MORE than two months after declaring victory over Tamil Tigers, Sri Lanka's government is continuing to hold hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamil civilians in what it calls "welfare villages," but what increasingly look like military internment camps.

The civilians, many of whom were held hostage by the guerrillas in the bloody last stage of the long war, are not being allowed out of the camps, and access by human-rights organizations or journalists is highly restricted.

The government claims it is looking for Tamil Tigers among the refugees and clearing Tamil villages of landmines before let-

ting people return. It may well be that there are former guerrillas hiding among the civilians - the Tamil Tigers had no compunctions about using civilians as cannon fodder or forcibly conscripting men and children. But the screening process is dragging on far too long. And many refugees see it as another abuse of the country's Tamil minority. As one prominent Tamil politician told The New York Times's Lydia Polgreen, "This is simply asking for another conflict later on down the road." If President Mahinda Rajapaksa means it when he says he seeks reconciliation with the Tamils, he should start by letting these people return to their homes.

The government's strict control on visits to the camps has also raised suspicions that it may be trying to block any investigation into possible government abuses

committed in the last months of the war. Soldiers corralled the Tigers, along with hundreds of thousands of civilians into a narrow stretch of beach and, according to human-rights organizations, shelled the area repeatedly. The United Nations says that thousands of civilians were killed, though how and by whom remains murky in the absence of independent investigations.

Donor countries - including the United States, the European Union and Japan - as well as international aid organizations are helping provide food, shelter and clothing to the camps. Most have kept quiet so far about the Tamils' plight, evidently fearful that criticizing conditions in the camps could get them thrown out of the camps. The time for silence is over. The best way to help the Tamils is by demanding their freedom and an end to their long ordeal.

## JVP claims 10 die daily in camps, Sri Lanka denies

THE Sri Lankan Health Ministry rejected international media reports that 1,400 deaths occurred in camps in the north, calling them 'designed to viciously discredit the government'.

"Several media bodies in the United Kingdom including the newspaper London Telegraph had carried false and malicious news items claiming that nearly 200 people housed in welfare centers died daily," the statement said.

Secretary to the ministry Athula Kahandaliyanage speaking at a media briefing in Colombo said mortality within the range between 6.6 percent and 13.2 per-

cent were possible in any refugee camp in the world.

"Mortality figures at welfare centers in the north are within this range which has been acknowledged internationally," Kahandaliyanage said.

Mortality figures at welfare centers in the north are within this range which has been acknowledged internationally. Between May 15 and July 14, only 163 deaths have been reported. Most of these deaths have occurred due to old age, Dr. Kahandaliyanage added.

However, even the Sinhala nationalist party, Janatha Vimuk-

thi Peramuna (JVP), has come out saying it has been receiving reports that internally displaced people dying every day inside the camps located in Vavuniya due to scarcity of essential needs such as food, water and medicine.

According to JVP at least ten people are dying in the Vavuniya camp alone, putting the death toll at 600 between May 15 and July 14, instead of the government's figure of 163.

"These people too are citizens of Sri Lanka. Those who are languishing inside the barbed wire camps are our fellow citizens. We call upon the Government not to

forget the fact that they arrived on the invitation of the government. It is disgusting to hear of the way the government treats them now," said JVP leader Somawansa Amarasinghe addressing a press briefing Wednesday at the JVP head office in Battaramulla.

Amarasinghe demanded that parliamentarians of all parties should be allowed into the camps where internally displaced people are held. All armed groups still operating in the North and East must be disarmed, he said.

The Government tries its best to hide the true picture prevailing in these camps, but soon the truth

will come out. Thereafter the situation would be very difficult for the government when the world hears how innocent Tamils had died inside these camps, Amarasinghe added.

"There is a danger in this problem. This would certainly allow the foreign forces against Sri Lanka to come in and meddle in the local affairs in the guise of assisting the displaced. The government must not wait till that happens and should allow other parties to visit these camps and help these people. Tomorrow could be too late for that," Amarasinghe said.



## NEWS

# Justifying a costly war in Sri Lanka

Lydia Polgreen  
New York Times

MORE than 2,000 years ago, a Sinhalese king named Dutugemunu saddled up his elephant and headed north to fight and kill Elara, an invading Tamil king from India.

The battle between the men is one of the most celebrated moments in Sri Lankan history, and the last time, until two months ago, that a Sri Lankan ruler won such a decisive victory over a mortal threat.

Perhaps it is no wonder, then, that fans of Mahinda Rajapaksa, the president of Sri Lanka, have taken to calling him a modern-day incarnation of King Dutugemunu.

After all, he presided over the defeat of the Tamil Tigers, among the world's most enduring and vicious guerrilla separatists, hardened fighters who have humiliated four presidents over nearly three decades.

