

How will the US handle
Lanka peace talks
after Iraq win? *Page 4*

NORTHEASTERN HERALD

Imagining Medieval
Sri Lankan history

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Black market galore: a pump attendant at a petrol station filling up for customers who face an artificially created shortage of fuel due to unscrupulous businessmen. (See story on page two)

Pic. by Buddhika Weerasinghe

SLA refortifies Jaffna Fort

By S. Somitharan

In a move of profound military-strategic significance, the Sri Lanka army has decided to refortify the Jaffna fort destroyed in fighting with the LTTE, acquire land including that on which the Jaffna Municipal Council (JMC) once stood and other areas along the peninsula's coast ensuring military fortifications stretch almost uninterruptedly from Jaffna town down to Nunavil, informed sources told the *Northeastern Herald*.

This will mean military camps that can be supplied by sea will ring the peninsula.

Reconstruction of the Jaffna fort, which has already begun will also allow the military easy access to Mandatheevu from which it had to retreat in 1993 and the other islands. It will be also relatively a short distance from here to the Karainagar navy base in the northwest of the peninsula, the sources said.

The moves come as part of a plan to relocate the brigade headquarters now housed at Subash and Gnanam's hotels and a number of private buildings around them in downtown Jaffna.

The decision was made by the cabinet last week to acquire properties and take other necessary steps to implement the decision. The ministry of defence had intimated to the governor of the Northeast Province, Major General Asoka Jayawardane (rtd.), to inform the necessary individuals and organisations whose properties would be needed for the construction of new camps.

One of the acquisitions in Jaffna town was the site on which the JMC building, now destroyed by fighting, had once stood. Jayewardene had informed the Northeast Provincial Ministry of Local Government to convey to the JMC that its land was to be acquired by the government. The governor's office and the Provincial Ministry of Local Government

have written to the JMC on the matter.

Sources said the JMC was to reply stating it was unable to part with the land because it hoped to start reconstruction work on the building shortly.

Despite permission not being given to acquire the land, the military has already demarcated the area and preliminary work has begun by filling the land. Meanwhile, the Jaffna District Fishermen Co-operatives Federation undertaking repairs of the ice factory near Gurunagar that has long lain in disuse has been asked by the army to suspend the work forthwith.

Since the coastline is a restricted zone coming under the control of the military the areas being acquired are those adjacent to the sea. Therefore, the JMC, the municipal library that was the eye of a political storm recently and the Jaffna rest house are also to be taken over. But the Jaffna courts will not be acquired since the government has secured for-

eign aid for its rehabilitation. "But it will nestle between army camps that will be a great hindrance for the public to come and go freely," said the source.

However, Subramaniyam Park, Duraiappah Stadium and Vembadi Girl's High School and Central College, Jaffna, will not be within the zone to be carved out for the military as earlier believed, but will lie unhealthily close to it.

Sources said the ring around the north western, western and southern parts of the peninsula was almost complete except for the gap in Jaffna town and the government was trying to 'rectify' this by the present moves. South of Jaffna town the army has large camps in Ariyalai and Columbuturai. If the government's moves to relocate its camps along the coast materialises, they would link up with Ariyalai and Columbuturai in the south, said sources. Ariyalai is one of the bigger camps in Jaffna, which was recently strengthened by troops pulled out

from other parts of the north, sources said.

South of Ariyalai are Thanakalappu, Maravanpulo and finally Nunavil, all which are dotted by military fortifications. Some of them had been established after the Ceasefire Agreement was signed in February 2002.

"The government promised it would withdraw from the Subash Hotel and Gnanam's Hotel before the end of March. It appears the army is using the withdrawal to relocate itself in a strategically more important place whereby it can advance onto the centre of the peninsula from different points. The civilian population will be boxed in," said an analyst.

An opinion expressed stated that once it had established and strengthened itself thus the army might remove parts of the high security zone now in existence around Palaly and allow civilian resettlement the LTTE and the Tamils are demanding.

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CTTU to picket in support of volunteer teachers

The Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union (CTTU) Tuesday announced that its members would picket the offices of North East Provincial Department of Education and the Provincial Ministry of Education in Trincomalee from 1 April if the authorities concerned failed to grant permanent appointments to one thousand Tamil medium volunteer teachers according to the Cabinet approval by the then Peoples Alliance government and the present United National Front government on or before 31 March, sources said.

The CTTU has invited all Tamil National Alliance parliamentarians to participate in the picketing campaign, its general secretary T. Mahasivam said. Several TNA parliamentarians

have expressed their willingness to participate in the sit-in-protest in support of volunteer teachers, CTTU sources said.

The CTTU made this announcement Tuesday when the sit-in-protest by several hundred northeast Tamil medium volunteer teachers in front of the provincial ministry of education office entered 23rd day Tuesday, sources said.

In the meantime, TNA Jaffna district parliamentarian Mavai Senathirajah Tuesday wrote to the Prime Minister seeking his immediate intervention to solve the problem of one thousand Tamil medium volunteer teachers, sources said.

"We seek your intervention to restore the deteriorated educational structure of the northeast during the past two decades owing to the war situation," said

Contd. on page 3

Jaffna fuel prices up as black market thrives

By S. Somitharan

The price of petrol jumped to between rupees 75-90 per litre in Jaffna as the black market created an artificial scarcity by buying up stocks of fuel and blaming the government for reducing supplies of petroleum, diesel and kerosene to Jaffna due to the war in the Gulf, sources told the *Northeastern Herald*.

This is despite the government increasing fuel supplies by 10-15 percent to Jaffna recently, to prevent panic buying that could be triggered off by rumours or an actual breakdown of oil imports from the Gulf.

While petrol prices have increased from Rs.61.50 to between rupees 75-90, kerosene that is sold at Rs.25 has shot up to between rupees 30-40, while diesel that is Rs.33 a litre is Rs.50. The black market prices of petrol and diesel varied depending on the place and time, while the price of diesel was fixed.

Jaffna residents said the root cause for their dilemma was panic buying by individuals who believed that there would be an inevitable price increase because the war in Iraq had started. The traders had merely capitalised on these emotions.

Sources said the modus oper-

andi was for unscrupulous traders to buy up stocks of petrol, diesel and kerosene from the petrol sheds when stocks arrived. They followed this by circulating rumours that a scarcity of fuel had arisen that created panic buying, at which point they released the stocks they had hoarded at higher prices.

"Trishaw and lorry drivers are used to purchase petrol from petrol stations. When they finish delivering one round they go back to the petrol station for more. In the event the attendant asks questions, they agree to pay the petrol stations around Rs.2.00 per litre more for petrol. But when the stuff is sold in the black market, the sellers keep a margin of rupees 15 to 30 per litre," sources said.

The system operates through the network of informal points that retail petrol, diesel and kerosene, known as 'mini petrol sheds' in local parlance that have been in existence in Jaffna since 1990. They came up due to the scarcity of fuel supplied by the CPC during the years there was an embargo on fuel, which had to be supplemented by stocks that were smuggled into Jaffna. The smuggled petrol, diesel and kerosene were retailed through these 'mini petrol sheds.'

Sources said that the CPC is not in a position to stop this uncon-

scionable profiteering by the black-market operations. They said it was a job of the ministry of consumer affairs and trade, who had to implement it through their flying squads.

Sources said that the 'mini petrol sheds' used to operate and still operate with the full knowledge of the LTTE. "They could put a stop to this if they so desire; the question is whether they want to," said sources.

Residents said though the mini petrol sheds were a menace they had advantages because they were open after 6.00 p.m. and there were no long queues.

The scarcity of fuel has not only affected vehicle owners and housewives, but also has had an impact on farmers who need it to work their tractors and fishermen who need it for their boats.

