

## The UK Column: Voting for the Tamil cause

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Tamil civilians held in the concentration camps in Vavuniya continue to starve, receiving inadequate food and worse water rations. Photo Ishara S. Kodikara/AFP/Getty Images



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## NEWS

# ‘Eventual resettlement no excuse for holding 280,000’



**Children continue to be held behind barbed wires and armed soldiers months after the end of the war**

THE Sri Lankan government should immediately release the more than 280,000 internally displaced Tamil civilians held in detention camps in northern Sri Lanka, Human Rights Watch said Tuesday, July 28.

The government, in violation of international law, has since March 2008 confined virtually all civilians displaced by the fighting between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in detention camps, euphemistically called “welfare centers” by the government.

Only a small number of camp residents, mainly the elderly, have been released to host families and institutions for the elderly.

“Keeping several hundred thousand civilians who had been caught in the middle of a war penned in these camps is outrageous,” said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

“Haven’t they been through enough? They deserve their freedom, like all other Sri Lankans.”

The United Nations reported that as of July 17, 2009, the government was detaining 281,621 people in 30 military-guarded

camps in the four northern districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Jaffna, and Trincomalee.

Camp residents are allowed to leave only for emergency medical care, and then frequently only with military escort.

Inside the camps, humanitarian workers are prohibited, on threat of being barred from the camps, from discussing with residents the fighting in the final months of the conflict or possible human rights abuses.

Premkumar, 44 years old, told Human Rights Watch that he, his wife, and their 3-year-old daughter have been confined to a camp since they escaped the war zone in mid-May.

He has been allowed out only once, when he managed to obtain a referral to a hospital.

“The way I see it, we are not internally displaced persons, we are internally displaced prisoners,” Premkumar said.

“We used to be in a prison controlled by [LTTE leader] Prabhakaran. Now we are in a prison controlled by the government.”

In Kalimodai and Sirukandal

camps in Mannar district, established more than a year ago, some residents have been granted permission to leave the camp for short periods during the day.

In these camps, they have to register with the military twice a day.

Human Rights Watch has received reports that if a person fails or is late to register, the military may apply punitive measures, such as forcing the person to stand still under the sun for a period of time or to perform manual labor.

Sri Lanka’s policy of confining the displaced to detention camps has been widely condemned. On May 15, for example, Walter Kälin, the UN secretary-general’s representative on internally displaced persons, said: “Prolonged internment of such persons would not only amount to arbitrary detention but it also aggravates the humanitarian situation needlessly.”

In response to domestic and international criticism, President Mahinda Rajapaksa has tried to

justify the detention policy by claiming that anyone in the camps could be a security threat.

The government has sought to play down the situation, insisting that the displaced civilians will be quickly resettled.

In May, the government said it would resettle 80 percent of them by the end of this year. Now the Minister of Foreign Affairs says the goal is 60 percent.

The government has not provided any concrete resettlement plans, however, and displaced persons have not received any information about when they might be allowed to return home.

The military has reportedly removed several thousand camp residents for alleged membership or support of the LTTE, and transferred them to rehabilitation centers for LTTE fighters or to Colombo, the capital, for further interrogation.

In many cases, the authorities have failed to inform relatives remaining in the camps about the fate and whereabouts of those removed, raising concerns of pos-

sible ill-treatment or enforced disappearance.

The order to humanitarian workers not to talk to camp residents limits their ability to protect people from abuse.

While the Sri Lankan authorities are entitled to screen persons leaving the war zone to identify Tamil Tiger combatants, international law prohibits arbitrary detention and unnecessary restrictions on the right to freedom of movement.

This means that anyone taken into custody must be promptly brought before a judge and charged with a criminal offense or released.

Although human rights law permits restrictions on movement for security reasons, the restrictions must have a clear legal basis, be limited to what is necessary, and be proportionate to the threat.

“Vague promises about the future release of the people illegally locked up in detention

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## Sri Lanka needs more time to resettle Tamils – ministers

SRI Lanka will need extra time to resettle the nearly 300,000 Tamil civilians being held in internment camps in the country’s north, various government ministers have told different audiences.

About 60 percent of displaced people should be able to return home within the 180-day period promised by the president in May, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said in an interview on July 23. The government earlier expected to resettle 80 percent in that period, he added.

“Logistics are a factor” in the delay, Bogollagama said in Thailand, where he attended a regional security forum.

“We have to clear the area of

land mines before we send people back to their respective villages.”

Bogollagama said about 5,000 civilians have so far returned home after the areas where their villages are located were cleared of mines.

Separately, Disaster Management and Human Rights Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe told the Sri Lankan Parliament that the people would continue to be kept within the welfare camps, claiming that LTTE cadres had infiltrated the ranks of displaced and that all the people would need to be held until the ‘infiltrators could be weeded out’.

Sri Lanka Minister of Electri-

*continued on p15*

## US ‘deeply concerned’ by camps, wants resettlement

A top United States official on Monday, July 27, visited the most presentable of the squalid, militarized camps in which Sri Lanka has interned three hundred thousand Tamils. “The United States remains deeply concerned about a range of issues where further progress is essential,” Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration from the US State Department Eric P. Schwartz said. “In particular, the vast majority of displaced persons remain confined to camps, and my visit to Manik Farm and my conversations with displaced persons underscored for me the hardships they are enduring,” he said.

“The continuing support of the US government will be reliant on the means in which the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka is addressed,” Mr. Schwartz was

quoted by the Daily Mirror as telling reporters. “Inclusive reconciliation is among one of the top priorities for high-level bilateral dialogue between Sri Lanka and the US. This process of inclusive reconciliation is important for all of Sri Lanka’s friends,” he said. “There remain burdensome limitations on access to those camps for those international humanitarian organizations and others who are in a position to ameliorate the conditions faced by these victims of conflict,” he said.

“There is a dearth of information within these camps. There need to be better provision of information,” he also said. Mr. Schwartz said President Rajapaksa and other top officials have assured him of “significant and substantial returns” of displaced people to their homes over the

next month. The Associated Press quoted him as saying the Sri Lankan government had invited him back to observe the process of return and recovery. He hoped to do so, Mr. Schwartz added.

Interestingly, The Hindu newspaper in India reported Mr. Schwartz’ visit by reproducing a rosy Sri Lankan government statement and adding the headline “US hails [Sri Lanka’s] efforts for war displaced.”

Meanwhile, Rebecca Cohn, Director of USAID Sri Lanka, announced a donation of an \$8 million and the provision of nearly 30 million food aid to the World Food Programme. “The funding we have announced this evening will support international organizations, such as UNHCR, as well as NGOs who are longstanding partners in Sri Lanka.”

## NEWS

# 'More aid needed' - Gotabaya

SRI LANKA needs massive international financial assistance to 'help' the hundreds of thousands of Tamils being forcibly held in the internment camps, the country's defence secretary has said in an interview.

Gotabhaya Rajapaksa told a BBC interview he expected much more than had been promised by donors including the UN, the US and Japan.

The funds are needed for facilities for nearly 300,000 people currently housed in government-run camps in the north, he said.

Mr Rajapaksa's comments came as the UN and Western countries have been urging a rapid resettlement of Tamil civilians to their homes in the north of the country.

Although the government has promised to resettle most of the civilians by the end of this year, many think the target may be tough to achieve, reported the BBC.

The government says it needs time to remove mines from war-affected areas and to root out insurgents hiding among the displaced population.

"We have told the US, Japan and others that we need more money to build infrastructure in the camps and to resettle these people," Mr Rajapaksa said in a

telephone interview.

"Funding is the major bottleneck in carrying out the rehabilitation work," he said.

The UN and other international agencies have been providing relief in the camps for Tamils displaced by the war.

But long term rehabilitation needs additional resources.

Some estimates suggest that Sri Lanka requires about \$2bn (£1.2bn) for long term post-war reconstruction.

The fresh appeal by Sri Lanka's powerful defence secretary came more than a week after the approval of a \$2.6bn loan by the International Monetary Fund.

Sri Lanka had asked for the loan to weather a severe balance of payments crisis and tackle the effects of the global economic turnaround.

The loan was approved despite donors' concern about the government's human rights record during and after the war against the Liberation Tigers.

Britain, France, US, Germany and other Western countries abstained from the vote at the IMF board meeting.

The Times newspaper estimates that 20,000 Tamils were killed in the last months of fighting.

The UN has estimated that more than 7,000 civilians were killed up to April this year and another 13,000 injured.

UN officials have declined to estimate how many Tamil civilians were killed in May, as the government stepped up its campaign against the Liberation Tigers and indiscriminately targeted the civilians areas.

The Sri Lankan government denies responsibility for civilian deaths, claiming it has killed 'not one single civilian'.

Sri Lanka's defence budget this year reached about \$1.7bn, about 4% of its gross domestic product (GDP), and there are expectations that with the end of the war, defence expenditure could be reduced to divert funds for rehabilitation work.

But the Sri Lankan defence secretary ruled out any immediate cuts in defence expenditure to fund post-war reconstruction, the BBC reported.

"There will be automatic reduction in acquisition of arms and ammunition and that amount will be saved," Mr Rajapaksa said.

"But that will not directly benefit the Treasury. We have bought most of the weapons from foreign countries on a long-term credit facility. So, the amount of money going out of the country [in



Even as the conditions in the foreign aid built concentration camps remain appalling amidst Sri Lanka's refusal to release the Tamil civilians in the camps, the government calls for more assistance

repaying the loans] will remain for some time."

Sri Lanka bought millions of dollars worth of weapons from countries like China, Pakistan and Israel to fight the war with the Tamil Tigers.

The UK government - which has committed £12.5m (\$21m) in emergency aid to Sri Lanka - said camps "cannot be a long-term solution".

"The government of Sri Lanka must stick to its own commitment and return the vast majority of civilians within 180 days, including the interim option of staying with host families where necessary," a spokesperson for the Department for International Development told the BBC.

## Diseases rampant

DISEASES continue to spread rampantly through the concentration camps in the north of Sri Lanka in which about 300,000 Tamil civilians are held.

An increase of typhoid fever and viral hepatitis have been reported in the camps of Vavuniya.

"Measures are in place to prevent it from developing into an epidemic", Government Epidemiology Unit Director, Dr. Prabha Paliawadana said told reporters, acknowledging that there was a growing problem.

Dengue has also been detected, with seven people admitted to Vavuniya General Hospital on July 21. The dengue patients were inmates of the camps - described as concentration camps - in Vavuniya.

Civil sources in Vavuniya have complained that health authorities in Vavuniya have failed to adopt proper measures to contain the spread of dengue in IDP camps and elsewhere in the

## Indian doctors stay extended

THE tenure of a group of Indian doctors working among the displaced Tamils in refugee camps has been extended by two months. Indian doctors, mostly from the army's medical corp, have been working among refugees since the beginning of March, more than two months the war between the LTTE and the

Lankan army was over.

Currently, the doctors run a field hospital in a camp in Vauniya where almost 280,000 refugees are housed. This was the third extension granted to the field hospital unit.