Asked about this comparison earlier this month, Mr. Rajapaksa laughed it off, insisting that the legend was misunderstood as a triumph of one ethnicity over another.

After his victory, the story goes, Dutugemunu made peace with the Tamils and honored the memory of Elara, who was beloved by his people.

History will decide whether Mr. Rajapaksa will be remembered as a nationalist avenger or a unifying peacemaker.

But in a wide-ranging interview this month at Temple Trees, the former prime minister's residence that now serves as the president's office, Mr. Rajapaksa emerged as a man bent on total victory, no matter the cost, who was convinced that his government's actions in crushing the Tamil Tiger insurgency after 26 years were not only justified but humane.

"All governments tried to discuss with them," Mr. Rajapaksa said of the Tigers.

"All failed. Because when they are weak they came to talks. Within a few weeks they walk out of the talks, but better equipped and strengthened."

Mr. Rajapaksa's determination to vanquish the insurgency once and for all lifted him to the presidency in 2005, in the midst of an informal election boycott enforced by the Tigers.

Now, the stunning and total defeat of the Tamil Tigers in May, accomplished with an enormous loss of lives - tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians through the

years - has made him a hero to many Sri Lankans.

His fleshy, mustachioed face beams down from billboards across the country.

Often his brothers, who control key portfolios in the government, flank him in these portraits.

One, Basil Rajapaksa, is a senior adviser who was the prime architect of the war strategy against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. His other brother, Gotabaya, is the powerful secretary of defense.

President Rajapaksa is careful to use conciliatory language and speak about the importance of winning the peace, not just the war. In his speech to the nation after the Tigers' fearsome leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, was killed, he pointedly spoke in Tamil. He has repeatedly invoked the maxim that the war was against the Tigers, not the Tamil people.

But so far talk of reconciliation has been just that, according to politicians, analysts and diplomats here, and there have been no concrete steps toward a lasting political solution to Sri Lanka's thorny ethnic problem.

The Tamil minority has suffered discrimination and violence at the hands of various Sinhalese-dominated governments through the decades.

Tamils have sought, first peacefully, then violently, the right to a measure of self-rule in Tamil-dominated areas.

While publicly pledging to seek a political solution, Mr. Rajapaksa has put off for the moment the question of how to share power with the Tamil minority, saying that any agreement would have to wait until after the next presidential election, scheduled for November.

"I was given a mandate to defeat terrorism; I have defeated them," he said. "Now I must go and tell them now I want a mandate to settle this problem forever, a political solution."

Mr. Rajapaksa is all but certain to win a second term.

The opposition is fragmented. Journalists and analysts have to choose their words carefully or risk arrest. One popular astrologer was recently arrested after predicting that the president would be ejected from office.

Mr. Rajapaksa made it clear that he would tolerate only a limited amount of devolution, some-

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Unsatisfied with local investigations, ACF is calling for a European probe into the killing of its staff

## ACF seeks wide probe of staff massacre

A FRENCH charity accused the Sri Lankan government of "lacking the will to establish the truth" about the massacre of 17 aid workers in 2006 and called for an international inquiry.

Seventeen mostly Tamil staff members of the charity, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), were shot dead in the ACF compound on August 4 2006 in the northeastern town of Muttur, near where fighting was taking place between the government and Tamil Tigers.

"Today, nearly 3 years after the crime, one has to recognize that these procedures have failed, and that the Sri Lankan government obviously lacks the will to establish the truth," the French charity said in an emailed statement on the report on Saturday July 18.

"In light of this, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) reiterates its call, notably to the European Union, to constitute an international inquiry into this massacre."

"ACF has closely followed three separate judicial proceedings. Two years into these investigations, the search for truth has been a casualty of obstructionism, the intrusion of politics into the judicial process, a lack of transparency, and even errors," the statement said.

"The massacre is the gravest crime carried out against a non-governmental organization and is comparable to a war crime under international law," it added.

The head of a presidential probe into rights abuses, including that massacre, said in a report early this month that his work was hampered by the lack of witness protection and the abrupt winding-up of his investigation.

Thirteen men and four women who worked on water sanitation and farm projects for ACF were found shot dead in an area where government troops and Tamil Tigers 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.

The report by the commission of inquiry appointed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa to investigate serious human rights abuses is inconclusive about who killed the aid workers.

The Island and the Daily Mirror newspapers quoted from the commission report, which had not been made public by the authorities yet.

The Island newspaper said the inquiry accused the ACF of "gross negligence" and recommended that the charity pay 10 years' salary to the families of the victims.

The commission, headed by retired judge Nissanka Udalgama, has been dismissed by rights activists as a government cover-up.