An analyst attributed this phenomenon to the experience of a public inured to the uncertainties of war. They genuinely felt that since the war had begun in the Middle East there would be shortages and were trying to avert such disaster. "Do not forget that during the time of the economic embargo, when the fuel ships from Colombo were delayed by a day, prices used to shoot up. It is the replay of the same thing," he said.

PM urged to stop new SLA camp in Jaffna

An urgent appeal has been made to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, Tuesday on behalf of the people of Jaffna asking that the Sri Lanka army should be disallowed to relocate its Jaffna brigade headquarters to the municipal council premises close to the Jaffna fort, sources said.

The Jaffna brigade headquarters of the army is currently located at

the Gnanams hotel, the Subash hotel and about 20 civilian houses in the heart of Jaffna town.

Representatives of several public welfare organizations in Jaffna, Tuesday, met at the office of the Multi Purpose Co-operative Society under the chairmanship of C. V. K. Sivagnanam and discussed the move by the army to relocate its brigade headquarters to the new location.

The representatives decided at the meeting that the army should not be allowed to relocate its present brigade headquarters to another site in the Jaffna town and to request the prime minister to stop this move. They also decided to request all Tamil parliamentarians to act fast in this regard, sources said.

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Farmers' protest brings Mannar to standstill

More than 1500 farmers in Mannar demanding fair prices for their rice harvest and the removal of Sri Lankan armed forces units which continue to occupy fields and buildings in the region blockaded the District Secretariat Wednesday and brought all government administration in the Northwestern island town to a standstill.

"More than 14 years of extensive Sri Lanka army restrictions and ban on cultivation drove thousands of farmers in Mannar to destitution. They were hence pinning their future on this season's harvest. But Colombo hit us below the belt by refusing the guarantee price facility which is available to farmers in other districts", a spokesman for the Federation of Mannar Farmers' Associations told *Tamilnet*.

The protest began around 7 p.m. Wednesday. Hundreds of

farmers from many parts of the Mannar district, including areas controlled by the Liberation Tigers on the mainland, gathered in front of the district secretariat in Mannar town, blocking government officials from entering the compound.

Rice farmers in Mannar were compelled to sell their produce at prices lower than 650 rupees a bag during the war due to stringent SLA restrictions on transport to and from the district.

The SLA banned farmers from cultivating vast tracts of fertile rice fields in Mannar since 1987. Severe restrictions were imposed on the use of tractors and the supply of fertilisers and fuel.

"The few farmers who managed to cultivate a few acres amid the restrictions was fleeced by unscrupulous traders. They fixed the prices which were much lower than the going rate for rice in other parts of the island", a

spokesman for the Federation said.

Following the ceasefire which saw the removal of several restrictions late last year, Mannar farmers urged Colombo to buy their produce through the state owned Corporative Wholesale Establishment (CWE) at the guarantee price of 13.50 rupees as in other parts of the island to stabilise the local market for rice.

Farmers in Mannar now sell rice to private traders for 8-10 rupees a kilo. The Federation says that these prices will ruin many of them. The majority of rice farmers in the district are compelled to sell their produce at low prices because few have facilities to store the paddy in their farms or homesteads. Many local rice storage facilities were destroyed in SLA operations.

Early last month the Federation and the TNA MP for Vanni,

Selvam Adaikalanathan, took up the matter with Sri Lanka's Minister for Trade and Commerce, Ravi Karunanayaka. The Minister promised them that the CWE would begin buying rice from Mannar farmers at the guarantee price.

But CWE officials who visited the district to study the matter had reported that it was not possible to buy rice at the guarantee price as the treasury was not willing to release the money for the purpose.

The GA for Mannar met the protesting farmers and the TNA MPs around noon and promised that the CWE would be opened for buying rice at the guarantee price in the district from April 1. He also promised them that local Multi Purpose Co-operative Societies will buy 1400 kilos of rice from each farmer at the guarantee price from tomorrow.

Farmers, however, said they

would continue their agitation from April 2 if no action is taken by the GA to redress their woe.

The protestors handed over a memorandum to the GA in the afternoon spelling out their four demands that Colombo should introduce in Mannar the guarantee purchase price for rice; that the Sri Lankan armed forces should vacate paddy fields they continue occupy; they should vacate paddy storage facilities and that Colombo should subsidise fertilisers.

The protest was organised by the Federation of Mannar Farmers' Associations, the Tamil National Alliance MPs for Vanni, Selvam Adaikalanathan, Raja Kuhaneswaran and Sivasakthi Anandan and Rev. Ruben Ariyanayagam, the Superintendent of the Methodist Church's Jeevothayam Farm in Murunkan.

(TamilNet)

Moolai hospital rises from ashes, looks for funds

By a Staff Correspondent

Moolai co-operative hospital, located on the Jaffna-Karainagar road, Valigamam was the first co-operative hospital to be established in Sri Lanka and provided the stimulus for similar institutions to be established in other parts of Sri Lanka. However, it was very badly affected by the ethnic war over the years.

Way back in 1935, driven by lack of medical facilities, a handful of men in their humble way opened a co-operative dispensary to provide medical facilities at minimum cost. This institution was registered under the Co-operative Ordinance on 4 April 1936 (registration No. 1.82). It made rapid progress and blossomed into a full-fledged hospital with 105 beds, a well equipped operation theatre, a labour room with excellent facilities for childbirth and a fine laboratory.

There were on the staff U.K. qualified resident doctors and a well-trained nursing staff. The hospital provided indoor and outdoor services 24 hours of the day. The services were so excellent that patients from distant places came to Moolai co-operative hospital for treatment.

The charges levied from the patients were admitted to be the lowest in Jaffna peninsula. This enabled poor patients to avail the medical facilities at this hospital.

The past glory of this hospital can be best seen from the impres-

The Moolai Co-operative Hospital despite its service to Jaffna and valiant efforts at rehabilitation faces enormous problems in financing the equipment and instruments it needs. It seeks public contributions in this regard

sions recorded in the visitors' book. This was what D. S. Senanayake, minister of agriculture and co-operative undertakings in the State Council said on 19 February 1939, "I visited the Hospital today. It is a remarkable institution and is unique in that it is the first of its kind in the Island. I am greatly impressed particularly in view of the example it sets to the possibilities of social improvement by co-operative effort. I wish it great success in the future."

Prior to 1990, Moolai co-operative hospital had all the facilities for childbirth. A labour room with excellent facilities and an operating theatre fully equipped to undertake surgery were available. A separate maternity ward block with all facilities was also available. Expectant mothers from Karainagar and Valigamam West came to Moolai hospital for childbirth. Even from other parts of Jaffna peninsula, expectant mothers came to this hospital because of the excellent facilities that were available.

In 1995, Moolai co-operative hospital attracted the attention of private medical practitioners who were looking for a suitable institution to establish a private medical college to teach medicine and to undertake medical research. Though the medical college started with much enthusiasm, the progress was hampered and eventually the medical college ceased to function.

The ethnic war that prevailed in the peninsula affected the hospital very badly. Work in the hospital was affected and there was a gradual decline. The deteriorating security situation came to a nadir in 1995 when people from Valigamam west area evacuated en masse. At that stage, the hospital was abandoned. In 1996 when the displaced people returned to their homes, the hospital was reoccupied. The hospital committee then found the buildings damaged and almost all of the hospital's equipment missing.

The British High Commission provided grants to assist the hos-

pital to rebuild. With British aid, most important buildings - the operating theatre, labour room, laboratory, administration block housing the dispensary and clinics, a few wards and doctor's quarters - were repaired. The British High Commission also donated medical and laboratory equipment including a Hitachi Ultra Sound Scanner.