"The field hospital unit has a 60-member medical team comprising surgeons, pediatrician, medical specialist and lady medical officers. The team so far has already treated over 21,000 internally displaced Tamil civilians including cases of gunshot wounds, trauma, head injuries and those related to general surgery and orthopedics at Manikfarms camp at Vavuniya," the Indian defence ministry said.

A 30-member armed forces medical team from India arrived in Colombo on July 23 to relieve the medical personnel already there since March, this year.

Not only Indian doctors, a team of 80 retired Indian soldiers are reaching Sri Lanka to join the ongoing efforts to clear the thousands of anti-personnel mines planted across north and north-eastern Sri Lanka.

According to news agency IANS, while 50 of the latest batch of Indians are attached to the Pune-based Horizon Group, 32 are from Sarvatra Technical Consultants, a company that is based in Gurgaon, Haryana. Sarvatra will send 32 more men.

Sri Lanka is one of the world's most heavily mined areas. There are no precise estimates about the number of mines the military and the LTTE buried in the island's north and east over the past quarter century.

## GA abducted

THE Kilinochchi District Government Agent, Nagalingam Vethanayagam was abducted Thursday, July 30, by a group of persons who arrived in a vehicle at his temporary residence in Vavuniya. Mr. Vethanayagam had returned to his government quarters in Vavuniya Thursday evening after official work.

On Friday July 31, the Sri Lankan Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) informed Mr. Vethanayagam's family that he had been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

They further informed the family that he had been taken to Colombo for further inquiries.

The persons who took him into custody at his temporary residence also removed many official files. His official vehicle and several files were handed over to his sub office in Vavuniya on Friday.

## NEWS

# 'No respite from human rights abuses to children'

DESPITE the end of hostilities, children in Sri Lanka continue to be at risk of forced recruitment, arbitrary detention and other human rights abuses, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (Coalition) said on Tuesday, 28 July. In a new briefing to the Security Council Working Group (Working Group) on Children and Armed Conflict, the Coalition urged the Sri Lankan authorities to act immediately to protect conflict-affected children.

Children are among dozens of people who have been detained by security forces in internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Vavuniya, apparently for their alleged links to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In one case in June 2009, a group of four or five girls and boys from a camp in Menik Farm were reportedly detained and questioned by members of the Sri Lankan military. One of the girls admitted that she had been with the LTTE for two days.

The children were subsequently taken away and there has been no news of them since.

"The families of children taken by the security forces from detention camps have no idea where they are – if they are in detention, have been taken to rehabilitation centres or have disappeared" said the Director of the Coalition, Victoria Forbes Adam.

Given the background of large-scale disappearances in Sri Lanka, there are grave fears that some of the reported incidents of children and adults being removed from IDP camps may represent enforced disappearances.

"There are simple steps that can be taken to enhance the security of children in IDP camps including allowing unhindered access to independent human rights monitors and maintaining a centralized register of all persons in the camps. Families should also be informed of where their children have been taken and their access to them should be facilitated" said Victoria Forbes Adam.

The Coalition has received reports of continued abductions for ransom and forced recruitment of children by pro-government armed groups.

Unverified reports indicate that young boys in rehabilitation centres in Vavuniya have been forced to join pro-government armed groups including the Eelam People's Democratic Party and Tamil People's Liberation Front (TMVP).

They are now reportedly collecting 'protection money' from merchants and traders in Vavuniya town.

There are also sporadic reports of child recruitment in Batticaloa district by the TMVP and cadres loyal to the former TMVP leader, V. Muralitharan, known as Karuna.

"Armed groups are clearly operating with the support of the security forces who are allowing them access to IDP camps and centres for surrendees and using them to identify individuals formerly associated with the LTTE. The Sri Lankan authorities must act immediately to prevent armed groups from entering facilities where children are housed and must investigate reports of ongoing abductions and recruitment by them" said Victoria Forbes Adam.

An entrenched culture of impunity in Sri Lanka facilitates ongoing abuses against children.

In 2007 the government initiated an investigation into elements of the armed forces suspected of complicity in the forced recruitment of children by the TMVP. Twenty-three months later it has yet to be completed.

In the meantime, Karuna, the former head of the TMVP, has been made a government minister. Karuna also stands accused of recruiting thousands of child soldiers when he was an LTTE commander prior to his split with the group in 2004.

No known action has been taken against any member of the security forces or of any armed group suspected of child abductions or forced recruitment.

Intense recruitment of children by the LTTE during the final phase of the conflict has created serious challenges for the release and reintegration of underage recruits.

While the government has set up a framework to provide support for children leaving armed groups through the establishment of accommodation and rehabilitation centres, the efforts fall short of internationally recognized best practice.

Under the framework, there are concerns that former child soldiers may be held in custody for up to one year without clear grounds.

Further, there are concerns about the inadequate access of these children to their families; the incomplete separation of children from adults; and the security of children in the centres.

## Urgency of bearing witness

### Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

FIRST they were captives of a conflict in which their freedom and security was thwarted at every turn. Now huge numbers of the Tamil population of Sri Lanka find themselves trapped again, unseen for the most part and wholly unprotected.

The conflict may officially be over, but the battle to reach the victims is not. Aid agencies, the media and even the Red Cross have all been denied access to the military-run camps where an estimated 300,000 civilians are languishing in dangerously impoverished, hostile conditions.

The Sri Lankan government maintains that it will resettle those currently interned, describing its battle against the Tamil Tigers as "a humanitarian operation to safeguard the people of the area". But the reality is far different.

The UN has accused the Sri Lankan government of waging "a war without witnesses". While those still locked inside the camps are prevented from speaking out, the testimonies of those who were fortunate to survive provide ample testimony to a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Since 2006, when the peace process was finally abandoned and northern Sri Lanka was once again gripped by conflict, waves of survivors have sought help from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (MF). In 2005, before the escalation of the conflict, just 50 people were referred. By 2008, that number had almost quadrupled to 187.

Stories of rape, sexual abuse, burnings with hot irons and long periods of solitary confinement are commonplace. All parties to the conflict, from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to the police and paramilitary groups, have been implicated. The Sri Lankan army is particularly notable for its appetite for torture. Yet the army has evaded an investigation into its actions during the war and since, in the military-run camps now being operated in the north.

One of many young Tamil men to have survived the notorious military-run Joseph Camp in Vavuniya is fretful about the fate that may have met the family he was forced to leave behind when he fled Sri Lanka last year. He was detained by the military during one of many sweeps that the authorities made of Tamil Tiger controlled areas, picking up young people regardless of whether they had any active involvement with the LTTE.

He was beaten and sexually abused almost daily for the two months he was held. He was never allowed out of the bare cell in which he was kept, but he



**Torture continues to be a part of the Sri Lankan arsenal against the Tamils, even though the government has claimed victory in the war**

vividly recalls hearing the screams of other Tamils, particularly women, being tortured.

Just one week ago, he spoke to a close friend who is still detained in an army camp in the north, who told him of life in the barbed-wire surrounded camps, where there is practically no food and people are treated like animals: "Tamils are dying and disappearing, this is a genocide that the government is aiding and abetting and nobody has lifted a finger to help while our people are being butchered."

"We need the whole world to put pressure on the Sri Lankan government to give access to foreign countries otherwise most of the people will be killed before anyone sees. They should give access to the war zone to see how many people have been buried there and to witness what life has been like for so long amidst all this destruction."

"I don't believe anything the government says now about protecting the Tamils - after the experience that I had when I hadn't even committed a crime, I cannot believe them now."

Any aspirations that the younger generation of Tamils had to build jobs, careers and families, feel lost to them. Their only memories are of violence and war. If they are to be given a chance to rebuild a future, "the world must be allowed in to see and the Tamils must be freed from the camps and allowed to return to their houses".

But those exiled to the UK only hear horror stories via phone calls from people in Sri Lanka and messages relayed through the Tamil community in the UK, of young people being abducted from the camps and of sugges-

tions that the army is still intent on wiping out the Tamil population.

Another young woman recalls the brutality of the camps, the incessant torture which saw her whipped with canes, kept in solitary confinement, burnt with cigarettes and suffocated with a petrol-soaked bag for more than two months. She too is filled with dread thinking about what may have happened to the family she has had no contact with since she escaped to the UK last year:

"Other women who were arrested at the same time as me are still in the camps, who knows how many are living and how many are dead."

Exiled from their country and with their families feared trapped in the camps or worse, a small group of Tamils have come together in a therapeutic group established at the MF to form links between a people whose connections to all that they held dear have been severed by war.

By far what galvanises their resolve more than anything else is the determination to counter the Sri Lankan government's attempts to deny reports of torture and ill-treatment. One young man says: "There are so many more people like us, we are not the only ones, and yet the international community doesn't really know the truth." Another woman says: "This really happened to me, why shouldn't the government know it?"

With the people of Sri Lanka increasingly cut off from the outside world, it is now more important than ever that the outside world demands to be allowed in, to provide help that is so obviously needed and to see the uncensored reality.



## NEWS

# 'Rebellion or mass suicide only outcome if this continues'

**An eyewitness report of personal exposure to the suffering of Tamils in the Manik Farm camp.**

WITH all the people from Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar districts crammed into the camps in Vavuniya, space is a premium. Rather than being 'internally displaced persons' these people are in reality 'internally displaced prisoners'.

The camps are large open prisons where suspicion is encouraged, all rights denied and human rights abuses occur in the open, with no indication that any attempts are being made to change the circumstances in which these people are constrained.

The Manik Farm complex is the second largest city on the island of Sri Lanka, after the capital Colombo. Locally the story is that more camps are to be built, and more people are still being transported into the camps from outside.

The estimated 280,000 inmates of Manik Farm camp - and there are no accurate figures of how many people are in each camp or who they are - are housed in six zones, three on either side of a central passage. The names of the people detained are not recorded, and thus there is no accountability for them.

The zones are named after Tamil politicians of the past - Kadirgamar, Arunachalam, Ramathanan, etc. One zone remains unnamed as the name of a sixth Tamil politician deemed suitable enough could not be found.

Each zone is self-contained and all inmates are prevented from leaving their zone or interacting with relatives in another zone unless they have the permission of the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence.

Inside the zones, 2-3 families are housed in each temporary dwelling. This is ten to fifteen individuals, many of them adults, crammed into a small tent. There is absolutely no privacy and solitude is only a dream.

## Food and water

Visitors to the camps get simple meals of rice and dhal or rice and beetroot. The residents get even less, and at times are lucky if they get one meal a day. At other times, they get three meals, leading to a complete lack of certainty about what sustenance the people will have at any given time.

Certainly no effort is made to provide nutritious or balanced meals. Some people are attempting to grow their own plants outside their tents, but these disappear quickly and are not sufficient



**An eyewitness account of the conditions in Manik Farm camp tells of parents left dead within sight of their children, children dying by falling into toilet pits, women taken away and raped every night, lack of medical assistance, poor food and worse water access.**

for their needs.

But if the food is restricted, the water is atrocious. There is never enough water for people to drink and many have been forced to drink from the bathing pools. The lack of sanitation however means that these are basically breeding grounds for bacteria and this is one of the major causes of the rampant spread of diseases through the camps.

Malnutrition, chicken pox, diarrhoea, malaria, respiratory infections and skin diseases are common, spreading rapidly through the tight swarm of people. Deaths are common.