Foreign observers to the panel two years ago predicted the commission would fail to find anything substantive and quit last year, saying it did not meet international standards and had been interfered with politically. The government denies that.

The commission's mandate was not extended when it expired in June, making it the latest in Sri Lanka's long history of probes into rights abuses that were

incomplete or inconclusive.

"We have not been able to complete the whole thing because we didn't have the video conferencing facility and a witness protection bill...is still in parliament," retired Supreme Court Judge Nissanka Udalgama told Reuters.

A number of witnesses have fled the country in fear for their lives, and video-conferencing was needed to contact witnesses who live abroad, he said.

Udalgama, head of the eight-member commission, said they could have called other witnesses but the president wanted a report based on what had been done so far.

The report exonerates the army and navy, but says auxiliary police known as home guards could have carried out the killings. "There was other evidence like the presence of Muslim home guards. They had access to the weapons. And it could have been LTTE," Udalgama said.

It was the latest of many Sri Lankan investigations of rights abuses that were incomplete or inconclusive.

Rights watchdogs have reported hundreds of abductions, disappearances and killings, blamed on both the government and the LTTE, throughout the course of Sri Lanka's 25-year civil war, which ended in May.

The country has a long history of failing to prosecute rights abuses, particularly when members of the security forces are involved, going back to the early 1970s when the government violently suppressed a Marxist insurrection.



## NEWS

# Refugees interned

*Continued from p11*

thing that may poison negotiations right from the start.

"Federalism is out of the question," he said. "It must be a home-grown solution."

Most Tamil political leaders want a single, Tamil-speaking majority state in the north and east of the country that would have authority over most matters except foreign policy, trade and the military.

But this is a nonstarter for many of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist politicians who make up the core of Mr. Rajapaksa's coalition government.

The most hard-line nationalist party has threatened to leave the coalition if even a watered-down law to share power is passed.

"Peace will require a more federal power-sharing arrangement," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu of the Center for Policy Alternatives, a nonpartisan research and advocacy institution in Colombo, the capital.

"But there has been this primordial fear that federalism is a precursor to secession."

But the opposite is true, he argued. "It is the refusal to share power that has led to the armed conflict to begin with," he said.

Understanding this refusal requires a reach back to the time of Dutugemunu and Elara, the Tamil king who came from India.

Just 20 miles off Sri Lanka's coast, India looms large over the island.

The great size of India's Tamil population - more than 50 million people - helps explain why the Sinhalese majority here may feel threatened, thinking and acting more like an endangered minority even though it makes up more than 70 percent of the Sri Lankan population.

India has been pressing Sri Lanka to move quickly to resettle the Tamil civilians displaced by the war and reach a deal to share central power with the country's minorities.

Mr. Rajapaksa has pledged to

get most of the displaced, who are living in closed, military-run camps in the north, back to their homes within six months.

Mr. Rajapaksa said he had taken a number of steps aimed at forging a sense of national unity and bringing minorities more fully into the fold.

The government is offering a one-time payment of about \$250 to any civil servant who learns another Sri Lankan language, part of an effort to start requiring that officials and bureaucrats speak Tamil as well as Sinhala.

The president said he was also seeking ways to recruit more Tamils into the Sri Lankan military and the police force.

But the government's mood since the end of the fighting in May has been one of triumphant victory.

Alongside the billboards of Mr. Rajapaksa and his brothers are huge, Rambo-style photographs of the bandolier-draped commandos who penetrated deep behind the Tamil Tigers' lines to whittle at the rebel fighting force and weaken its resolve.

Many Sri Lankans see these soldiers as heroes, but given the controversy that remains over how many Tamil civilians were killed in the last weeks of the fighting, some people find the air of martial triumph unseemly.

"They are trying to get a great deal of political mileage from the fact that they militarily defeated" the Tamil Tigers, said Rajavarthiam Sampanthan, a member of Parliament for the Tamil National Alliance. "We don't see any movement toward ending the political conflict."

Riding high on his big victory, Mr. Rajapaksa said he needed only one verdict on his leadership: that of the Sri Lankan people. "I am not fool enough to call myself a king," he said with a laugh.

Churchill, he mused, was thrown out of office after victory in World War II. "If anyone doesn't want me, I must not be the president of this country," he said. "It is democracy."



India is officially sending troops into Sri Lanka in large numbers for the first time since the Indian Peace Keeping Force left in 1991. However Indian military personnel, especially doctors and radar operators, were active in the war zone during the past year at least, assisting the Sri Lankan military.