The hospital's visitor's book records a more contemporary view. Said Linda Duffield, British High Commissioner in Sri Lanka on 22 March 2000, "I was very impressed by the facilities at the Moolai co-operative hospital and am pleased that the British Government has been able to provide some assistance with the development of the hospital."

At present, outdoor patients are treated daily between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. A registered medical officer (RMO) is serving in the hospital. During weekends, consultant doctors including Dr. G. Bavani, obstetrician and gynaecologist from the Teaching Hospital, Jaffna conducts clinics at this hospital. These clinics are popular as this enables the patients in the neighbouring villages to avail themselves of the services of specialist doctors close to their homes.

Following the opening of the land route (A9) from Jaffna peninsula to Vanni, the families who fled to Vanni in 1995 and before have returned to their homes in the peninsula. Even families who went to Colombo have returned.

The people in Karainagar and Valigamam West are repeatedly urging the management of Moolai co-operative hospital to reactivate the maternity wards to provide facilities for childbirth as before. Expectant mothers now have to go all the way to Jaffna Teaching Hospital, which is 16 km from Moolai and 20 km from Karainagar. Reactivation of maternity ward is therefore most urgent.

The hospital sought the assistance of Dr. V. Karunakaran who served as obstetrician and gynaecologist in Moolai hospital from 1987 to 1992 in regard to the details of making purchases of the required equipment.

Steps are being taken to recruit an obstetrician and gynaecologist and an anesthetist to be resident in the hospital.

The Moolai Co-operative Hospital despite its service to Jaffna and valiant efforts at rehabilitation faces enormous problems in financing the equipment and instruments it needs. It seeks public contributions in this regard.

If the equipment could be purchased and installed it will be a great boon to the people of Karainagar and Valigamam West. Moolai co-operative hospital had rendered yeoman service to the people in particular to the poor and had earned the goodwill of all sections of the society; it will indeed be a pity if it was not resurrected.

Pictures of POWs rally Iraqis

On the streets of Baghdad, the pictures of dead and captured US soldiers - and the reports of fierce resistance to the US-led attack - have left Iraqis standing tall and proud.

"I was never so proud to be Iraqi," said a taxi driver on Baghdad's central Saadoun street, which was busy on Monday despite another night of intensive bombings in the US-led war to oust Saddam Hussein.

"Our army is scoring success after success against the world's sole superpower with its mighty military coalition," Abu Jassem said.

Like virtually all Iraqis, he gathered on Sunday with his family to watch footage of charred and bloodied bodies which Iraq said were US soldiers killed in battle.

State television also aired images and interviews of five obviously frightened American soldiers, two of them wounded and one a woman.

The United States and Britain

criticised Iraq for broadcasting the pictures, which were shown worldwide on Qatar's Al-Jazeera television, but there was nothing of the sort heard here.

"The pictures are obviously gruesome, but not as much as pictures of Iraqi children victim of the depleted uranium used by the American troops in the 1991 Gulf War or the victims of 13 years of sanctions," said dentist Ahmad Shalabi.

On a sidewalk nearby, a group of men sat on small wooden chairs, lazily smoking waterpipes.

"We are proud to have humbled the US pride in front of the whole world," said Kazem Mohamad, who said he fought in both the 1980-1988 war with Iran and the 1991 Gulf War led by US President George W Bush's father.

"Did you see the American soldiers?" his neighbour asked the others.

"I thought they looked like Rambo, like tough fighters, but all we saw are a bunch of nice-looking urban people," said Mohsen

Ahmad, who owns an exchange shop in the centre.

Ahmad opened his hands in wonder, at a loss over the interview with one of the five US soldiers, who looked bewildered.

"When the soldier was asked why he was in Iraq, he did not know what to respond. He said he was just obeying orders," Ahmad said.

"How can soldiers fight without a cause? They are on foreign land, they don't even know what Iraq is like. But we will teach them in no time, because our soldiers are fighting with everything they have: their arms and souls."

Ali Hussein, a grocer from the holy city of Karbala, said: "It does not matter where you stand in Iraqi politics, it is clear that all Iraqis stand against foreign invaders and are extremely happy to see the images of humiliated American invaders."

"Even today, the television aired pictures of an American helicopter that was shot down in Karbala by tribesmen who have rallied to

help the regular army," he said.

"Airing these pictures will also make the American people aware that their leadership is lying to them. No foreign country should be allowed to invade another," he said.

One souvenir shop owner was even more exuberant.

"The image of Iraq in the world is children dying in hospitals. I wish I could change these postcards of our country's touristic

wealth into our new treasure: the captured enemy soldiers."

Abu Iman, an elderly man wearing a red and white Arab checkered headress, noted that several of the captured soldiers came from the US state of Texas.

"This is the state of US President George W Bush. Our only hope is to capture all people from Texas who attack us, including Bush and his father," he said. (SA)

CTTU...

Senathirajah in his letter to the PM. "A severe dearth of teachers is prevailing in the northeast and more than ten thousand unfilled vacancies have accumulated during the last two decades, while at the same time nearly the same number of teachers is in excess in the south. The dilapidated state of the educational structure in the northeast need not be overemphasized. Hence, I seek your immediate intervention to restore

this deteriorated conditions of the education structure in the northeast," he said.

He appealed to the PM to take immediate steps to order the authorities concerned to effect the appointments of the volunteer teachers as the first priority, as it had received the cabinet approval, and follow it by rectifying all other shortcomings to bring the education structure of the northeast to its once prestigious standard.

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SLA camp, litmus test of govt.'s sincerity

Sri Lanka army's move to shift the Jaffna brigade headquarters from its present location at the Gnanam and Subash hotels and private buildings near the teaching hospital, to the Jaffna Municipal Council (JMC) site, is a needlessly provocative act coming as it does at a time when both sides to the conflict, the government and the LTTE, have declared peace talks are progressing satisfactorily.

The announcement sometime ago of the army preparing to move out of Subash was welcomed by the Tamil public as a gesture of goodwill, which displayed that the government's commitment to establishing normalcy in the northeast was not confined to the negotiating table, but was demonstrated in real life as well. However, the present move is testimony that the government disregards public opinion in Jaffna, while it pays lip service to winning the hearts and minds of the Tamils to build a united Sri Lanka.

The relocation will place the new brigade headquarters near a number of public buildings integrally connected with the day-to-day lives of the Jaffna people. Though the relocation is unacceptable by any standards, it becomes preposterous when the new site will be located near two important schools - Vembadi Girls' High School and Central College, Jaffna.

The disruptive influence the army has had on the Tamil people of the northeast needs no reiteration. But the suffering and trauma it has meted out to schoolchildren has to be mentioned. Two examples will do: Krishanthi Kumaraswamy, the Chundikuli Girls' School student, was raped and killed while returning from school; similarly, the army remains at Hartley College and Methodist Girls' School in Pt. Pedro endangering the lives of the students of those schools day in and day out.

The relocation is also a testimony that the government is willing to bend over backwards to accommodate the wishes of the army. If the government is willing to face public animosity due to the relocation of the headquarters, it shows to what lengths the UNF will go to please the army.

Further, the process of acquiring the JMC premises (the building has been destroyed in the fighting) will require a legal procedure. On earlier occasions when such acquisitions were made, they were done through emergency regulations and after the state of emergency were allowed to lapse, through the PTA. This is also a good indication as to why the government is unwilling to repeal the PTA.