Toilets consist of large open pits with planks across to squat on and removal of waste is nonexistent. Children have been known to fall into the toilet pits - the scene from the movie 'Slum Dog Millionaire' has new significance in these camps. Many of these children die, for there is no way out of these pits, unlike in the movie.

## Suspicion and fear

The Tamils are suspicious of each other. Divides between Tamils of differing regions or reli-

gions are being encouraged so as to break down the sense of Tamil unity. People are distrustful of everyone they don't know, as everyone is a potential whistleblower, passing on true - or false - information in order to advance their cause, or because they don't like an individual.

Anyone attempting to cross from one camp to another - for example to see relatives - is shot. One example was a mother and father who attempted to see their children who were being held in another zone. They were shot and the bodies allowed to lie where they lay, exposed to the children looking on from the neighbouring zone.

The dominant feeling in the camp is one of despair.

## Rampant rape

Rape is common in the camps, and is carried out by the soldiers 'guarding' the camps. With toilets at the periphery, women who go to use the facilities are easily dragged away and raped.

Women and girls identified as having had a connection with the Liberation Tigers are held separately at Ponmedu (the men and

boys are held at the Tamil Mahavidyalayam in Chettikulam, also separated from the rest of the population). Every night a bus arrives at Ponmedu and about ten women are taken out and returned in a ruffled state the next day.

This is done quite openly, and is common knowledge among those in the camps and those who have had access.

## Lack of access

The International Red Cross has been asked to reduce their operations in Sri Lanka while non-governmental organisations are still not allowed in to camps.

The only people allowed into the camps are local religious organisations and aid groups from what are considered 'friendly countries' - countries that militarily or economically supported the Sri Lankan government in its war against the Liberation Tigers. For example, visitors from India have been allowed inside the camps.

Religious groups are encouraged to visit the camps, but they are often ill equipped to deal with the practicalities of large scale displacement and the psychological impacts of this on the people.

The only local doctors working in the camps are from the Independent Medical Practitioners Association.

Accommodation is provided in tents for clinics, but there is no privacy for individual patients. All patients have organic medical problems and mental illnesses have been reported, but no records of this are available.

There is no shortage of medicines, donated by agencies or drug firms, but often these include drugs not commonly used, which can do harm or cause death if used inappropriately. There is no pharmacy so patients are reliant on what drugs the local doctors can provide.

There are no facilities in the local hospital. An ill patient who needed surgery was delayed for six hours in the camp and then disappeared, with no news of his progress brought back to the people in the camp.

Locals feel the camps are likely to continue indefinitely with foreign financial help - they were certainly built with international aid. But they also warn that if the situation continues, the people are bound to either rebel or kill themselves.

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## Fostering Hatred

### Sri Lanka is laying the foundations for renewed war

The end to armed hostilities in Sri Lanka that followed the conventional defeat of the Liberation Tigers in May and the movement's declaration last month that it has suspended its armed struggle has led some observers to talk about a 'post-conflict' era. It is in this context that the language of 'reconciliation' has entered the discourse, for example. To begin with, Sri Lanka's conflict is anything but over; on the contrary, it has clearly entered another period of gestation. Unless the international community acts decisively to end Sinhala oppression of the Tamil people and ensures a robust political solution that guarantees the equality of the two nations, there will be neither 'reconciliation' nor peace. Instead, the violent tyranny of the state will lead inevitably to violent resistance anew.

Whilst overt hostilities have now ceased, the enmities long-driven by the state's racial oppression of the Tamils are only further intensifying. While Sinhala leaders, drunk with victory, deny there is a political problem to be solved, a chauvinist triumphalism has engulfed the Sinhala people. The polarization between Sinhalese and Tamils that became especially acute over the past few years is being rendered irreversible.

This is no 'ancient hatreds' argument, but the contrary. Whilst the Tamils and Sinhalese are long-established nations on the island, Sri Lanka's conflict and crisis is the direct outcome of politics, specifically a chauvinist nation-building project undertaken by Sinhala leaders since independence based on a supposed divinely ordered superiority of the Sinhala over the Tamils and others. This superiority is embedded in the country's constitution, its flag, the composition of its state bureaucracy and military, and above all in the annihilatory trajectory of the policies enacted and violence carried out by the Sinhala-dominated state since 1948. And that was before the Tamil armed struggle erupted in 1983.

For decades, Sri Lanka's crisis and conflict has been defined as the consequence of Tamil depends for independence. On the contrary, as a cursory survey of pre-1976 history demonstrates, it is the reverse: the demand for Tamil Eelam flowed directly out of state policies and violence towards the Tamils - policies and violence that are inexorably escalating.

The Tamil charge of genocide is no outlandish rhetoric, but a recognition of

an existential threat from the Sinhala-dominated state. First there was the state-backed mob violence of the riots and pogroms between 1956 and 1983. In each year since 1983, our people have been slaughtered by the thousand by the armed forces. Throughout the war, under the logic of 'fighting terrorism', hundreds of thousands of Tamils have been starved and denied medicine en masse. Thousands of Tamils have been disappeared, summarily executed, tortured and raped by the state's forces. This is still ongoing in today's 'post-conflict' times.

Then there is the unabashed racism institutionalized in state policies, including distribution of health, education and welfare provision. Whilst the Tamils have been marginalised, excluded and impoverished, the state has fostered the Sinhala and Buddhism. This chauvinism was exemplified by how international aid has consistently been denied to the Tamil northeast - especially after the devastating 2004 tsunami. It is amply illustrated today in how Tamil fisherman are prevented by the military from going to sea whilst Sinhalese trawlers fish with abandon off the Tamil coast.

The point is this: today's Sri Lanka constitutes the perfect conditions for fostering a future armed conflict. Quite apart from the legacy of the past sixty years, the actions and policies of the Sinhala state are inflicting all manner of deprivation and humiliation on Tamils all over the island. Moreover, these actions and policies are enthusiastically backed by the Sinhala people. Especially amid a conviction Tamil defiance has been militarily crushed, the racism manifests itself in daily interactions between Tamils and Sinhalese and between Tamils and state officials across the island. In short the grievances that drive a future war are to be found especially in the present, not just the past.

International aspirations for a united, peaceful Sri Lanka are doomed without decisive action to make it possible. Reconciliation can only be possible from a position of parity. England and Scotland warred for centuries, yet today they are reconciled. It is hardly remarked but fundamental that the unity of the United Kingdom turns on the recognition of the equal worth of four distinct nations and their homelands, and not only on the formal equality of all individuals as citizens. Neither can be dispensed with.

# The politics of internment

Himal

THROUGHOUT the years of the island's ethnic conflict, successive governments of Sri Lanka maintained that the war was against the LTTE and not the Tamil people. As such, with the end of the war in May, the world expected to see Colombo launch a process of reconciliation that would once and for all resolve the grievances and aspirations of all communities, and particularly the Tamil community. Then Sri Lanka could rebuild inter-community relations and settle into a path of democratic governance and economic prosperity. But such an opportunity and hopes are now being dashed by what is increasingly looking like the narrow interests and unprincipled politics of the administration of Mahinda Rajapakse. And what forces us to believe this is the continued internment of a quarter million Tamil civilians, who had suffered under the jackboot of the LTTE and narrowly escaped the war, while having lost many kith and kin.

This gruelling condition is as much a political crisis as it is a humanitarian one. The fundamental question facing the roughly 280,000 interned Tamil civilians today is one regarding their citizenship and their relationship to the Sri Lankan state. Rights of citizenship should ensure freedom of movement, expression and association - the absence of which in essence is, automatically, a suspension of democracy. If the LTTE disrupted the state's functioning by holding a population hostage within a territory it controlled by force of arms, the Rajapakse government is undermining the legitimacy of the state through these internment camps, which have suspended the rights of its citizens.

The issue is foremost a question about the freedom of movement of these Tamil civilians. The Rajapakse government, along with many of the aid agencies and media, have largely missed this point. For different reasons, they view what is taking place as essentially a humanitarian crisis, that the problem is a set of logistical issues around humanitarian services, of providing food, shelter, sanitation, etc. The other approach of engagement, meanwhile, has been around the eventual resettlement of these citizens to their original homes. Since the end of the war, for instance, the Indian government's engagement has been focused on getting assurances of resettling the bulk of the displaced civilians within 180 days. Yet these calls for resettlement are also being deflected by the Rajapakse government, due to a set of alleged logistical and security concerns: the pres-

ence of landmines, the caches of arms buried by the LTTE, the lack of local infrastructure, the destruction of homes, etc.

While both the humanitarian concerns and the issue of resettlement are of great importance - and there have been some improvements in the humanitarian situation, and still greater engagement on the issue of resettlement - the focus should not be on these issues to the detriment of freedom of movement. Citizenship should ensure freedom of movement, fair and simple. All citizens should be given the choice either to leave the camps and move in with friends or relatives, or to settle elsewhere, temporarily or permanently, as they wish.

While there are international human-rights norms that are being violated through such prolonged displacement, the question is also a political issue - and one not particularly new to the Southasian region in the context of armed conflicts, where marginalised populations have been repeatedly abused by our states. As such, the dire situation of the caged Tamil civilians is an issue that Southasians need to think about with a sense of solidarity.

How the internment of Sri Lankans is addressed will also become a test of legal institutions, in Southasia in general and in Sri Lanka in particular. There are today two fundamental-rights cases in front of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, regarding family reunification and the freedom of movement of those kept in the various camps. What, after all, is the exact legal basis of such an internment of citizens? During the warring years, all forms of abuses were justified by what the government called its 'war against terrorism', where the Emergency and the Prevention of Terrorism Act were used to detain individuals, inevitably engendering bitterness among youths who suffered under these draconian laws. Following the end of the war and the government claims of having defeated 'terrorism', it is a tragic irony to see an entire population now suffer internment behind barbed wire. An entire community is thus incubating a festering bitterness that could easily not exist today.

One section of the Sri Lankan citizenry cannot be affected so drastically while life for the rest of the population simply continues. Internment of Tamils is bound to impact on the long-term relations between the communities, yet again undermining the efforts to build a just postcolonial society that have dogged the

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## OPINION

# Life during peacetime

Editorial  
National Post

DURING the recent military campaign in Sri Lanka, this newspaper was broadly sympathetic to the Sri Lankan government's goal of confronting and subduing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers), the guerilla-cum-terrorist force seeking to carve out a Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. As in any war, there were civilian casualties - but we urged our readers to keep in mind the fact that the LTTE was using hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians as human shields, and so it - not the government - was primarily responsible for their deaths.

But the war in Sri Lanka is now over: The Tamil Tigers' last remaining forces were destroyed by the Sri Lankan military in May, and the group's leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was killed.

Sri Lanka is no longer a country under siege, as it had been since the rise of the Tigers in the 1980s. Rather, it is now becoming a "normal" country -- albeit one whose peace is fragile, and whose Tamil minority is restive.

This means that Sri Lanka must now be judged by the human-rights standards that typically govern developing countries. And by those standards, the country's recent conduct should be of great concern. According to UN figures, over 280,000 people -- about 10% of the country's Tamil population -- are still being detained in 30 military-guarded camps. While we do not believe the overheated theory currently making the rounds among Canadian Tamils that the Sri Lankan government is seeking to ethnically cleanse the nation, Colombo's actions have fed Tamil suspicions that they are destined to remain second-class citizens.