## India sending 500 soldiers

IAN S

AFTER providing medical services to thousands displaced by war, Indian soldiers will now go to Sri Lanka to help de-mine areas once held by the Tamil Tigers. The military personnel will be part of Indian experts who will assist authorities in Sri Lanka to

detect and defuse thousands of mines, Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon told the media. "We will send experts and equipment to Sri Lanka. Yes, this will possibly include army experts," Menon said.

India deployed troops in Sri Lanka's northeast in 1987. The soldiers returned home in 1990 after suffering nearly 1,200 dead in a dragging war against the

LTTE. As the Sri Lankan military battled the Tamil Tigers this year, India sent military doctors. The medical personnel were first based in Sri Lanka's east and are now located in the north.

Menon's comments came shortly after Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee announced that India would grant US \$100 million to Sri Lanka for relief and rehabilitation.

## Dissuade India from backing rights violator, US urged

Editorial

The Boston Globe

IF THERE is any part of the developing world that has bright prospects for stability and prosperity, it is southern and eastern Asia. Yet Asia also has the potential to become the battleground for a destructive confrontation between rising powers India and China. So Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's trip to India this weekend should allow her to gauge the chances for what she recently called a new "architecture of cooperation."

India presents both the most promising and the most challenging test case for cooperative relations with the emerging powers of the 21st century. The US-India nuclear deal negotiated by the Bush administration has provoked anxieties in some quarters about a dangerous precedent for nuclear proliferation, but the deal has indisputably cleared the way for a closer relationship between Washington and New Delhi.

Under the agreement, India can now buy nuclear fuel and technology from the United States for its 14 civilian reactors. Opponents have warned that the deal could enable India to divert domestically produced nuclear fuel to its eight military reactors. On the plus side, however, India must now allow intrusive IAEA inspections of its civilian nuclear facilities, continue observing its moratorium on the testing of nuclear weapons, enhance the security of its nuclear stockpile, and work with Washington to negotiate a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty that would prohibit the production of fuel for nuclear weapons.

Now that the nuclear accord is a done deal and the Congress Party of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has won a smashing victory in recent parliamentary elections, Clinton can address other outstanding issues in US-

Indian relations. These include pending defense agreements between the two nations' militaries, cooperation in the fight against terrorism, more educational exchanges, more US visas for Indians with advanced skills, and, perhaps most important of all, a meeting of minds on the need for coordinated actions to reduce the danger of catastrophic climate change.

When it comes to regional issues, Clinton should make the case that the expanding US-Indian relationship gives Indian leaders more strategic flexibility. They can stop trying to match their Chinese counterparts in backing regimes, such as those in Burma and Sri Lanka, that have committed gross human-rights abuses against their own people. If a shared respect for democratic values forms the foundation for the burgeoning US-India partnership, Indian leaders should be able to heed any such counsel from Clinton. She could tell her Indian interlocutors that friends don't let friends become the enablers of abusive neighbors.

## 'Best camps in world'

*Continued from p5*

ings. Slowly, we have to overcome them. In some camps there are no problems.

"What these people I sent told me: they are satisfied with the housing, shelter. They have undergone much worse conditions earlier [when they were under the LTTE's control]. Their problem is movement, freedom of movement. Since there are security concerns, I don't know how to do that immediately.

"I said on 20th of May that as soon as possible, we must send them to places where they can stay. My problem is that we have to get the certificate of de-mining

from the U.N. We have already sent people back to several places. As soon as we get the clearance, I'm ready to do that. But before that I must get the clearance from the U.N. about the de-mining. We can't send them back to a place where there are just jungles. Every square centimetre has been mined by the LTTE. If something happens, I am responsible.

"My personal feeling is that as soon as possible, we have to resettle these people. We have to send them to the villages. But my problem is that to provide security for them, I will have to recruit another 200,000 (soldiers)! I don't want to do that."



## NEWS

# US, Canadian law makers want IMF loan linked to human rights

TamilNet

US and Canadian law makers have called for Sri Lanka's request for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan to be linked to unimpeded access to refugee camps and adherence international human rights rules.

The north American politicians calls comes amidst an announcement by IMF that a loan accord has been agreed with Sri Lanka and the Executive Board of the organisation will meet on Friday July 24 to approve it.

US democratic senator Patrick Leahy, from Vermont, has introduced language into the soon to be passed Appropriations bill requiring the US Treasury Secretary to instruct the US Executive Directors of international financial institutions to vote against any loan, agreement, or other financial support for Sri Lanka except to meet basic human needs, unless the Secretary of State certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that the Sri Lankan government is meeting the requirements of humanitarian conditions demanded by the US.