The government's reaction to the plea of the Jaffna residents to stop the relocation of the brigade headquarters will be a telling symbol of its sincerity. On the last occasion when an important decision came up regarding army-public relations, which was on allowing the resettlement of IDPs in the high security zone, the UNF government quietly ducked the issue after spreading the story that the Jaffna security forces commander, Major General Sarath Fonseka, was PA sympathiser and acting on the behest of President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

The enormity of the relocation exercise of the brigade headquarters however is such that it cannot only involve the president and the generals. It has to involve decision-making and implementation by various organs of the UNF-controlled government. Let us therefore see whether the government, which can through its minister of defence, call a halt to the project, is sincere and committed enough to do so.

How will the US handle Lanka peace talks after Iraq war?

By D. Sivaram (Taraki)

The US-British coalition has invaded Iraq and is bent, come what come may, on establishing its firm military control over the vast oil resources of that country. The unilateral and brazen manner in which the US-British military alliance is carrying on in the middle east today has angered many the world over - but none, even Russia, China and France, can do anything about it.

What is of concern to us is that behind the increasingly flimsy façade of the so called 'neutral' Norwegian facilitation, it is this US-British coalition that is defining the overall course and external political environment for the peace talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government.

America's hand in the peace process is becoming quite clearly visible now. The US Assistant Secretary of state Richard Armitage even went far as to assert on Jaffna soil that the US would 'forcefully' make its point to ensure that the LTTE would toe the line.

His comments this week during talks with ministers Prof. G. L. Pieris and Ravi Karunanayaka on the status of the peace talks confirm the proactive role of the US in the effort to settle the conflict in Sri Lanka.

After the unilateral military action by the US against Iraq, very few in the world today are indeed ready believe that active US intervention abroad is dictated by altruistic motives as the spokespersons for the State Department, the American Embassies and CNN anchors would have us believe.

Very clearly the US has a keen strategic interest in Sri Lanka. Otherwise there would be no need for it to seek the signing of the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) with the Sri Lankan government.

It is also obvious that this strategic interest (whatever its long term object may be) is best served by containing the LTTE and stabilising the Sri Lankan state.

The US is supporting large infusions of development aid and the holding of local government elections in the northeast. It has also warned the LTTE time and again not to bolster its military capability now. All these are patently aimed at containing the Tiger and thereby stabilising the Sri Lankan state.

However, the crucial provisions of the 1987 Indo Lanka Accord expressly prevent the Sri Lankan government from having close military alliance with a third party. (read US)

By virtue of the 87 Accord, India holds the right to 'advise' Sri Lanka "about the relevance and employment of foreign military and intelligence personnel with a view to ensuring that such presences will not prejudice Indo Sri Lankan relations". Sri Lanka is bound by the Accord not to make any of its ports "available for military use by any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interests".

But a swift and unmitigated vic-

But a swift and unmitigated victory in Iraq may encourage the US to act in defiance of the terms of the Indo Lanka Treaty to achieve its immediate strategic objective on Sri Lanka; or it is more likely that Washington might coax Delhi into agreeing on a 'stabilising role' for the US in Sri Lanka.

tory in Iraq may encourage the US to act in defiance of the terms of the Indo Lanka Treaty to achieve its immediate strategic objective on Sri Lanka; or it is more likely that Washington might coax Delhi into agreeing on a 'stabilising role' for the US in Sri Lanka.

Some analysts tend to believe that the latter scenario is probable in the light of strategic contradictions between US and China, which, according to them is inevitably drawing India and the US closer to each other.

As a US War College analyst put it recently: "Much to China's chagrin, the US-led war on terrorism has developed in ways that could not have been foreseen, with potentially disastrous consequences for its core strategic interests. A major unintended (and unsettling, from Beijing's standpoint) consequence has been not only to checkmate and roll back China's recent strategic expansion moves in Central, South, and Southeast Asia, thereby severely constricting the strategic latitude that China has enjoyed since the Cold War, but also to tilt the regional balance of power decisively in Washington's favour within a short period".

The fast-changing strategic scene not only undercuts Chinese ambitions to expand Beijing's power and influence in Asia, but also hems in the one country in the world with the most demonstrable capacity to act independently of the United States. Not surprisingly, the beginning of 2002 saw Chinese leaders and generals shedding their earlier inhibitions about publicly expressing concern over the growing "southern discomfort"—that is, ever-expanding US military power and presence in southern Asia after 9/11. China's Chief of the General Staff Fu Quanyou warned the United States against using the war on terrorism to dominate global affairs by saying "counter-terrorism should not be used to practice hegemony."

China's initial optimism that new Sino-US-Pakistan triangular coop-

eration in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 would wean Washington away from New Delhi turned out to be wishful thinking as Bush Administration officials went out of their way to assure India that America's intensifying alliance with Pakistan would not come at India's expense. If anything, the current crisis has strengthened the American commitment to building stronger relations, including defense ties, with South Asia's preeminent power. However, China does not want to see India increasing its power, stature, and profile regionally or internationally. Beijing shares Islamabad's deep mistrust of India's strategic ambitions and seeks to prevent India's emergence as a peer competitor and a major strategic rival in Asia. That is why Chinese strategists have long argued that China's pursuit of great power status is a historical right and perfectly legitimate but India's pursuit of great power status is illegitimate, wrong, dangerous, and a sign of hegemonic, imperial behavior. For its part, New Delhi has long accused Beijing of doing everything it can to undermine India's interests and using its ties with other states to contain India. Beijing is also alarmed over the growing talk in some conservative policy circles in Washington and New Delhi of India emerging as a counterweight to China on the one hand and the fragile, radical Islamic states of West Asia on the other.

Earlier, when President Bush unveiled his missile defense plan, New Delhi responded far more positively than did most US allies. Some Indian strategic thinkers even see in the emerging US-India quasi-alliance an opportunity for "payback" to China. As G. Parthasarthy, former Indian Ambassador to Pakistan and Burma, put it: "Whether it was the Bangladesh conflict of 1971, or in the Clinton-Jiang Declaration in the aftermath of our nuclear tests, China has never hesitated to use its leverage with the Americans to undermine our security."

Growing Chinese strategic pressure on the Malacca Straits has already led to maritime collaboration between India and the United States, with their navies jointly patrolling the straits. More significantly, US-India strategic engagement has scaled new heights with the announcement of a series of measures usually reserved for close US allies and friends: joint military exercises in Alaska that would boost India's high-altitude warfare capabilities in the Himalayan glaciers of northern Kashmir where it faces Pakistan and China; sale of military hardware including radars, aircraft engines, and surveillance equipment to India; joint naval exercises and the training of India's special forces; and intelligence sharing as well as the joint naval patrols in the Straits of Malacca.

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Imagining Medieval Sri Lankan history

By Bertram Bastiampillai

Due to the frenetic activity of three kings in the new capital of the Sinhalese kingdom, Polonnaruwa, from around the mid-11th century till the close of the 12th, political power of Sinhalese royalty notably diminished. The Sinhalese rulers and most of their subjects withdrew into the hills in the nether areas of Sri Lanka, mainly in quest of security owing to recurrent invasions from South India. Meanwhile, the Tamils in the island occupied the Jaffna peninsula and most of the area between Jaffna and Anuradhapura, the Wann. Tamils from the invading armies of South India also settled on the island. Major Tamil settlements were in the northern peninsula and there were several other settlements proximate to the seaboard in the east of the island too. By the 13th century an independent Tamil kingdom had been set up with the Jaffna peninsula as the base and centre.