As journalists, we also are particularly appalled at the brutal treatment of reporters in Sri Lanka - especially those who happen to critique the country's military. Over the last decade, about 20 journalists have been killed - often by murderers linked to the

government, the military or their supporters. In many cases, the murders were unsolved, and the government seems to have done precious little to unravel the crimes: Sri Lanka placed fifth on the recent Impunity Index circulated by the Committee to Protect Journalists. Only Iraq, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Colombia do less to track down those who murder journalists.

Even aside from these killings, there is little in the way of media freedom for critics of the government: Tamil activists and their allies have been threatened with prosecution under the country's "Prevention of Terrorism Act," or accused of the catch-all term of "treachery."

Sadly, most people in the West don't seem to care much about all this - even those activists who proclaim themselves up in arms over events in Honduras, western China and Iran. The silence from CUPE, left-wing churches, Naomi Klein, campus activists and all the other folks who boycotted Israel at the first sound of gunfire in Lebanon or Gaza is especially puzzling: The human-rights abuses and overall death toll in Sri Lanka are orders of magnitude above those witnessed in the recent Sri Lanka fighting. Press freedom, moreover, is vigilantly protected in Israel, a country where the most vicious criticism of the state, and even of Zionism itself, routinely appears in the country's media.

So why is it that Israel is the world's bete noire while Sri Lanka was recently commended by the UN Human Rights Council following its victory over the LTTE? Apparently, some humans' human rights count for more than others.

Given its large Tamil population and commitment to human rights, Canada is the right country to ensure that the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils is on the world's radar screen. The war in that country is over. Colombo no longer has any excuse for its brutal policies.

tivity, arrogance, majoritarianism or Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism of the high officials in Colombo - is bound to have a tragic impact on the future. What is at stake could not be dearer - reconciliation and democracy - and the Rajapakse government should not go any further with its politics of internment.

# The UK Column



## Voting for the Tamil cause

The campaign to elect Jan Jananayagam to the European parliament elections was an important landmark in British Tamil politics. For the first time a British Tamil stood as an independent candidate on issues that were central to the Tamil political community.

The success of the campaign demonstrated the electoral capacity not just of the Tamil community but of a whole range of issues that are central to Tamil politics. British Tamils now need to think through how best to capitalise on the political capacity, energy and support that became evident through the campaign.

Despite her very late nomination giving a campaign period of only four weeks, Jan was still able to get the support of over 50,000 voters: a historic record for an independent candidate. It showed that the Tamils are really mobilised by the ongoing genocide in Sri Lanka and are clearly ready to use British and European political channels to push their cause.

Jan Jananayagam's profile in Tamil Diaspora circles is as the UK spokesperson for the Tamils Against Genocide (TAG). This project is working to raise awareness of Sri Lanka's genocide of Tamils as well as to bring prosecutions against key Sri Lankan officials closely associated with these policies.

The central message of Jan's campaign was to make the prevention of genocide anywhere central to British and European policy. Her election manifesto also highlighted related issues that are central to British political life such as the erosion of civil liberties and the criminalisation of communities. Working without an established party apparatus, Jan relied on Tamil community networks along with support from Kurdish, Sikh, Jewish and other community groups.

Notably Jan's campaign is the latest in a growing history of Tamil engagement with British political institutions. Tamils have already contested successfully as local councillors for the both the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties. For many years now Tamils have worked closely with their Members of Parliament to bring parliamentary and ministerial attention to the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Whilst these activities have helped to push forward the Tamil cause, the changing demographics of the Tamil Diaspora opens up important new possibilities for future engagement.

The general elections that are due to be held in May next year along with local council elections for all the London bor-

oughs present the British Tamil Diaspora with an opportunity to make the Tamil question an important issue in wider British public life.

As a recently arrived refugee community the Tamils were for many years thought to have a natural sympathy with the Labour party. However, over the past fifteen years there have been important changes in the political landscape of the Diaspora. The community, which has always had a very aspirational ethos, has achieved a great deal of social mobility since the early to mid 1990s. Many members of the community have now established themselves in business or the professions. Second generation British born Tamils are also a significant section of the community and they no longer have the immigrant anxieties of their parents.

The diversity within the Tamil Diaspora means that it can no longer be seen as a simple block vote. Although as Jan's election results shows Tamils rightly prioritise the genocide issue, the Tamil community now reflects the spectrum of political views and positions on general issues such as taxes and public services that are found within the British public. Whilst some Tamils will be still naturally Labour voters, others are more inclined to support other important parties.

The Tamil community should now use the strengths it has built up. Tamil activists should work with all parties and groups within the British political system to ensure that British political actors across the spectrum understand the Tamil perspective. This will ensure that whichever party wins the general election the Tamil issue can be taken forward.

As a well established and successful community, the British Tamil Diaspora has all the resources necessary to make the case for Tamil national rights in Sri Lanka. They must now argue that confronting Sri Lanka's genocidal path is not just a moral obligation for the UK and the international community but also fits with Britain's interests.

Britain and other governments are coming to recognise that Sri Lanka cannot become a stable and productive member of the international community whilst it attempts to erase the Tamil people's national existence from the island.

Sri Lanka must be forced to allow the Tamil people to live with freedom and dignity in their own lands. The Tamil Diaspora can play an important role in bringing about this much needed shift in British public life.

# Politics of internment

*continued from p6*

country since independence in 1948. It is thus that the hopes of those who have longed for reconciliation now seem shattered: this much is clear from the bitterness in the eyes of the confined Tamil civilians. The humiliation that sections of the Tamil community face - whether due to the insensi-



# Mourning Black July 1983

THE last weekend in July once again took Tamils across the globe back to the events on July 1983, when over 3,000 Tamils were killed and over 150,000 made homeless in Sinhala State sponsored anti-Tamil pogroms.

Remembrance events were held in all Tamil Diaspora centres, marking 26 years since the only anti-Tamil pogrom which has been recognised as an act of Genocide by the International Commission of Jurists.

However, the remembrance this year was far more sombre given that from the start of this year history was allowed to repeat itself, this time conducted in devastating proportions.

In London, UK, thousands converged in Trafalgar Square on Sunday, 26 July 2009 to commemorate the 26th anniversary of the Black July 1983 riots.

The stage, situated at the foot of Nelsons column, adorned with red and yellow flags symbolising the national colours of the Tamil homeland, boasted a striking banner saying "Black July 1983: 26 years Sri Lanka's Genocide of Tamils continues".

Tamil community organisations jointly hosted the remembrance rally, which commenced at 2pm. The crowd observed a two-minute silence in memory of the lives lost and laid flowers on mock tombs as a show of their respect for those who have perished in the ongoing genocide against Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Speakers included Jeremy Corbyn MP, Gareth Thomas MP, Mr Robert Evans - Former MEP, Navin Shah AM, Mr Andrew Judge (Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Labour - Wimbledon) and members from the Tamil Councillors Association.

Matt Foot of CAMPACC, Maria from Peace Strike, Sara Callaway from Global Women's Strike and Tim Martin of Act Now also lent their voices to raise awareness of the ongoing plight of Tamils languishing in Nazi-style detention camps, where over 300,000 civilians remain imprisoned.

Many volunteers, mostly second and third generation Tamils, engaged with tourists and passers by handing them leaflets and giving them an insight into the remembrance event being held.

Despite an overcast afternoon, the crowd were enthused by speeches made by representatives from Tamil community organisations, all of whom urged the community to continue to raise their voices as one for their brethren who remain imprisoned in camps.

In Holland, the mourners gathered in a church for a religious service, while in Switzerland, Tamils gathered in Bern for a public rally. In Australia, events were held in Sydney and Melbourne.

## BLACK JULY REMEMBERED



LONDON, UK



SWITZERLAND



LONDON, UK



SWITZERLAND



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



LONDON, UK



NETHERLANDS



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



LONDON, UK



NETHERLANDS



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



## NEWS

# ‘State terror’ in local polls

BBC

POLICE authorities in northern Sri Lanka have rejected accusations by opposition parties that the government is terrorising the region in the run up to Vavuniya Urban Council elections.

The main opposition, United National Party (UNP), says party's organisers are continuously threatened and intimidated by pro-government supporters.

UNP Vanni district organiser PA Karunadasa told BBC Sandeshaya that people travelling in motor bicycles without number plates prevented their supporters from canvassing.

"We know that thugs have arrived in Vavuniya with government ministers. It is state terrorism. We are urging the police to stop this," he said.

The police, however, denied the accusation.

"There is no state terrorism here. We can't accept that accusation," said Nimal Lewke, the Senior Deputy Inspector General (DIG) in charge of the Northern Province.

Elections for the Vavuniya UC and Jaffna Municipal Council are scheduled to be held on 08

August.

In Vavuniya, 24626 voters are registered to elect 11 councillors.

DIG Lewke says the police won't allow anybody, apart from the police and military, to carry arms in the north.

But it differs from the ground reality, according to UNP regional leaders.

"Although nobody carries weapons during the day, our supporters regularly are threatened with death and intimidated at nights," says PA Karunadasa.

"Please do not use media for undue accusations," responds the senior police official.

DIG Lewke urges those affected to lodge complaints with the police, instead.

However the political activists say they are reluctant to make complaints. "We are afraid to make complaints to the police and give our details. We do not know what will happen to us as a consequence."

"A school principal and businessman were recently killed in Vavuniya but the police are yet to arrest any suspect," says the UNP organiser.



TNA MPs Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam and Suresh Premachandran on the campaign trail in Jaffna, where the party's candidates have received death threats and voters have had polling cards snatched

## Rajapakse will give nothing to Tamils – Gajendrakumar

"TAMILS should be vigilant of Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse's intentions. He says that there is no minority race in the country but only a majority race. It is clear that his intention is to assimilate the Tamil race into the Majority Sinhala race in Sri Lanka," Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Jaffna district parliamentarian, told TamilNet Saturday, in an interview in Jaffna.

"Mr. Rajapakse spoke of 13th Amendment before he waged the war on Vanni and during the later stage of the war he spoke of 13 'double plus'. Now he says that he is going to offer a political solution to the ethnic issue," Gajendrakumar said.

"But in a recent interview to an Indian website he said that power devolution is a long term issue and the proposal now would create tumult in the country. We are certain that Mahinda thinks that the Tamils need not be given any solution," he said.

"India openly assured us that the Vanni people will be resettled within 180 days but we knew that Sri Lanka will not keep its promises. Now it is forced to speak of resettlement due to International pressure," he said.

"But some persons here say that action is being taken to resettle the Vanni displaced people because they had urged the President to do so," Gajendrakumar said.

"The real intention of Mr Rajapakse is to crush the Tamil struggle, Tamil Nationalism and leave the Tamils with nothing. The government tries to present a picture of Tamils wishing to live along with the Sinhalese, and the UPFA uses this now as a deplorable election gimmick, he further said.

"Mahinda had made Karuna the SLFP organizer for the East and now he will make Minister Douglas Devananda its organizer for the North. He thinks that there will be no minority issue in the country after that," he told TamilNet.