The language inserted in the Department of State Appropriations bill S.1434, has virtually blocked U.S. Treasury Secretary from authorizing the projected \$1.9B IMF loan to Sri Lanka, unless Hillary Clinton certifies that Sri Lanka "is treating internally displaced persons in accordance with international standards, including by guaranteeing their freedom of movement, providing access to conflict-affected areas and populations by humanitarian organizations and journalists, and accounting for persons detained in the conflict," and Sri Lanka is promoting "reconciliation and justice including devolu-

tion of power to provincial councils in the north and east as provided for in the Constitution of Sri Lanka."

Senator Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, reported the original bill which was read twice and placed on the calendar.

The bill makes appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Party in Canada has said that conditions need to be strictly applied to any potential loan to Sri Lanka from the International Monetary Fund, based on humanitarian concerns, the proper treatment of internally displaced persons and a restoration of peace and security to the country. "We must be responsible in our economic assistance to Sri Lanka," said Liberal Foreign Affairs Critic Bob Rae. "The government of Sri Lanka cannot expect massive economic assistance without paying full attention to their humanitarian obligations. The situation in Sri Lanka remains dire and requires international attention. Our efforts must be focused on helping those in need," he said.

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband has stated a similar position, saying that any use of IMF money must be in an appropriate and responsible manner.

"The international community is in full agreement on this point," said Mr. Rae. "Canada should be a leader in calling for the responsible use of international financial loans and be a vital partner in ensuring these conditions are met."



Hilary Clinton has been urged to oppose the IMF loan to Sri Lanka unless human rights improve

## Sri Lanka, IMF close to deal

THE International Monetary Fund has announced it has reached a \$2.5 billion loan accord with Sri Lanka, which will be presented to the IMF board for approval on Friday, July 24. The IMF announcement follows the submission of a Letter of Intent (LoI) on Monday July 20 by Sri Lanka, listing the conditions it will adhere to in return for the money.

"We have set out our intentions, which do not differ from the macroeconomic policy thrust that we have been following," Central Bank of Sri Lanka Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal told Bloomberg. Cabraal declined to elaborate on the contents of the LoI but said Sri Lanka and the IMF would soon make a joint statement on a financial aid package.

Sri Lanka's submission LoI comes just two weeks after the central bank chief declared that

the country was in a 'comfortable position right now' and can go on without a major IMF bailout. "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 right now," Cabraal said in early July.

According to the IMF, a disbursement of \$313 million will immediately be available to Sri Lanka once the loan is approved.

"The government has formulated an ambitious program aimed at restoring fiscal and external viability and addressing the significant reconstruction needs of the conflict-affected areas," the IMF said in its statement.

The end of Sri Lanka's 25-year civil war posed a unique opportunity to undertake economic reforms and rebuild areas damaged by the conflict, the IMF

statement further added.

Rebuilding the country will require significant spending the IMF said, adding that the program will provide a framework for donors to help fund reconstruction.

"The IMF staff supports this program, specifically the government's goals of rebuilding reserves, reducing the fiscal deficit to a sustainable level, and strengthening the financial sector," the IMF added.

The announcement comes despite calls from western law makers to link the loan package to Sri Lanka adhering to human rights norms.

Both the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and British Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, have previously stated that the loan should only be made available in an appropriate and responsible manner.

## US caves in under Sino-Indian pressure?

**P K Balachandran**

STRONG support from India at the IMF board and the need to match China's growing clout in the island nation have resulted in the US giving up its opposition to the international funding agency's extending a \$2.5 billion standby facility to Sri Lanka.

Sunday Island reported that IMF Executive Board would meet on July 24 to sanction the facility following the submission of a letter of intent by Sri Lanka agreeing

to abide by certain conditions imposed by the funding agency.

On May 14, at the height of the war against the separatist Tamil Tigers, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had said that it was not appropriate for the IMF to give a loan to Sri Lanka in the absence of a resolution of the conflict.

The US was leading a Western campaign to secure a ceasefire. But recently, after the war, a top US official met the Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary to say that his

government had, at no stage, campaigned against the grant of the loan to Sri Lanka and that the IMF was guided by economic considerations alone.

According to Sunday Island reason for the softening of the US attitude was Sri Lanka's apparent willingness to carry out some structural reforms in its financial system and its impeccable record in loan repayment.

However, some analysts feel that the US may be influenced by a Sino-Indian factor too. Sunday

Island noted that the Indian member on the IMF board, who represents a group of countries including Sri Lanka, had been strongly advocating Sri Lanka's case.

Then there is China's increasing economic clout and a growing strategic interest in Sri Lanka, which has made Washington sit up. Like India, the US may be veering round to the view that the only way to prevent Sri Lanka from going wholly under Chinese influence is to meet Sri Lanka's demands.

The paper pointed out that it was when the West was putting heavy pressure on Sri Lanka to give in to the LTTE's demand for a ceasefire, that China signed an agreement to give Sri Lanka a \$1.2 billion long term soft loan for a huge housing project. The Exim Bank of China issued a letter of interest in funding the Matara-Kataragama railway.