The dominant state in South India endeavoured time and again to wield authority over Sri Lanka. Sometimes a strong South Indian power would noticeably influence Sri Lankan politics while Sri Lankan kings allied with rivals of the superior power in South India so as to protect the island's own political setup and independence. Parakramabahu I got into protracted involvement in South India until ultimately the

Sri Lankan armies were beaten down. Lengthy intervention by Sri Lankan rulers in South Indian politics ended invariably with military failure. Sri Lankan rulers allied with one South Indian power to distract another South Indian power from eying the subjugation of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka in the Middle Ages was notably politically weaker. There was the invasion and rule of Kalinga from Magha after which Polonnaruwa was replaced as a capital by Dambadeniya while another ruler chose Yapahuwa. Thereafter, Kurunegala became a royal seat for a short while and the quest for an elusive security moved Sinhalese royalty to Gampola, and finally to Kandy.

The remarkable decline of the strength of Sinhalese kingdoms was largely because of the rivalry posed to them from southern India, the consolidation and expansion of the Tamil kingdom in Jaffna southwards and the growth of the independent Wann chieftaincies to act as a buffer to the north. As eminent historian Prof. K. M. de Silva concludes, "In the second half of the fourteenth century the fortunes of the Sinhalese reached their nadir." At one stage "...Jaffna under the Aryacakravartis was the most powerful kingdom in the island." He adds that "the Tamils moved southwards to exact tribute from the southwest and central regions - their tax collectors were at work in parts of the Gampola kingdom."

The Wann chiefs proved to be a buffer between the two major political groups or entities in Sri Lanka, Sinhalese and Tamils. Central authority had collapsed with the fall of the Polonnaruwa kingdom and generally the rule of the times during most of the post-Polonnaruwa period was "an accommodation with the Tamil kingdom," in the interest of safety and peace. Another vital charge was an emergence of trade to be important in the island's economy, and use of money in transactions was increasingly evident. Then there was an expansion of a Moorish population, which was added to the country's ethnic groups. Groups of recent immigrants from South India, and their absorption into the caste structure of Sri Lanka spawned three new Sinhalese caste groups; the Salagama, Durava and the Karava. A communally mixed population inhabited Sri Lanka and the belief that the land is exclusively Sinhala-Buddhist, seems fictional and the conceit it has engendered among the Sinhalese, is not tenable.

During the post-Polonnaruwa years, Buddhism had to contend with powerful pressure from Hinduism through the worship of Mahayana deities, and Vedic and post-Vedic Hindu deities remained a part of the religious practices of Sri Lankan Buddhism. Fourteenth century inscriptions mention Upulvan, Saman, Vibisana and Skanda as the guardians of the island. Hindu deities were required to safeguard Sri Lanka. Hindu dei-

ties guarded Buddhist Sri Lanka. Hindu influences were fostered in Sri Lanka by groups of Brahmins who gradually increased in the island in number. As de Silva says, "...the upper crust of Sinhalese society was fast becoming Hindu in outlook." Hindu shrines proliferated in the Kotte kingdom. Muniswaram near Chilaw was patronised by Parakramabahu VI, Kandasamy Kovil in Jaffna and Koneswaram in Trincomalee were two famous Hindu places of worship in Sri Lanka. Religions co-existed on the island, which did not contain only a mono-religious Buddhist people. Among the famous monuments of the time, the Gadaladeniya Buddhist shrine is constructed in a Dravidian style of South India. Clearly, there was a co-existence of Sinhala-Buddhist and Hindu-Tamil populations and developments in diverse spheres of life in Sri Lanka in the Middle Ages attest to the fact that the idea Sinhala-Buddhists alone lived in Sri Lanka is a fallacy.

Then there was the northern Jaffna kingdom with its capital in Nallur. After Parakramabahu VI's singular episode of an over-lordship, Jaffna was independent, exercising control over the peninsula and neighbouring coastlands. It also received the allegiance of a few Wann chieftains. It is evident that there was no such unified Sinhalese-only central rule over Sri Lanka except under a few kings like Dutthagamani, Vijayabahu I, Parakramabahu I or

Parakramabahu VI. Otherwise, for most of the time, Sinhalese chieftains managed the Sinhalese provinces, and Tamil chieftains ran the Tamil Wann areas.

Invasions from South India under Magha of Kalinga and his rule from 1215-1236, from Chandrabhanu of Tambralinga (in Malaya) in the 13th century, from the Cholas who under Rajaraja the Great (983-1014), who not only invaded the land but ruled it directly by attaching it to the Chola empire, from the Pandyas under Sri Meva Sri Vallabha (815-860), from Chengho, the Chinese Admiral, in the beginning of the 15th century, and thereafter altogether seven times, indicate how vulnerable and defenceless Sri Lanka could have been in the early and medieval years of the island's history.

In later and more recent years, just before and after independence in 1948, there grew a tendency to imagine history. The reality of the state, of politics, religion, society and demography of the past was distorted and was passed down as history at the popular level. The misinterpretations and misrepresentations of the story of Sri Lanka came to be considered to be its true history, which was far from the truth, but pleasant to believe. Facts were forgotten and new 'facts' were crafted to compile the story, which would please those who dreamt of a past that had to be conjured to satisfy a popular and fertile imagination.

Iraq war changes face of war reporting

By Allan Little (BBC world affairs correspondent in Kuwait city)

I am standing in the lobby of an international hotel in Kuwait city.

It is just after dark. A US army major is talking urgently into a mobile phone to a journalist who has got lost in southern Iraq.

"These voices you can hear," the major is saying. "Are they English or Arabic? Arabic."

"Then lie flat on the ground. Do not move."

"Switch off your mobile phone because if it rings it will give away your position. Stay there all night."

"When you hear American forces arrive wave something white and put your hands up."

"Now," he adds ominously, "is there any message you would like me to pass on to your next of kin while you still can?"

Who is the hapless, terrified hack who has phoned the US army press office in Kuwait in des-

peration, unable to move and now fearing for his life?

He has run across the Iraqi border and headed blindly into the battlefield and has run up against units of the Iraqi army.

How has he got himself into this position? Is he still there this morning? Has he survived the night?

There are too many of us here. There are 2,000 reporters accredited with the US military.

Of those 500 are embedded with the coalition forces and they are telling the story of this war - graphically, dramatically, instantly and sometimes live, commenting on battles as they unfold, and before the outcome is known.

It is astonishing and unprecedented. It changes everything, about what we do.

An old friend rang me this morning. He is working as a cameraman with one of the American networks.

I have worked with him in dangerous places before - Rwanda, Zaire, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe - and

he is a calm and fearless man of careful judgment.

He has seen a lot. I trust his judgment.

"I'm desperately worried Allan," he says.

"None of the team I'm working with here has ever been to a war before and they want to cross the border and go wandering into the battlefield."

"You should hear them talking about this war. They think it's a reality TV show."

Information is part of the war effort.

The Coalition War plan demands that by the time US tanks reach the gates of Baghdad, the Iraqi regime will know - because they will have seen it on satellite television - that their authority has collapsed everywhere else in the country.

What we report - and the way we report it - is therefore a key part of the military campaign.

The military have a term for it. They call it 'Information Opera-

tional Effect.'

This is all new to me.

In 1991 I was on the other side. I was with the Iraqis.

For me it wasn't Desert Storm, it was the Mother of All Battles.

We cannot escape the fact the Iraqis wanted us there - allowed us to be there - because they thought we would be useful to them.

It was their version of 'Information Operational Effect.'

Some of my good friends are embedded with the US and UK military.

They are doing what seems to me to be a brilliant job. They are keeping cool, distanced, serious. It is not - emphatically not - a reality TV show to them.

Nor is it to those on the other side.

One or two of my good friends are in Baghdad. I know what it is like for them there.

I pray for their safety. I admire what they are doing beyond measure.

But this feeling that so far we are all inescapably part of someone's

war effort is unsettling.

And it is this - and not the neophyte adrenaline rush excitement of those who think of this war as reality TV - that is driving good people across the border in search of voices and experiences that are not policed by either side's military spin doctors.