"It is obvious that Mr. Rajapakse does not wish to give anything to the Tamils," he said.

## Political struggle will continue until Tamil aspirations are met - TNA

"TAMIL militancy was a part of the political struggle of the Tamil people to achieve the right to self-determination in the traditional homeland of the Tamil people in the northeast. The Sri Lanka government says that the armed struggle has been completely defeated. But the political struggle of Tamil people would go on till the legitimate political aspirations of the Tamil people are achieved," said R.Sampanthan, leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentary group, addressing a meeting in Vavuniya Saturday in support of the TNA candidates contesting the elections to the Vavuniya Urban Council under the banner Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchchi (ITAK).

"Hence the Tamil people in Vavuniya and Jaffna should vote

for the ITAK to show the world that the Tamil political problem in Sri Lanka still exists even after the defeat of Tamil militancy," said Sampanthan.

TNA parliamentarians Maavai Senathirajah, Vino Noharathalingam, S.Kanagasabai, and lead candidate of the ITAK contesting the Vavuniya UC election, G.N.Nathan, also participated in the election meeting.

Sampanthan added, "the whole world is anxiously waiting for the verdict of Tamil people in the elections to the Jaffna MC and Vavuniya UC. It is the utmost duty of the Tamil voters to tell the world by electing the ITAK administration to the two local bodies that Tamil people would continue their political struggle to achieve their legitimate political aspirations."

## TNA receives death threats

THE Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) said Wednesday, July 29 that it received complaints that three candidates of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) contesting the election to the Vavuniya urban Council have been issued with death threats.

The candidates are V.Paranjothy, N.Mathiharan and P.Sellathurai, according to a press release by the CMEV. The candidates of the TNA have been contesting the Vavuniya polls under the banner of Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchchi (ITAK) in "HOUSE" symbol.

Meanwhile, TNA Jaffna district parliamentarian Suresh Premachandran alleged that the ruling party contestants in Jaffna Municipal Council (JMC) election had forcibly confiscated more than 1500 voting cards from residents in Kozhumputhurai,

Ariyaalai and Eachchamoaddai area in Jaffna, in a press meet held in his Jaffna office Saturday, August 1.

TNA parliamentarians Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam and Solomon Cyril along with ITAK chief candidate Mudiappu Remedias attended the press meet.

"Ruling United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) persons who go house by house compare the voting cards with the voters list and forcibly take away cards saying that they will be used to vote for the ITAK 'House' symbol if left with the residents," Suresh Premachandran said.

"40% of the 1,00,400 registered voters in JMC area have been displaced and it is their votes that are going to be rigged and the JMC election on 8 August will be certainly one filled with malpractices and rigging," he added.

"We will make public the

names of persons going around confiscating voting cards in the press meet that is to be held in Jaffna when our parliamentary leader Sampanthan comes to Jaffna next week," he informed.

"We are also aware of arrangements being made to bring down people from the islets of Jaffna in buses for the purpose of impersonation," he said.

Meanwhile, Douglas Devananda, Minister and General Secretary of Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) denied anything to do with the persons confiscating the voting cards, in a press release Saturday, August 1.

Jaffna University Students' Union (JUSU), in a recent press release, has appealed the people to vote for TK House symbol saying that only those who care for the Vanni displaced persons and their wellbeing should be returned as their representatives.



## NEWS

# TNA outlines political formula

TamilNet

BASED on Self-Determination, distinct and comprehensive autonomy to the historical homeland of Eelam Tamils is the political solution envisaged by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to the ethnic conflict in the island of Sri Lanka, said veteran Tamil politician and TNA Parliamentary Group Leader R. Sampanthan, while addressing the press in Jaffna Tuesday. Mr. Sampanthan, who said that a draft proposal of the TNA will be released soon, was optimistic of India's support. This is the first time the TNA is coming out with its own political formula to resolve the conflict.

TNA Parliamentary Group leader R. Sampanthan's political formula to resolve the ethnic question of Eelam Tamils is currently being drafted by the TNA and it will be presented soon to Colombo, New Delhi and to the International Community, Mr. Sampanthan said while answering a question at the ITAK office located on Martin Road.

"All powers needed including land, agriculture, industries and security should be in our hands," Mr. Sampanthan said. "Financial arrangements including powers to raise funds inside and outside of the island are also crucial." Tamil

diaspora is keen in investing in the North and East and the TNA is engaged in talks with everyone concerned and in planning with foreign governments, he added.

In a recent meeting with the Indian Foreign Minister, the TNA had expressed its willingness to work along with the Indian government and the Indian FM has reciprocated by assuring his government's cooperation, Mr. Sampanthan said.

All formulas such as the 13th Amendment, 13+, 13++ etc., being spoken about by the Sri Lankan ministers have been dumped to the dustbin by the SL President Mahinda Rajapaksa, he added. It was only because of international pressure Mr. Rajapaksa was talking about considering 13th Amendment as a beginning, but he is not interested in it anymore as pressure mounts on him from JVP and other Sinhala parties, Sampanthan said.

Taking a stand that there is no majority or minority in the island, the SL President ignores the plight of Tamils and Muslims, Sampanthan blamed and added that the displaced Tamils and Muslims have to be resettled in their own places.

Some high ranking sections of



The TNA proposal for a political solution will be based on self-determination and autonomy

the SL government threaten to re-impose restriction on fishing in Jaffna if people are not voting in favour of the government in the forthcoming Jaffna Municipality elections.

Tamils, either in the North or in the East, do not own or operate trawlers engaged in Deep Sea fishing at the moment. According to Central Bank statistics of March 2009, out of 2814 trawlers in the island, only two are in Jaffna, but they are not operating. The only one trawler that was in Tamil hands in Trincomalee has been coerced to be sold. In the meantime, more than 1,000 trawlers belonging to Sinhalese are fishing in the waters of the East. This is the situation when the Colombo government comes out with threats such as re-imposing

fishing restrictions. There was a time when 60% of the islands fisheries was carried out by the Tamils. This threat comes from sections that have now rallied behind the ruling party's betel symbol. How could these politicians, who are unable to even retain their party's own Vee'nai symbol are going to help Tamils winning their rights, asked Sampanthan.

Meanwhile, Mavai Senathirajah, who addressed the same press conference blamed some sections for making propaganda that there is dissension in the TNA. The SL government, in the past, destroyed political parties and bought over some of them. "The TNA is the one and only political alliance that is immune to such tactics of the government.

Our people will not allow any dissension in the TNA. Our diaspora also insists on the unity of the TNA," Mr. Senathirajah said.

Even Mahinda Rajapaksa has recently said that a political solution has to be negotiated with the TNA, he added.

Sampanthan, Mavai Senathirajah, Suresh Premachandran, Gajendrakumar Ponnampalam, Pathmini Sithamparanathan, Solomon Siril and Thuraratnasingham were present at the press conference.

TNA MPs Kanagasapay, William Thomas and Ariyanenthiran were due in Jaffna on Tuesday to engage in election campaign. Mr. Sivasakthy Anandan and Kishore are actively engaged in election campaign for ITAK in Vavuniyaa, Mavai Senathirajah told reporters.

## APRC proposal to be 'home grown' but no devolution

THE head of an all party panel set up by Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse to seek an ever elusive southern consensus on the Tamil national question and buy time to conduct war has said the panel has come up with a home grown solution with no absolute devolution.

Science and Technology Minister, Prof. Tissa Vitharana, who is also the chairman of the All Party Representative Committee, told local media "It is an indigenous method that would work out a solution for our country. However, there would not be absolute devolution of power."

Vitharana also announced that the panel's proposals will not fall in line with the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which is a result of the 1987 Indo-Lanka agreement and therefore not 'home grown'.

Whilst many international

actors including the United States see the 13th amendment as a first step for Sri Lanka sharing power with the Tamils, the Rajapakse administration is not interested in the 13th amendment which is already in the Sri Lankan constitution and requires only the implementation.

Rajapakse administration's intentions on the 13th amendment were made clear when it demerged the North-eastern province despite protests from India.

According to Vitharana, the APRC proposes the abolishing of the Executive Presidency and reverting to the Westminster system. It also proposes the setting up of a Commission that functions under the purview of the central government to determine and monitor policies with regard to land and water.

The APRC has looked at the formation of a village committee

system and a second chamber consisting of representatives from the nine provinces, according to its chairman.

Vitharana explained that following a series of discussions, the APRC has prepared a draft of its final proposals that would be submitted for endorsement from the parties that were represented in the APRC. The first copy of the draft is to be presented to Rajapakse, who is the head of the SLFP, for his observations.

"After the President is handed over the first draft, the other parties that were in the APRC would be given copies of the draft to receive the views of their respective party leaders," Vitharana said. Once the APRC receives the observations made by each party, it would be discussed and the final report would be prepared with the signatures of all member parties.

## Reporters barred from North during polls

SRI LANKA will not allow reporters into Vavuniya and Jaffna to cover the local government elections to be held there, the Associated Press reported. "The government did not give a reason for banning reporters, but it cites security reasons for denying entry to any outsider," AP reported. The towns are accessible with Defence ministry permission and "even residents can't leave without permission," AP report said. Meanwhile, elections watchdog, PAF-FREL said there seemed to be little public interest in the polls as people were preoccupied with the plight of their relatives in government's military-run internment camps. The government has touted Saturday's polls in the two northern cities as the first sign of democracy taking root in an area ravaged by the decades long civil war that ended in May. The two cities are just outside the de facto state the LTTE ran in the north.

Both cities, where Tamils are the majority, remain surrounded by checkpoints and are accessible only with permission from the Defence Ministry, AP reported.

Reporters will not be allowed into the cities to report on the elections - the first in the cities since 1998 - and will have to rely on government handouts, said Lakshman Hulugalle, the head of the government's security information centre. However, despite the ban, ruling party officials have taken some journalists to the area to cover their campaign events.

Meanwhile, elections watchdog PAFFREL's Executive Deputy Director, Rohan Hettiarachchi, told a media conference in Colombo: "Our observation is that the people of both these areas do not have much interest on these elections." He said people of Vavuniya area are more concerned about their relatives in the camps for internally displaced.



## NEWS

# No investment flow despite IMF loan

DESPITE Sri Lanka touting the approval of the IMF loan as a resounding vote of confidence in Sri Lanka and some Sri Lanka and India based analysts projecting it as a boost for investor confidence, there has been no significant investment flow into the country according to market watchers.

Following the approval of the US dollars 2.5 billion stand by loan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the largest amount of resources ever given to Sri Lanka by the global financial institution, Minister of Export Development and International Trade Prof. G.L. Peiris touted it as a clear indication of the IMF's confidence in the government's economic management capabilities and predicted 'very considerable advantages to Sri Lanka'.

Joining the Sri lankan government in painting a rosy picture were UK-based banks HSBC and Standard Chartered. Both gushed about the IMF loan, without any reference to ongoing internment of Tamils or the gross human rights abuses the Sri Lankan government has committed.

The IMF loan "is a significant positive for Sri Lanka's external liquidity position and should further boost sentiment toward the country," Standard Chartered's Mumbai-based analyst Priyanka Chakravarty wrote in a research report.