This railway would help build up the hinterland of the Chinese-built mega port at Hambantota in the deep south of the island.



## NEWS

# Rajapakse overhauls top military roles

BARELY two months after the military defeat of the LTTE, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has made some significant changes to military hierarchy and created the posts of chief of defence staff national security adviser to the president.

President Rajapakse's office, on Sunday July 12, said army chief General Sarath Fonseka would take over as Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) from Wednesday 15 July with powers over all armed forces and responsibility for overall military strategy and planning.

The current navy chief, Wasantha Karannagoda, becomes the new National Security Adviser to the president and will be replaced as navy chief by his deputy, Vice Admiral Tissara Samarasinghe.

"This is part of revamping the command structure to meet the needs of a post-conflict situation," a senior military official said.

Fonseka's and Karannagoda's appointments means the military will still have an influential role in Rajapakse's administration.

A statement by the Defence Ministry said Gen. Fonseka paid a courtesy call on the Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa after taking charge as CDS.

Fonseka is the first person to

hold the post of CDS, after the Chief of Defence Staff Act was passed in the Parliament on June 25. The purpose of the legislation was to legalise the post of CDS. The new law tasks the CDS the responsibility to provide strategic directions of armed forces, develop a doctrine for the joint employment of the armed forces, and facilitate the preparation of strategic plans.

CDS will be under the direction and supervision of the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence will be responsible for co-ordinating functions relating to intelligence, as well as to preparing operational and contingency plans. The new CDS will also advise on military recruitment and procurement tenders.

As part of the reshuffle, the army will be led by Major General Jagath Jayasuriya, a senior field commander. Jayasuriya on assuming office told reporters he would "re-motivate" his 200,000-strong force and build a peacetime military. He added: "We have to transform them from fighting to other things. We have to re-motivate them"

"Running a peacetime army is quite different. Discipline has to be emphasised," he said.



Though claiming the war is over, Sri Lanka is expanding its naval forces, as well as growing the army

## Colombo expands navy with air wing and coastal guards

SRI LANKA is planning to boost its naval power with the introduction of a coast guard department, an air wing for the Navy and more ships with missile capabilities, according to Sri Lankan officials.

The announcement follows plans by Sri Lankan army to increase its troops numbers by 50% to 300,000.

Newly appointed Navy Commander Thisara Samarasinghe on Thursday July 16 said he expects to form a naval air wing for the Navy and also have more ships with missile capabilities.

"The naval air wing is not a dire necessity but it is a requirement in any future event," Vice Admiral Samarasinghe who assumed duties as the 16th Navy Commander on Wednesday July 15 said in his inaugural news conference held at Navy Headquarters.

He further said the Navy had four war ships that could carry helicopters in each vessel. "But we don't have helicopters for these vessels, although we have vessels for the purpose."

Samarasinghe also said the Navy needed missile technologies for the naval ships. "We have two war ships suitable for missile launching operations, but we

don't have that facility as those equipment are very expensive," he said adding that "navies of other neighbouring countries possessed the missile technologies in their naval ships."

Stating that he would submit a proposal to the authorities regarding the requirement of the missile technologies Samarasinghe said: "It is important to have such kind of technology for our navy as well, as if someone wants to attack our ship they would think twice before attacking us because of the missile capabilities," he added.

Samarasinghe further told reporters that he wanted to strengthen coastal surveillances to prevent illegal activities, while focusing deep sea patrolling as well.

"As the Sri Lanka Navy Chief I am planning to have more and more vessels to strengthen security around the island especially focusing on the coastal security," he said adding that "this was because we had additional duties with the ending of the war."

A week earlier, on Thursday July 9, the Sri Lankan Parliament approved a bill to set up a Coast Guard Department (CGD) under the Ministry of Defence, Public

Security and Law and Order replacing the Coast Guard Unit which operated under the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Speaking during the debate on the bill, Sri Lankan prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake said that an urgent need has risen for such a department to stop illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, taking place in the Sri Lankan waters after the defeat of LTTE and to further secure territorial waters.

"The Department will prevent illegal fishing and poaching by other nationals in Sri Lankan maritime zone", he added.

The Department will co-operate with the law enforcement agencies and the Armed Forces by taking necessary measures for the suppression of destructive terrorist activities occurring in the maritime zones and the territorial waters of Sri Lanka, he said.

Parliamentarian John Amaratunge of the main opposition United National Party said that his party would support the establishment of the CGD as it was long overdue. However, he wanted the government to appoint an Army Officer as the head, instead of a civilian.