The news that an ITN crew was lost in southern Iraq came as a sobering reality check to the mood that has sometimes prevailed here.

Terry Lloyd was one of Britain's most experienced television journalists.

In Bosnia where I worked opposite him, he was a generous and thoughtful colleague and a welcome friend in any bad place.

I saw him the other day and he greeted me with warmth and we punched each other's local phone numbers into our Kuwaiti mobiles promising to get together to talk about how to proceed. I had hoped we still would. (BBC)

Economy more than peace

By Feizal Samath

New poll results showing that Sri Lankans are most concerned about daily economic woes explain why it is not easy to mobilise more mass movement in support of the peace process, analysts say.

This is despite the fact the ethnic war in Sri Lanka has cost 65,000 lives in the past 20 years.

A total of 48.2 percent of the people polled in the Peace Confidence Index (PCI), whose results were released March 20, said they believe the rising cost of living is the most important issue of the day, followed by the ethnic conflict (18.8 percent) and unemployment (16.5 percent).

The poll, conducted across the island, sought the views of majority Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and upcountry Tamils, referring to Tamils of Indian origin working in plantations. It did not say how the respondents were broken down among these groups.

These results do not come as a surprise to Sri Lankan political analysts and economists, who say the war is less of an everyday concern for people living outside the north and eastern regions which are most affected by the armed rebellion by Tiger rebels seeking a homeland for minority Tamils there.

"The cost of living is still the

main issue – and has been over the years – for those living outside the northern and eastern regions," says Dr. Jehan Perera, director at the National Peace Council (NPC), the country's biggest peace promoter.

Perera says this helps explain why it is not easy to have the mass public support to push the peace process – the sixth round of talks just finished in Japan on Friday – harder.

Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese community lives in the southern, western and central regions of the country. Most of the minority Tamil and Muslim communities, who together account for less than 25 percent of the country's 19 million people, live in the north and the east.

Among the Tamils, the results of the Peace Confidence Index showed that 30 percent cited the ethnic conflict as the most critical issue for them, followed by a close 27.5 percent who cited cost of living as their main worry.

"The terrors of war is faced mostly in the conflict zones (apart from the occasional bombs that go off in the capital)," Perera says, adding that for the Sinhalese, the price of going back to war is not such a big issue.

But the poll, conducted in January and February 2003 by Social Indicator and financially supported by the Canadian International Development Agency, also

showed that an overwhelming majority (83.7 percent) of the 1,400 respondents believed the conflict could be solved through peace talks, not fighting.

This shows a sharp increase in this belief from 59.1 percent in May 2001.

Social Indicator (SI) is the social research unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), a well-known policy think tank in Sri Lanka. The Peace Confidence Index was launched in May 2001 and has been conducted every two to three months since then.

SI officials, noting that this was the first time the cost of living issue came up in the questionnaire, said the purpose of this study was to gauge public confidence in the peace process.

Peace talks between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), as the Tigers are formally known, have been on since September. A ceasefire between the two sides has held for more than a year now, but has been marred by violations.

Still, the current round of talks has been the longest running ever.

In recent weeks, the United Nations Front (UNF) government accused of increasing the people's economic woes has been forced to turn its attention to the rising cost of living by appointing committees to recommend price stabilisation in

essential food items.

The People's Liberation Front or JVP, the most strident third political force and former militant group that has proven its skills at organising mass rallies and street protests, has gleefully watched as middle and lower income groups struggle to cope with price hikes.

Fuel prices are rising monthly, triggering a chain reaction among prices of essentials across the board.

Economic reforms, particularly the removal of subsidies on fuel and wheat, are gradually biting into the pockets of middle-level income earners. Hard times have prodded many to ask the question, through letters-to-the-editor-columns in newspapers, is the government paying too much attention on the peace process and ignoring economic realities?

Likewise, growing opposition rallies and protest marches have begun focusing on rising costs and corruption in state tenders, more than antipathy toward peace talks.

In short, the peace dividend that everyone expected to placate the Sinhalese-dominated southern parts of the country has not come as quickly as expected. Local and foreign private investment is slow, as investors wait for a permanent peace package to emerge before taking major decisions.

"Clearly an advancement in the living conditions of the people

hasn't happened since the peace process began," says Kethish Loganathan, a CPA director and head of its conflict analysis division. "Peace and the economy are inseparable."

He said the peace process would not work unless sound planning and management policies are put in place and have a positive impact on larger sections of the people.

"People have begun to question as to what has happened to the so-called savings from lower military spending? Why hasn't it being reinvested (to bring down prices, for example)?" he says.

Jagath Sumanasekera, a grocer in a Colombo suburb, agrees that the cost of living is the main issue among most Sri Lankans. "Customers who used to buy half a dozen eggs at a time, now buy ones and twos, grumbling about the cost. Invariably the conversation is about the cost of living and how the government has failed to pay enough attention to it."

Another question in the Peace Confidence Study sought to find out the impact the peace process has had on living conditions.

To this, nearly 34 percent of the respondents said there was no impact, 29 percent said it had a negative impact while 24.1 percent said that there has been a positive impact. (IPS)

US Homeland Security targets democratic rights

By Kate Randall

One hour before President Bush went on television the evening of 17 March to issue his ultimatum in preparation for war on Iraq, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge made the decision to raise the national terrorism threat level to orange, the second highest level. At the same time, Ridge activated a security plan called Operation Liberty Shield, which calls for unprecedented domestic security measures, supposedly to protect American citizens from impending terrorist attacks.

As with previous terrorism alerts issued by the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department, no specific information was provided on where the attacks could be expected or what the government's intelligence sources were. Ridge only cited "highly reliable" reports that terrorists would attempt attacks "against US and coalition targets worldwide in the event of a US-led military campaign against Saddam Hussein." FBI officials have also commented that "the bureau is very concerned" about potential attacks from "lone wolves" – individuals disgruntled over government policy.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration has repeatedly used such alerts, or vague advisories of impending

terrorist attacks, with one central objective in mind: to generate an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and hysteria in the American population in an attempt to make it more amenable to military aggression abroad and further attacks on democratic rights at home. In this, the government has been assisted by a pliant media, which has bombarded the public with warnings of imminent terrorist attacks without supplying the slightest substantiation.

With the US attack on Iraq now under way, the heightened terror alert level is being utilized to justify increased repression against actual or potential opponents of the Bush administration's war policy.

In a move denounced by civil liberties groups and immigrants advocates, the Homeland Security Department has also implemented what it says is a temporary policy of detaining asylum-seekers from 33 nations where Al Qaeda is reported to have operated. This could result in hundreds of arrests, as some 600 people from these countries seek asylum in the US each year. Up to 60 percent of these asylum-seekers come from Iraq, and those targeted also include immigrants from the West Bank and Gaza. All these asylum-seekers will be jailed until their cases are adjudicated, which could mean months in detention, and in some cases more than a year.

On 20 March, the FBI began "vol-

untary" interviews of Iraqi-born individuals living in the US. These interrogations are not based on any evidence of criminal or terrorist activity, but solely on ethnicity and national origin. FBI officials began going door-to-door, with plans to question 400 Iraqi nationals in Detroit, 200 in Philadelphia and similar numbers in other large metropolitan areas.

By last Friday, teams of agents from the Homeland Security Bureau of Immigration Enforcement in the Detroit area had arrested about a dozen men, and were reportedly looking for hundreds more. On Saturday, agents interviewed more than 20 Iraqi men, and detained at least two who, they alleged, had criminal backgrounds. It is unclear how many still remain in custody, and federal agents declined to provide any details on why they suspected the men of being terrorist threats.