"It is noteworthy that the final IMF loan amount is appreciably higher than originally discussed."

Nick Nicolaou, chief executive officer of HSBC Sri Lanka, pitched that "the IMF endorse-

ment provides confidence to overseas investors... Sri Lanka has an excellent story to tell."

However, in reality the IMF loan has not helped Sri Lanka attract investors as it had hoped.

Traders say foreign funds were waiting to see the government's approach in attracting investors from western countries as Sri Lanka's relations with the West took a hit in the closing months of the war and immediately afterward.

"Investor sentiment was low," said Prashan Fernando, executive director at Acuity Stockbrokers.

"Foreign investors are not stepping in as expected. They might be waiting to see the full impact of IMF loan conditions on the exchange rate."

Analysts said despite the central bank's maintaining of a steady exchange rate, foreign investors are still not convinced it will prevent gradual depreciation of the rupee.

IMF approved the loan On July 24 to help the country weather the global financial crisis and build up its low reserves, while rebuilding the north after a 25-year civil war.

With no significant investment flow, Sri Lanka is considering a \$500 million sovereign bond issue among possible fundraising options. "We are considering several options, one of which could be a \$500 million bond, it could be a syndicated loan, it could be an extension of the bills and bonds that we have already opened out for foreigners," central bank governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal told Reuters.

# Emotional healing before IMF politics

TamilNet

IF structural changes are what the West aims in the island of Sri Lanka through IMF and GSP+ loans, those cannot be achieved without first emotionally rehabilitating the Eelam Tamils.

Emotional rehabilitation, which is fundamental to all other rehabilitation is possible only when the West openly acknowledges Eelam Tamils as a nation and their cause as a national liberation struggle, says a TamilNet commentator. "Tamils are deeply hurt by IMF and Indian assistance to Colombo failing to take note of this fact, the commentator said, adding that the GSP+ should not make the same mistake.

By abstaining the IMF voting the West has indirectly helped the approval of the loan to Colombo.

Now there are proposals that the EU should consider GSP+ assistance too. The call for investigation of war crimes may serve political purposes of the West but this will not address the fundamental expectations of Eelam Tamils, the commentator said.

"The West has to consider the long history of betrayal and the explicit ways in which the Sinhala state has embarked upon the structural genocide of Eelam Tamils.

"The long legacy of international failure, spanning over half a century, in not recognising the genocidal oppression in the island and the nationalist dimensions of the struggle of Eelam Tamils have immensely contributed to the present mess," he said.

"When nothing is resolved but only gone deep into a military subjugation, the attitude of the West and India in pretending that the war is over, national question



**Sri Lanka's bourse remains quiet as investors wait to see if the country can meet the conditions of the IMF before they invest**

of Eelam Tamils doesn't exist anymore and now the way out is to promote the 'victors', will only resume war at some stage.

"International recognition of the nationhood of Eelam Tamils and guaranteeing its self-determination is the only way possible in the context of the island to save a nation from genocide and for any stability in the island aspired by the powers. Such a recognition

and guarantee emotionally rehabilitating the war-torn Tamils could only lead them into a healthy political process, if that is what the powers want," he said.

"The diaspora has a responsibility in reminding that it is positively addressing the Tamil national question and not cosmetic calls for human rights that is integral to the interests of the West in the island."

# Can Sri Lanka fulfill agreed reforms with IMF?

Shihar Aneez  
Reuters

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$2.6 billion loan for Sri Lanka to help the country through the global financial crisis and rebuild following a 25-year civil war.

Sri Lanka will immediately be able to tap the first disbursement of \$322 million under the 20-month programme but the rest will be phased in, subject to quarterly reviews.

Following are some questions and answers on key conditions and whether the government will be able to meet them.

**The hardest condition for**

## Sri Lanka to meet?

Maintaining a 7 percent budget deficit in 2009. Latest Ministry of Finance data showed the deficit has already hit 4 percent in the first four months of this year and economists expected the full-year figure to reach at least 9 percent.

They say the government will be forced to revise its populist policies to more economically rational ones if it wants to receive the entire \$2.6 billion loan.

The 5 percent fiscal deficit target in 2011 will also be a difficult task for President Mahinda

Rajapaksa, who faces a parliamentary and presidential election before then.

Analysts say the Rajapaksa administration, which has already promised to cut military expenditure after the war, could introduce new indirect taxes to increase revenue.

But that might be unpopular with the electorate. So Rajapaksa could take advantage of his current high popularity and call for elections early and, assuming he wins, implement the less popular policies afterwards.

## If Sri Lanka fails to meet conditions?

Initially, the IMF is likely to be flexible, taking into consideration Sri Lanka's post-war situa-

tion. However, continued failures to meet conditions will compel the lender to stop disbursement of the loans, which would be negative for domestic markets. The IMF discontinued a previous loan programme due to Sri Lanka's failure in adhering to its conditions in 2001.

## Impacts of conditions on the economy?

Inflation is expected to pick up. The government has agreed with the IMF to halt subsidies to loss-making state enterprises Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC). That is likely to lead to higher inflation via increased energy prices, raising pressure for policy rates to rise.

## Will exchange rate policy be an issue?

No. One of the conditions state that the central bank must allow flexibility in the foreign exchange rate and limit intervention to smooth volatility in the market. But the IMF has also said the flexibility should help maintain exporters' competitiveness, suggesting it is in line with the current central bank policy of intervening only when the rupee is depreciating.

Central bank Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal told Reuters on Monday that the rupee is trading at a reasonable rate and it will continue to maintain a stable exchange rate. Traders also expect the rupee remain steady.



## NEWS

# IMF takes charge in Sri Lanka

TamilNet

WHILST Sri Lanka's government hailed its securing of an IMF loan for \$2.6bn last week as a 'victory' and as indication of international support for its political and economic policies, the reality is the reverse. Sri Lanka has been compelled to accept not only painful economic and quasi-political obligations, but also the kind of external supervision the ultra-Sinhala nationalist regime routinely rails against. Moreover, whilst the IMF loan is ostensibly to revive Sri Lanka's economy, its first purpose is to ensure the government keeps up with repayments to prior foreign lenders. In short, Sri Lanka can borrow from the IMF to pay back its creditors but has to undertake harsh economic reforms - under IMF supervision - for the breathing space.

On July 24, the IMF approved a 20-month Stand-By Arrangement for Sri Lanka for US\$2.6 billion, of which US\$322 million will become immediately available.

Central Bank chairman, Ajith Niward Cabraal was quoted as saying that the IMF's decision is a "big victory" and a "huge boost in confidence" for Sri Lanka.

According to this logic, the IMF has decided to lend Sri Lanka the money because so many countries on its board support the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse and its policies.

"The IMF has accepted the Mahinda Chinthanaya policy for the country's economic development," Mr. Cabraal told the press.

As Mr. Takatoshi Kato, the IMF deputy managing director and acting chairman of the board, put it: "the government should take advantage of the opportunity created by the end of the conflict to ensure national reconciliation, restore macroeconomic stability, and promote strong and durable growth."

These beguilingly abstract words entail significant consequences for the Rajapske regime and the island's near future.

## A Global Focus

The IMF is the 'lender of last resort' for states that are unable to secure credit on the international market.

Formed after WW2, the IMF's raison d'être is ensuring global economic stability i.e. to ensure states' mismanagement of their economies does not damage the global financial system.

In the past sixty years, the IMF has become a powerful proponent and enabler of neoliberalism, an ideology now adopted widely (and often reluctantly), that advocates the supremacy of markets and the minimizing of state interference in them.

This month's \$2.6bn loan to Sri Lanka is part of a global strategy being unrolled by the IMF to stabilize and bolster the global financial markets still shuddering from the global credit crisis of 2008.

Whilst there has been vocal criticism of Sri Lanka's brutality towards the island's Tamil population by Western states, the IMF's priority is ensuring the global financial markets continue to lend and are not further unsettled by borrowers defaulting.

In this context, whilst the United States, Britain and France - along with Germany and Argentina - are reported to have abstained from voting for the loan, thereby signaling their disapproval of the Rajapske regime, they certainly did not actively seek to block the funds.

## Lender of Last Resort

Following the turmoil which began last year, several countries around the world have been reluctantly lining up to accept the IMF's stringent terms for its support to get out of their predicaments.

It is only at times of acute crisis that countries have accepted the IMF's punishing conditionalities. For example, several countries in East Asia were compelled to go to the IMF after the financial crisis that swept through the region and thereafter across the world of 1998.

Sri Lanka is presently heavily in debt to foreign lenders, a condition made acute as the Rajapakse regime has been borrowing furiously on international markets to finance its high-intensity and bloody military onslaught against the Tamil Tigers.

Even by December 2008, Standard and Poor, the global ratings agency cut Sri Lanka's credit rating to five levels below investment grade, citing mounting government debt.

At least two recent attempts by the Rajapske government to issue sovereign bonds produced lackluster interest from international markets. Even Colombo's declaration of victory over the LTTE failed to spur interest in Sri



**President Rajapakse ploughing the fields behind a pair of bullocks - it will be difficult, if not impossible to align this Buddhist vision for Sri Lanka with the macro economic expectations of the IMF**

Lanka's bonds - at a time when Emerging Market issues were soaring.

## Conditions

It is in this context, despite its public bravado that the Colombo government has been compelled to accept the portfolio of conditions that the 'lender of last resort', has imposed.

The \$2.6bn Stand-By Arrangement is effectively a large credit card that can be used for specific purposes - and that only so long as Colombo is adhering to certain forms of conduct. While \$322m is immediately available, the rest will be phased in, subject to the IMF's quarterly reviews. An IMF team is due in Sri Lanka soon.

To begin with, Sri Lanka must prioritize the repayment of foreign debt - a promise Colombo tucked away in its letter of intent (LoI); paragraph 12, titled 'greater flexibility in the exchange rate', declares: "the Government is committed to staying current on all its external debt obligations."

Secondly, Sri Lanka promises not to borrow more than \$1.75bn in the next 20 months (paragraph 7). Colombo will also not intensify existing foreign exchange restrictions or introduce any new restrictions or multiple currency practices.

All this serves to ensure foreign lenders can extricate themselves from Sri Lanka and that the country will gradually become less of a threat (by way of potential defaults, say) to the global financial markets than it presently is.

As IMF deputy managing director Kato put it, one of the purposes of the loan is to ensure "restore [Sri Lanka's] fiscal and external viability."

## Painful Future

But if borrowings are limited this way, in the absence of strong earnings, it is state spending that must be cut and it is in shaping domestic policy that the IMF's medicine promises to be most bitter.

Amongst the agreements the IMF has forced from the Rajapakse regime are:

■ To aim to contain 2009 central government deficit to 7 percent and to reduce the overall deficit to 5 percent of GDP by 2011 (from 7.7 percent in 2008). That means military spending will have to be curbed.

■ To end the substantial state subsidies to state-owned commercial enterprises. Specifically, the Ceylon Electricity Board and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation will have to break even, without state subsidy, by end-2011.]

■ To increase tax revenue by at least 2 percent of GDP in 2011 with measures to broaden the revenue base, significantly reduce tax exemptions, and improve tax enforcement.