## 65,000 army deserters

AROUND 65,000 soldiers deserted their ranks during Sri Lanka's brutal war against the Tamils and are at large, according to a Sri Lankan Ministry of Justice and Law Reforms official. The number, which indicated the brutality of the war in the last stages, is in addition to the 2,000 soldiers already in prisons across the south for deserting.

Since the Defence Ministry had stepped up arresting those who deserted the service the Prisons Department will definitely

face a problem of space, Secretary to the Ministry of Justice and Law Reforms Suhada Gamlath told reporters. He says it is dangerous to put army deserters together with other criminals behind the bars. "There is a dangerous problem of putting the army deserters with other criminals behind the bars. The criminals have the background, know how of crime and social deviance while the deserters have the training in firearms and many other skills."

## Sri Lanka cancels weapons purchase

SRI LANKA has cancelled a \$200 million purchase of ammunition from Pakistan and China after the end of its war with the Tamil Tigers, the island nation's new top military commander said on Wednesday, July 15.

"We stopped the orders of \$200 million worth of ammunition from China and Pakistan with the war's end," Fonseka said

after assuming his new post.

The main component of the orders was for replenishment of large quantities of expendables like artillery shells, mortars, bombs and assorted varieties of ammunition. The order would have been enough ammunition to fire guns and heavy weapons at the rate seen during the climax of the war, which ended in mid May,

according to Fonseka.

Fonseka said the Chinese order was cancelled because there was no need to stock ammunition for heavy guns after the victory over the LTTE.

Defence spending in 2009 was estimated at Sri Lanka Rs. 200 billion (\$1.74 billion), accounting for 17 per cent of the country's total expenditure.

The Sunday Times, commenting on the cancellation said it is clear that the Government did not expect the military defeat of the LTTE so early, certainly not just two months ago.

"Both defence and security officials had earlier set time frames of two and three years to defeat the LTTE. More proof came this week when the

Government decided to cancel orders worth US\$ 200 million for defence supplies both from China and Pakistan, which have been two of the largest suppliers."

Sri Lanka's military and police, with a combined strength of 350,000, won one of the Asia's longest modern wars and declared victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in mid May.



## OPINION

# Defeated, friendless Tamils face annihilation

**Dr John Whitehall**  
News Weekly

ON May 19, the Sri Lankan Government declared victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who, for some 25 years, had led the struggle for autonomy for ethnic Tamils in their traditional region, the lowlands of north-east Sri Lanka.

The victory was won with overwhelming firepower that fell indiscriminately on the Tamil Tigers and civilians and included such banned weapons as cluster bombs. Some 20,000 civilians are believed to have died, with Colombo's military victory assured by the support of China.

The real victory, however, was inevitable, thanks to Western governments which, during the "war on terror", proscribed the Tigers as terrorists and categorised them with the likes of al Qaeda.

This gave Colombo an apparently higher moral ground to do what it wanted.

It also invited the Western audience to imagine the Tigers to be like Islamic terrorists - presumably unrepresentative of peoples under their control and committed to the destruction of Western democracy and culture.

The war in Sri Lanka turned on the word "terrorist".

But were they terrorists? Certainly, they employed terror, but so had the Colombo state.

However, the Tamil Tigers were not like the Vietcong or al Qaeda which emerged from hiding simply to destroy.

During the 2002-06 ceasefire they were a de facto government administering land traditionally belonging to the Tamils.

They ran their affairs through ministries of health, education, welfare, agriculture and sports, as well as police and security.

They were certainly an autocratic if not a military dictatorship, but they perceived the Tamils as facing genocide at the hands of the majority Sinhalese.

In my three months' stay in their de facto capital, Kilinochchi, teaching Tamil medical students, I used repeatedly to ask people, "Why did you join the LTTE?"

Their consistent answer was: "To fight for Tamil survival".

They knew of the history of racial oppression against them by the Sinhalese majority; they simply wanted freedom to rebuild their civilisation.

Unlike al Qaeda, the Tamil Tigers had no international goals, nor even the ambition to conquer all of Sri Lanka; they merely sought to secure what they believed was historically theirs.

As for the Tamil people themselves, they deserve better than to



**Tamils did not join the LTTE because it was the LTTE, but rather because it represented values they agreed with says Dr Whitehall**

be stereotyped as potential terrorists, especially after they have fled to Australia.

Given access to the Sydney Opera House, they would rather sing in it than blow it up.

In my opinion, the Tamil Tigers were best understood as a movement for national liberation.

The term terrorist implied the Tigers were a tiny minority in the Tamil population; but I began to question that when I visited some of the military cemeteries in which some 20,000 had been buried. Can a minority force that huge commitment?

I attended the Tamil equivalent of ANZAC Day and mingled with thousands of family members of the dead who were placing flowers and food on the graves.