Abed Ayoub, 23, a law student living in Dearborn, told the *Detroit Free Press*, "When they start picking and choosing who they want to detain, it reminds you of what happened to Japanese-Americans during World War II."

Since the US launched its war on Iraq, more than 3,000 antiwar demonstrators have been arrested across the country. One of the political aims of the Orange terror alert is to suggest that all such protesters are "aiding and abetting" the terrorists, and some local and state

police departments have responded by coming down hard on demonstrators.

Provisions activated by the "Orange" threat level include: stepped-up surveillance at US ports, borders and airports; Coast Guard escorts for watercraft near petrochemical plants; tightened security at nuclear power plants; increased disease monitoring to detect signs of bio-terrorism; and increased inspections of imported foods.

In New York City, police have increased security outside major Manhattan television news outlets, with the stated purpose of preventing possible takeovers by terrorists seeking to broadcast anti-American messages. The New York Police Department admits that the step has not been prompted by any specific threat or piece of intelligence information.

Unless the federal government specifically orders a call-up of National Guard troops to patrol a national border, for instance, the states foot the bill. The Department of Homeland Security has urged state governors to deploy National Guard troops at nuclear power stations and other potential terrorist targets, but has provided no funding. States are also responsible for providing increased funding for state and local police operations and private security firms.

After months of pressure from state and local government leaders who say that the Bush administration and Congressional Republi-

cans have reneged on promises to provide them with billions of dollars to fund firefighting and rescue operations, the White House on 19 March said it would ask Congress to pass an emergency domestic counterterrorism spending package, including \$1 billion for the Transportation Security Administration, \$200-700 million for the Coast Guard and increases in grants for local police and fire departments.

No rational person would deny that the threat of new terrorist attacks is real. This danger has been further intensified by the US war on Iraq, which will inflame anti-American sentiment worldwide.

A basic prerequisite for preventing such attacks in the future is a thorough examination of the 9/11 hi-jack bombings, as well as the anthrax attacks that targeted Congressional Democrats. But the Bush administration has vigorously blocked any investigation into these events, because they know that any such investigation would be politically devastating.

At best, it would reveal criminal levels of negligence on the part of US police and intelligence agencies in thwarting the attacks. More likely it would uncover complicity at the highest levels of the state with the terrorist forces that carried out the attacks, including connections between the terrorists and US, British or Israeli intelligence. (WSWS)

Navy's provocation threat to the peace process

In the recent past, especially consequent to the Ceasefire Agreement between the LTTE and Sri Lankan government, the actions of our navy appear to be designed to cause a breach to the peace process. They have been involved in disruptive and provocative actions not only in the seas but also on land where they behave in a calculated manner causing harm to peace and harmony.

There have been numerous recent instances of Indian fishermen brazenly entering into our territorial waters as close as half a mile from the coast and taking away large quantities of fish depriving our fisher-folk of their means of livelihood. Our navy harasses our own fishermen but it turns a blind eye to the incursions of Indian fishermen who come in large number of boats and trawlers. There have been number of instances of skirmishes between our fishermen and the Indians, culminating in a big clash where hundreds of Indian fishermen were captured and handed over to the police, to

be produced before the courts. Under normal court procedure they would have been remanded and would have languished behind bars for a considerable period of time. But suddenly, due to pressure from the government they were released. In the past our navy has killed hundreds of Indian fishermen, but India, with total insincerity glossed over such brazen actions of wanton killing of their citizens, probably because they were from Tamilnadu, which is ruled by a non-Tamil Brahmin.

However, in contrast, our navy was quick to pounce on a single LTTE trawler near Delft and cause a serious incident that almost destroyed the peace process. Hard on the heels of the Delft incident was the high seas drama 220 kilometers away from our coast in which our navy attacked a cargo vessel belonging to the LTTE and sank it with all hands on board. It is a known fact that the LTTE owns and operates a number merchant ships plying the high sea trade routes. (Incidentally the Sri Lankan nation owns only one old, small container

feeder ship, which operates as a coaster vessel. It is a crying shame for a country worth its name does not own a shipping fleet or an airline. Smaller countries like the Maldives, Bangladesh and even tiny Mauritius operate their own. We have ruined our lovely country by the majority attempting to be colonial master ruling the minorities in Sri Lanka and are paying a heavy price by becoming an impoverished and pauperized country).

Let me come back to our navy from a related diversion. The incident that involved the LTTE cargo ship being attacked by a naval attack craft in the international waters and on a sea-lane for merchant vessels to ply is a gross violation of the norms of international sea law governing ship movement. This incident involving the actions of our navy has to be necessarily viewed objectively and dispassionately taking into account only the legal and moral aspects. The legality of the action can be ascertained by quoting a ruling by the Indian High Court of Andhra Pradesh on the Indian navy's arrest of the ship

Ahat with Kittu, a prominent LTTE member, and the action that followed. The Indian High Court ruled that the actions of the Indian navy were a gross violation of international law governing the sea-lanes causing embarrassment to India. It must be stated that local law cannot surpass international legal jurisprudence.

Apart from the legal aspect, the repercussions that arose from the Sri Lankan navy's misconceived actions bringing the delicate peace process to the brink of disaster is an important fact that should be taken up and dealt with, with great responsibility if we are genuinely interested in peace. Or is the navy arrogating for itself the role as the champion of the Sinhalese to battle it out with the LTTE? The people of our country are fully aware of the performance of the navy apart from the other armed services. It is a painful fact of the past. If certain individuals and the navy are suffering from amnesia and attempting heroics, it will be the signal for another war causing wholesale destruction.

President Jayawardene once made a heroic boast, "If you want war let us have war." We have been at war ever since and what have we achieved? The achievement is reflected in countless lives lost, billions worth of property destroyed and an economy that has nose-dived to appalling depths. The State conducted this war against its own citizens using people who were educated and intelligent but who were also supreme egoists and unrepentant sadists such as Lalith Athulathmudali and Ranjan Wijeratne. We expected enlightened leadership from them but received 'mariakade' thuggery using state patronage.

All Sri Lankans should think with a genuine feeling of saving this lovely paradise on earth. Let us stop thinking of war and think only of peace, which involves sacrifice of pride and the self-gratifying feeling of racial superiority. Only then we can prosper, and save this beautiful piece of earth that we call Sri Lanka.

C.D. Chinnakone

How will... Contd. from page 4

Washington also reportedly gave the green light for Israel to proceed with selling the Phalcon airborne early warning and control system (AWACS) to India—something that was earlier denied to China for fear of enhancing Beijing's air surveillance and early warning capabilities in the Taiwan Strait.

All of these measures send an implicit signal to China of India's growing military prowess. In a cover story in the authoritative Beijing Review, one of China's noted South Asia specialists expressed concern over the US sale of arms to India which "enables it to become the first country to have close military relations with the world's two big powers—the United States and Russia."

Many Chinese strategists believe India is using the war on terrorism as a pretext to militarily subdue Pakistan or to destabilize and dismember the country. Pakistan is the only country that stands up to India and

thereby prevents Indian hegemony over the region, thus fulfilling a key objective of China's South Asia policy. As South Asia watcher Ehsan Ahrari points out: "India may end up intensifying its own rivalry with China by remaining steadfast in its insistence that Musharraf kowtow to its demands, especially if China calculates that US-India ties are harming its own regional interests. China, though still concerned about the continued activism of Islamist groups in Pakistan and contiguous areas, is not at all willing to see the regional balance of power significantly tilt in favour of India."