The consequences are clear; as one foreign headline put it: "Sri Lanka's citizens will feel pinch." In short, with subsidies ending, prices will go up.

Moreover, Sri Lanka has to cut its staggering military spending. In order to defeat the LTTE, the Rajapakse regime expanded the army to over 160,000 soldiers. By way of comparison, Britain's army is 100,000 strong.

Quite apart from serving to dominate the island's Tamil-speaking Northeast, the almost all-Sinhala army serves as indirect subsidy - by way of soldiers' lavish salaries - for large sections of the rural Sinhala population.

Now that Sri Lanka has declared the war over, the IMF expects the military to be cut back. The future, according to the IMF's neoliberal model, rests on private entrepreneurship, not state subsidies.

All of this is the exact reverse of 'Mahinda Chintana' ('Mahinda's thinking'), the ultra-Sinhala nationalist manifesto put forward by the Rajapske for his presidential campaign.

Rather than private entrepreneurship, the economic developmental model laid out in Mahinda Chintana turns on Sinhala-nationalism's veneration of the Sinhala peasant - of the 'sons of the soil' living by the temple, the tank and the paddy field.

President Rajapakse has been pictured ploughing furrows behind a pair of buffalo and visiting sites where the subsistence farming is encouraged - the vision

embodied in the leader (king) himself.

## Politics of Economics

Despite the supposed separation of economic and politics claimed by neoliberalism that the IMF's calculations work on, the ethno-political crisis gripping Sri Lanka cannot be ignored.

To this end, the IMF's contribution to ending Sri Lanka's repression of the Tamils appears as economic, rather than political, demands.

As IMF acting chairman Kato put it, the bank's loan seeks to "address the significant reconstruction needs of the conflict-affected areas, thereby laying the basis for future higher economic growth."

In other words, quite apart from the beginning economic reforms on which the IMF newly-extended support depends, Sri Lanka also has to end its internment of hundreds of thousands of Tamils in military-run, overcrowded and diseased camps.

To secure the loan Sri Lanka has had promise that its priority - once the ongoing foreign debt obligations are met - is to resettle 70-80 percent of the interned Tamils by the end of 2009.

Few observers, however, expect this to be honored. Indeed, with the ink not yet dry on the loan agreement, the government has already reduced resettlement to 60%.

In reality, 2009 will in all likelihood end with the majority of Tamils locked up in the squalid camps.

Moreover, Sri Lanka has sought to justify using future donor funds for its continued militarizing of the Northeast: as the letter of intent states, a "key element of the reconstruction plan include restoration of law and order..."

## Supervision

So what if Sri Lanka ignores the promises it has made to secure the IMF loan?

One analysis, by Reuters news agency, suggests "initially, the IMF is likely to be flexible, taking

*continued on p15*



## NEWS

# Sri Lanka deaths probe demanded

THE New York-based group Human Rights Watch on Tuesday pressed for an international probe into the killings in Sri Lanka of 17 local employees of a French charity three years ago.

HRW marked the anniversary of the execution-style murders of the Action Against Hunger (ACF) workers in Sri Lanka's northeastern town of Muttur with a scathing attack on the country's leaders.

The group accused the government of grossly mishandling the investigation into the deaths of local employees of the Action Against Hunger group.

"Since the ACF massacre, the (President Mahinda) Rajapakse government has put on an elaborate song and dance to bedazzle the international community into believing justice is being done," said HRW director James Ross.

"It's time the UN and concerned governments say 'the show is over' and put into place a serious international inquiry."

**A government inquiry - which found the Sri Lankan military innocent of the killings - has sharply criticized the organisations that supported witnesses during the inquiry into the murder of 17 aid workers in 2006**

"Instead of doing all it can to get justice for this horrific crime, the Sri Lankan government is further traumatising the victims' families by trying to shift the blame to others."

ACF itself has demanded an international investigation after a government probe failed to identify any suspects.

The call came last month after a Sri Lankan investigation cleared the military of killing the 17 employees of the charity, but ordered more compensation for the families of the victims.

HRW said that an international inquiry was needed into the murders. Sixteen of the victims were ethnic Tamils.

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 the Liberation Tigers were fighting.

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 commission blamed the killings on either the Tamil Tigers or auxiliary police known as home guards.

Its full report to President Mahinda Rajapaksa remains unpublished.

But HRW says that this report was based primarily on "limited witness testimony" from people who said that the armed forces were not in the vicinity at the time.

Excerpts from the commission's final report posted on the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defense website sharply criticize the role of local organizations in the ACF inquiry.

These organizations provided legal support for witnesses and made a number of written submissions on the case, HRW noted in a press release.

The commission stated that the "main function" of seven named nongovernmental organizations was to "attempt to discredit every possible institution and authority of this country before the Commission, and attempt to hold one party responsible for the gruesome crime.... They appeared not to ascertain the truth but to engage in a fault finding exercise of the security forces of Sri Lanka."

The commission said the groups adopted "a suspiciously narrow outlook" and engaged in a "preconceived plan or conspiracy to discredit the Commission ... for the consumption of some of the international organizations."

Human Rights Watch said that such accusations, made in the current context of continuing threats and physical assaults against media and civil society groups labeled "traitorous" or otherwise anti-government, place individuals and organizations at serious risk.

Colombo appointed 11 foreign diplomats and dignitaries to supervise the probe, but they pulled out in April 2008 saying the investigation did not meet minimum international standards.

"On the third anniversary of the murder of 17 aid workers, the Sri Lankan government is no closer to uncovering the truth or prosecuting those responsible," said Ross.

"Instead, the government is using the atrocity to threaten local rights groups, intimidate the victims' families, and score political points against the French government."



French charity Action Contra la Faim (ACF) has continued to call for justice for 17 of its aid workers killed in Sri Lanka. International monitors accused the government of responsibility, but the government not only denies responsibility, it is also pressuring the families of the victims to seek extraj compensation from the French government, accusing the charity of 'forcing' them to work in unsafe areas

## Sri Lanka pressures families of murdered aid workers

THE Sri Lankan government is putting pressure on the families of murdered aid workers to seek compensation from the charity that had employed the 17 individuals at the time of their murder.

The families were sent letters by the Sri Lankan government, which seek more compensation from Action Contra la Faim (ACF), reported the BBC.

The authorities deny the letters exist, but the BBC reports that it has seen copies of them.

The relatives have told the BBC that they do not want to press for more compensation from the French charity.

There was an outcry when the 17 aid workers were killed in 2006. The aid staff - all but one of them ethnic Tamils - were working on tsunami relief projects in the north-eastern town of Muttur when they were killed on 4 August 2006.

Critics say Sri Lanka has a long history of failing to prosecute rights abuses.

Nordic monitors overseeing a truce in the country's civil war at the time blamed security forces, who denied the charge.

Earlier this month, Sri Lanka's top human rights panel cleared the army, pinning the killings on Tamil Tiger (LTTE) or Muslim home guards.

The commission of inquiry also said compensation already paid to victims' families of about

400,000 Sri Lanka rupees (about \$3,480) was "totally inadequate".

A number of relatives of the murdered aid workers say they do not want to sign the government's letters, while others have refused to comment due to what their lawyers described as fear of intimidation, the BBC reported.

"Money will not help us. We cannot get our relatives back anyway," one family member of the victims told the BBC.

The BBC claimed to have seen three letters seeking more compensation from ACF, reporting that the letters were handed to the victims' families on 19 July at a government administration office in the eastern town of Trincomalee. They were due to be signed and handed back by Saturday 25 July.

One letter was addressed to the French ambassador in Sri Lanka, a second to the country's attorney general.

"We the heirs of the deceased are aware of the interest France and the French government has taken in human rights aspects especially in the... commission of inquiry into the killing in Muttur of 17 aid workers," the letter addressed to the French ambassador said.

"Therefore we trust that the French government will take necessary steps to oversee the payment of due compensation to the kinsmen / women of the

deceased."

A third letter seen by the BBC commended President Rajapaksa for investigating the killings.

"We are extremely grateful to Your Excellency for appointing a commission of inquiry and ensuring that justice prevailed," the letter said.

"We agree with the findings of the commission that the deaths were caused by the LTTE and the compensation as determined must be paid by ACF," it said.

A senior government official denied any knowledge of such letters being issued. Rajiva Wijesinghe, secretary to the ministry of human rights and disaster management, told BBC Sinhala that ACF had done a "very bad thing" by "forcing" its staff to work close to the battlefield.

"Some workers were even denied leave by ACF. They were forced to go towards the battlefield while many other aid workers were leaving the area," he said.

He added that the compensation paid by ACF "for their own wrongdoing" was inadequate.

There was no immediate response from the charity, which has accused Sri Lanka's government of lacking the will to find those responsible for murdering its staff. It is not clear whether any of the families has returned the signed documents to the authorities.



## NEWS

# More military appointments, promotions

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse has appointed more military top brass to a number of top and strategic positions in the government and promoted more officers including three Brigadiers to the rank of Major Generals and 46 Colonels as Brigadiers.

As part of Government's move to offer senior posts to military officials, Major General Asoka Thoradeniya of the Military Police has been appointed as Chairman of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, Major General A R A T Soysa has been appointed managing director of the Ceylon Petroleum Storage Terminals, Artillery General, V R Silva, has been appointed Commissioner General of Prisons and Brig Udaya Perera, former Director or Army Operations, has been made Deputy High Commissioner in Malaysia.

These latest appointments follows, the appointment of former navy chief, Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, as Secretary of the Highways Ministry, Major General G A Chandrasiri, as Governor of the Northern Province and Major General Jagath Dias as Deputy High Commissioner to Germany.

The appointment of military men to top civil posts shows Rajapakse's growing dependency on the military to run the country according to analysts.

In addition to military men being appointed top civil posts, there have also been numerous promotions since the end of war.

Former General Officer of Command (GOC) of the 55 Division, Brigadier Prasanna Silva, present 53 Division GOC, Brigadier Chagi Gallage and Director Operations of Army Head Quarters, Brigadier Shavendra Silva are the latest officers to be promoted as Major Generals, sources in Colombo said.

These officers had served in Vanni war front during the military operations against the Liberation Tigers.

45 year old Brigadier Shavendra Silva was the youngest military officer to be promoted to the rank of Major General. Meanwhile, 46 Colonels who served during the war at the front have been promoted to the rank of Brigadier.

A few weeks ago major changes took place in the SLA with the appointment of the new Army Commander.

Jaffna Commander Major General Mendaka Samarasinghe took over as Chief of Staff Army Headquarters. Major General Jammika Liyanage took over as Commandant of SLA Volunteer Force while Major General Aruna Jayatilake assumed duties as Adjutant General Army Headquarters. Major General Rajitha Silva took over as Commander Jaffna.

## Deserters pardoned during Buddhist rite

SRI LANKA'S President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Mahinda Rajapaksa, on the occasion of Esala Perahera, the Sri Lankan Buddhist festival that commemorates the scared tooth of Buddha, has granted an special amnesty for 1,933 Sri Lanka Army (SLA) deserters including SLA officers released from several prisons, Sri Lankan police authorities said on Tuesday, July 28.