There was overwhelming sadness but a commitment to the concept that the dead had died worthily for Tamil Eelam - the Motherland.

They did not die for, or because of, the Tigers as an organisation, but for the ideals they pursued.

It appears Western governments swallowed the impression that the Tigers were unrepresentative of the Tamil population; but the actions of Colombo since vic-

tory reveal that the Sri Lankan Government understood differently.

Since victory, Colombo has incarcerated the entire population of the north-east, some 300,000 people, not the handful of terrorists they claimed they were fighting.

And, despite Colombo's earlier propaganda that the Tigers were a tiny force, no fewer than 10,000 combatants have also been incarcerated.

Colombo has promoted another deception that the Tamils are merely internally displaced people (IDPs).

However, it has kept Tamil civilians under military guard, without any publication of their names, without any access to aid organisations or to journalists, and in physical conditions described by independent observers as "terrible".

Deaths from hunger have resulted from this collective punishment, which is proscribed by the Geneva Conventions. Furthermore,

Tamil combatants are being held in secret camps and denied the rights of the Geneva Convention regarding prisoners of war.

According to Colombo, the

Tamil population of the north-east is being kept for "rehabilitation from LTTE propaganda".

In other words, an entire population, including mothers and children, is being incarcerated until it learns to think differently.

But how can it possibly lose its fear of racial annihilation? Its current treatment will merely reinforce its conviction that it faces genocide.

On a more practical level, Colombo is also claiming it is too unsafe for the Tamils to return to their homes because of land mines.

However, it is currently taking the opportunity to further its established practice of settling Sinhala residents in vacant Tamil regions (a breach of Geneva Conventions against genocide).

And what of our proponents for freedom in the United Nations?

On May 26, a special session of the Human Rights Council was held to consider Sri Lanka after the High Commissioner, Madame Navi Pillay, declared the need to "address the tragic human rights and humanitarian consequences of the conflict in that country ... [and the existence of] strong reasons to believe both sides have

grossly disregarded the fundamental principle of the inviolability of civilians".

She thereupon called for "an independent and credible international investigation into recent events ... to ascertain the occurrence, nature and scale of violations".

The UN council, however, rejected the call for investigation and instead congratulated the Sri Lankan Government for its victory over the terrorist LTTE.

The council affirmed the Sri Lankan commitment to "sovereignty" and was "encouraged" by its handling of displaced persons.

The resolution was adopted by 29 votes to 12 with six abstentions. Those in favour included Russia, China, Cuba and the African and Islamic blocs.

The conclusion by the UN Human Rights Council utterly ignores the legitimate rights of the Tamil population and is a disgrace.

Under the concept of "sovereignty" and the need to overcome "terrorism", this UN council has not only ratified the destruction of the helpless Tamils, but has thereby endangered members of government-persecuted minorities everywhere.



## HINDU TAMIL CULTURAL ASSOCIATION (ENFIELD)

இந்து தமிழ் கலாச்சார சங்கம் (என்பீல்ட்)



### ENFIELD NAGAPOOSHANI AMBAAL TEMPLE

என்பீல்ட் நாகபூசணி அம்பாள் ஆலயம்

Dear Ambikai Devotees!

5th ANNUAL FESTIVAL of Enfield nagapooshani Ambaal will be taking place during the period 12-07-09 to 29-07-09. During this festival period devotees could observe fasting in order to seek ambaal's blessings.

25-07-09 Saturday Sabarathiruvizha –night

26-07-09 Sunday Chariot festival. 10.00a.m. to 1.00p.m.- Open to all (Pothu ubayam)

27-07-09 Monday Water cutting festival From 11.00 a.m.

28-07-09 Tuesday Poongkaavanam.

29-07-09 Wednesday Vairavarmadai.

31-07-09 Friday Varaladsumi Pooja.

அம்பிகை அடியார்களே!

வட இலண்டன் என்பீல்ட் நாகபூசணி அம்பாள் திருவருளால் 5வது வருட மகோற்சவப் பெருவிறா 12-07-09 முதல் விநாயகர் திருவிறாவுடன் ஆரம்பமாகி நடைபெற்று வருகிது.

25-07-09 சனி சப்பறத்திருவிறா

26-07-09 ஞாயிறு தேர்த்திருவிறா - பொது உபயம்

27-07-09 திங்கள் தீர்த்தத் திருவிறா

28-07-09 செவ்வாய் பூங்காவனம்

29-07-09 புதன் பைரவர் மடை

31-07-09 வெள்ளி வரலட்சுமி பூசை.

அனைவரும் வருக அன்னையின் அருள் பெருக

‘ஆலயம் தொழுவது சாலவும் நன்று’

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