270 SLA soldiers and 14 officers were released from Welikada. 3 officers and 30 soldiers from Boosa and 27 soldiers from Galle were released under the Perahera amnesty granted to them.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan military offered another amnesty to the tens of thousands deserters.

Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara

said troops who were absent without leave could report back to their units and be officially discharged without penalty.

"They must bring all their documents and return whatever is due to the army and then they will be granted an honourable discharge," Nanayakkara told AFP.

In 2001, the army had about 51,000 deserters on its books. According to a Sri Lankan Ministry of Justice and Law Reforms official, there are over 65,000 deserters at large.

The latest amnesty offers comes 2 months after government forces ended the island's bloody civil war. Despite the end of the fighting, the military wants to recruit new troops to fill vacancies and to be deployed in areas of the north and east captured from the Tamil Tigers.

# 'Eventual resettlement no excuse for holding displaced'

*continued from p2*

camps are no justification for keeping them there," said Adams.

"Every day in the camp is another day that the government is violating their rights."

The situation of camp residents is aggravated by inadequate living conditions in the camps. Many are overcrowded, some holding twice the number recommended by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

According to the UN, there is a shortage of latrines and access to water is inconsistent, causing hygiene problems.

In June alone, health officials recorded more than 8,000 cases of diarrhea, as well as hundreds of cases of hepatitis, dysentery, and chickenpox.

Numerous reports indicate that camp residents are getting increasingly frustrated with the inadequate food, overcrowding,

and inability to visit relatives in adjacent camps or elsewhere.

In late June, they held at least two protests in the camps, which were dispersed by the security forces.

The government has effectively sealed off the detention camps from outside scrutiny.

Human rights organizations, journalists, and other independent observers are not allowed inside, and humanitarian organizations with access have been forced to sign a statement that they will not disclose information about the conditions in the camps without government permission.

On several occasions, the government expelled foreign journalists and aid workers who had collected and publicized information about camp conditions, or did not renew their visas.

On July 24, the executive board of the International Mone-

tary Fund approved a US\$2.6 billion loan to Sri Lanka, granting the government an "exceptional level of access to Fund resources." Several countries - including the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Argentina - abstained from the vote, reflecting concern about human rights violations during the conflict and continued abuses, including mistreatment of internally displaced persons. Installments of the loan will have to be approved every three months.

"The world recognizes that Sri Lanka needs money to rebuild the country," said Adams.

"But the government's treatment of its Tamil population in recent months has drained much of the sympathy for the challenges it faces. The government needs to change course or expect greater international scrutiny in the future."

## More time IMF takes charge

*continued from p2*

city and Energy Aluthananda Gamage separately told media in Jaffna on July 25 that it will not be possible to resettle Vanni IDPs in Kilinochchi within 180 days.

Mr. Gamage, who was in Jaffna to campaign in the forthcoming polls, also said that the opening of the A9 route to public will be considered only after decisions are made in a Defence Ministry conference on the issue.

Mr. Gamage said that transport service via A9 route will commence only if the Defence Ministry approves it in a conference that will be held shortly and that it is not possible to immediately lift or relax the restrictions imposed by the Defence Ministry in Jaffna peninsula and that it would only take place gradually.

The system of a 'pass' from the Defence Ministry to travel between Jaffna and Colombo will not be done away under any circumstances and people travelling to Colombo should continue to register their names with the police in the respective places they stay in Colombo, he said.

*continued from p13*

into consideration Sri Lanka's post-war situation. However, continued failures to meet conditions will compel the lender to stop disbursement of the loans."

The IMF discontinued a previous loan programme due to Sri Lanka's failure in adhering to its conditions in 2001, the agency pointed out.

That loan had been extended to President Chandrika Kumaratunga's regime, which - despite its rhetoric 'of the left' - pursued the neoliberal agenda, some analysts say, more successfully than the pro-market opposition.

The question, then, is how firm the IMF will be with the Rajapakse regime, especially on resettling the incarcerated Tamils as a condition for future disbursements. As Human Rights Watch has protested, given Sri Lanka's track record, the IMF loan is "a reward for bad behavior, not an incentive to improve."

Defending its loan against criticism, the IMF said this week it was in regular contact with

humanitarian groups and diplomats over human rights worries.

Certainly, the terms of the loan - with its quarterly reviews and continuous IMF oversight - provide for powerful international leverage on the now beholden Sri Lankan state.

The point is underlined by the government's agreement that if the global economy worsens and hurts Sri Lanka's exports, remittances and capital flows, it will consult the IMF on the appropriate policy response.

Moreover, the saga of Sri Lanka's loan from the IMF has shown that politics and economics are intertwined. Economic developmental ideology itself - neoliberalism and Mahinda Chintana - is deeply political.

It has also shown that geopolitical analysis based on competing spheres of influence has its limits in a globalised 21st century.

No state, no matter how economically well off, can step in as the lender of last resort for another. That remains the sole preserve of the IMF - with its bitter medicine.

## Sri Lanka blocks Fiji suspension

SRI LANKA has claimed it played a key role in preventing the suspension of Fiji from the Commonwealth forum at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), held in London, to discuss the recent political developments in Fiji.

Sri Lanka opposed the conten-

tion that Fiji should be expelled from Commonwealth of Nations and prevailed upon the CMAG with some other nations to reach a consensus decision to give the country enough time to revert back to a fully fledged democracy at a meeting in London, according to a Sri Lankan news website.

"Sri Lanka took a position

expressing the declared policy of President Mahinda Rajapaksa that no sanctions or expulsions should be imposed on any nation as such conditions would create immense difficulties to the innocent people", said Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama told a reporter after the CMAG meeting.



# SRI KARPAHA VINAYAGAR TEMPLE

## திருவருள்மிகு கற்பக விநாயகர் ஆலயம்

8ம் ஆண்டு மகோற்சவ விஞ்ஞாபனம்

21-08-2009 முதல் 02-09-2009 வரை வேண்டுமோர்க்கு வேண்டும் வரம் தரும் ஸ்ரீ கற்பக விநாயகப்பெருமான் ஆலயத்தில் நிகழும் மங்களகரமான விரோதி வருட மகோற்சவம் 21-08-2009 முதல் 02-09-2009 வரை நடைபெறத் திருவருள் கூடியுள்ளது.

வழிபாட்டு நிகழ்ச்சி நிரல்

20-08-09 விபாழன் விநாயக வழிபாடு அனுக்கனா, கணபதி ஹோமம், கிராமசாந்தி பீரவோச பல், வாஸ்து சாந்தி, மிருத்சங்கிரஹணம், அங்குரார்ப்பணம்

21-08-09 வெள்ளி கொடியேற்றம்

காலை 7.00 மணி அபிசேகம் ஆரம்பம்

காலை 8.00 மணி காலைச்சந்தப்பூசை

காலை 9.00 மணி பேரீதாடனம்

காலை 9.30 மணி வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை, கொடியேற்றக்கிரிவைகள்

காலை 11.00 மணி கொடியேற்றம்

22-08-2009 சனிக்கிழமை முதல் 29-08-2009 சனிக்கிழமை வரை

காலை 8.30 மணி பூசை

காலை 9.00 மணி அபிசேகம் ஆரம்பம்

காலை 11.00 மணி தம்பப் பூசை

காலை 11.30 மணி வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை

மாலை 5.30 மணி சாயுட்சைப் பூசை

மாலை 6.30 மணி தம்பப் பூசை

கிரவு 7.30 மணி வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை

கிரவு 8.30 மணி கவாரி வீதியுலா

30-08-09 ஞாயிறு தேர்த்திருவிழா

காலை 6.30 மணி அபிசேகம்

காலை 7.30 மணி காலைப்பூசை

காலை 8.00 மணி தம்பப் பூசை

காலை 8.30 மணி வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை

காலை 10.30 மணி கவாரி தேரில் எழுந்தருளல்

பிற்பகல் 1.00 பச்சை சாத்துதல்

பிற்பகல் 1.00 பிராயச்சித்த அபிசேகம்

31-08-09 திங்கள் தீர்த்தோற்சவம்

காலை 7.00 மணி அபிசேகம்

காலை 9.00 மணி பேரீதாடனம்

காலை 10.00 மணி வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை

காலை 11.00 மணி தீர்த்தோற்சவம்

மாலை 6.00 மணி வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை

மாலை 8.00 மணி கொடியேற்றக்கம்

01-09-09 செவ்வாய் பூங்காவனம்

காலை 10.00 மணி 108 சங்காபிசேகம்

மாலை 5.00 மணி பீரோச வழிபாடு

கிரவு 8.00 திருக்கல்யாணம்

02-09-09 புதன் மாலை 7.00 மணி வைரவர் மடை

தினமும் பகலும் கிரவு விசேட மங்கள வாத்திய இசைநிகழ்ச்சி நடைபெறும்



குறிப்பு 01 23-08-09 ஞாயிறு ஆவணிச்சுரத்தி பகல் பஞ்சமுக விநாயகருக்கு சங்காபிசேகம், காலை 8.00 மணிக்கு பாற்குட அபிசேகம், கிரவு பஞ்சமுக அர்ச்சனை

குறிப்பு 02 04-09-09 வெள்ளி கும்பாபிசேகத்தின் விழா காலை 8.00 மணிக்கு 1008 சங்காபிசேகம், காலை 11.30 முலஸ்தான பூசை 12 மணிக்கு வசந்த மண்டபப்பூசை தொடர்ந்து பிள்ளையார், சிவன், முரகன் திருவித்யுலா நடைபெறும்.

21-08-09 வெள்ளி கொடியேற்றம் முசிகவாகனக் காட்சி

22-08-09 சனி 2ம் திருவிழா தூர்வா கணபதி உற்சவம்

23-08-09 ஞாயிறு 3ம் திருவிழா சக்தி கணபதி உற்சவம்

24-08-09 திங்கள் 4ம் திருவிழா புலப் கணபதி உற்சவம் வேதபாராயணத்திருவிழா

25-08-09 செவ்வாய் 5ம் திருவிழா பக்தி முக்தி பாவனோற்சவம் திருமுறைப்பாராயணம்

26-08-09 புதன் 6ம் திருவிழா வசந்தோற்சவம் வீணை, மிருதங்கம், வயலின், புல்லாங்குழல்

27-08-09 விபாழன் 7ம் திருவிழா மாம்பழத் திருவிழா

28-08-09 வெள்ளி 8ம் திருவிழா வேட்டைத் திருவிழா

29-08-09 சனி 9ம் திருவிழா சப்பறத் திருவிழா

30-08-09 ஞாயிறு 10ம் திருவிழா தேர்த்திருவிழா

31-08-09 திங்கள் 11ம் திருவிழா தீர்த்தத் திருவிழா

01-09-09 செவ்வாய் 12ம் திருவிழா பூங்காவனம்

02-09-09 புதன் வைரவர் மடை

திருவிழாக்காலங்களில் அடியார்கள் பால், தயிர், பூக்கள், மற்றும் பூசைப்பொருட்கள் கொண்டு வந்து திருவிழாவில் கலந்து ஸ்ரீ கற்பக விநாயகப்பெருமானின் பேரருளைப் பெற்றும்புமாறு அழைக்கிறோம்.

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