Though Beijing welcomes the new US commitment to prop up Beijing's "all-weather friend" after a decade of abandonment and estrangement, most Chinese strategists worry about the destabilizing consequences of a prolonged US military presence in Pakistan and increased influence on the future of Sino-Pakistan ties as well as on Pakistan's domestic stability.

The Chinese are also believed to be "highly uncomfortable" with the four US military bases in Pakistan.

Of special concern to Beijing is the US presence at Pasni in the Baluchistan region of Pakistan, where China is constructing a deep-water naval port at Gwadar, the inland Makran coastal highway linking it with Karachi, and several oil and gas pipeline projects. Beijing has long been eyeing its construction of the naval base at Gwadar, at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, as a bulwark against the US presence and India's growing naval power.

However, if India, despite all this, continues to thwart US efforts to gain a strategic foothold in Sri Lanka, there would be greater urge on the part of Washington to act unilaterally on the matter if Saddam is successfully deposed.

It is time for the LTTE to start carefully weighing the strategic scenarios that may develop after a US victory in Iraq.

Rivals continue sabre rattling

India test-fired a nuclear-capable missile today at its testing ranges in eastern India. Several hours later, Pakistan also tested a short-range missile with range to hit India, officials said.

"Pakistan has also test fired a missile today, but we informed India about it," Aziz Ahmed Khan, the spokesman for the Pakistani foreign ministry, told The Associated Press.

In New Delhi, a defence ministry spokesman Baljit Singh Menon said India's most sophisticated Prithvi missile was successfully tested from the Chandipur missile testing range in Orissa state.

The short-range missile, developed by Indian missile scientists, had a perfect lift off at its launch at 11:30 a.m., Menon said.

Menon said it was a routine test to improve the version of the Prithvi that would be used by the army, and described the launch as a "user's trial."

"The launch was witnessed by senior army officials. All the objectives of the mission were met and the launch was successful in every respect," Menon said.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry refused to comment, saying it would issue a statement only after examining what kind of missile was test fired and what technical abilities it had.

India and Pakistan have gone to war three times since independence from Britain in 1947, and came to the brink of war again last year. The nuclear-armed rivals recently have conducted tit-for-tat tests of

missiles which could be used against each other in the event of war.

The test was one of scores carried out by India's Defence Research and Development Organization to perfect the capability of the missile to carry a nuclear warhead.

The Chandipur missile testing range is located 1,200 kilometres southeast of New Delhi.

India's missile arsenal includes the Trishul, a surface-to-air missile which targets aircraft and can counter sea-skimming missiles; the intermediate-range Agni, which can reach 2,415 kilometres; the short-range ballistic missile Prithvi with a range of 153 kilometres; and the anti-tank Nag missile.

India conducted five nuclear tests in 1998, causing international consternation and provoking economic sanctions by the United States and other western countries. India's tests were followed by nuclear tests by Pakistan.

Since then, Indian defence scientists have been engaged in developing a missile delivery system for its nuclear arsenal. The DRDO has conducted 16 trials of the army version of the Prithvi, which was first test fired in February 1988.

The Prithvi, which means Earth in Hindi, can carry a payload of one tonne.

India test-fired a supersonic cruise missile jointly developed by New Delhi and Moscow and capable of hitting several Pakistani cities last month. (AP)

PM urged Contd. from page 2

A seven member action committee was appointed at the meeting to take further steps if the army refuses to accede to the demand that no army camp should be established in the Jaffna town once its moves the brigade headquarters from the present site, sources said.

Representatives of the Muslim people now resettled in Jaffna town also participated in the meeting, sources said.

The army is now engaged in clearing the land where the office of the Jaffna municipal council, the town hall and the rest house were once located. Army commander, Lt. Gen. Lionel Balagalle, had promised to a group of civilian representatives a few weeks ago that he would shift

the Jaffna headquarters from the present site before the end of March, sources said

However, the new location in Jaffna chosen by the army has caused panic among the people of Jaffna, who fear that the new site, which is close to two leading schools, the Vembadi Girls' High School and the Jaffna Central College, the Duraippah stadium and places of Hindu and Christian worship, will also be declared as a high security zone.

The proposed move by the Jaffna army brigade headquarters would cause difficulties for students, teachers and Hindu and Christian devotees, civilian representatives complained at the meeting at the MPC office, sources said.

Sivagnanam heads the seven-member action committee. Other members of the committee are: president, Jaffna NGOs Consortium, S. Paramanathan, president, Jaffna District Fishermen Co-operatives Federation, S. Thavaratnam, Jaffna district secretary of the Ceylon Tamil Teachers Union, T. Panchalingam, president, International Thamilaleam Students Federation, S. Gajendran, president of the Association of Resettled Muslim People, K. Mubin and a representative of the clergy Rev. Fr. J. Bernard.

Copies of the appeal to the Prime Minister have been sent to the minister of defence and secretary, head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and to all Tamil parliamentarians, sources said.

White House dictates war coverage to a pliant media

By Henry Michaels

Over recent days, photographs and footage of captured and killed United States soldiers have been seen by millions of people around the world, but not published by the major American newspapers or broadcast by TV networks. The blackout imposed on the American public, at the direct behest of the Bush administration, has highlighted two fundamental developments.

The first is that while the Bush White House claims to be fighting for "liberty" and "democracy" in Iraq, it has created an extraordinary official apparatus to control and manage the media to an unprecedented degree. The second is that the corporate media is functioning in the most blatant manner as a propaganda tool of the White House and the Pentagon.

When the ABC network initially replayed Al Jazeera footage of the American POWs, asking US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to confirm the story, Rumsfeld and his aides immediately objected, declaring that the Geneva Convention made it illegal for prisoners of war to be "shown and pictured and humiliated."

Threateningly, Rumsfeld added, "needless to say, television networks that carry such pictures are, I would say, doing something that's unfortunate." The major US networks, including CNN, and even the public broadcasting network, quickly bowed to this pressure and suppressed the video.

The Pentagon then sent news organizations a memo requesting that they "not air or publish recognizable images or audio recordings that identify POWs." The memo made the same request for deceased soldiers, citing "respect for the families" and "the principles of the Geneva Conventions."

At a US Central Command media briefing in Qatar, Lieutenant General John Abizaid called the footage "disgusting" and denounced Al Jazeera. "I regard the showing of those pictures as absolutely unacceptable," he told journalists.

US network anchors and reporters soon echoed this position. "They are horrifying pictures, and we are not showing them on MSNBC," anchor John Siegenthaler said. "Why would Al Jazeera put them on television? ... They are extremely, extremely disturbing images," said NBC anchor Matt Lauer. "They are utterly, utterly gruesome," said Fox News reporter Greg Palkot.

While the major US media out-

The Bush administration's "newfound affection for the Geneva Convention is remarkable," observed an editorial in the Riyadh-based daily Arab News. "The US does not believe that the prisoners now being held at Guantanamo Bay are prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention. Pictures of the men there shackled and living in cages, were distributed by the Bush administration to the world's media."

lets readily agreed and complied with the Pentagon directives, one US-based web site, *YellowTimes.org*, was shut down by its Internet provider for showing the Al Jazeera photographs.

By contrast, non-US media outlets ridiculed the Pentagon's claims to be suddenly concerned about the Geneva Conventions, noting that the US is illegally holding more than 600 prisoners from Afghanistan in Cuba, denying them any rights as POWs.

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Editorials around the world also noted that the US media had, on a daily basis, featured detailed images of Iraqi POWs. On the same day as Rumsfeld's directive, the *Washington Post* carried a front-page picture of an Iraqi prisoner being blindfolded as he was led away by US soldiers.

In fact, before the capture of the US POWs, American networks and newspapers consistently ran graphic pictures of surrendering, captured, dead or dying Iraqi soldiers. This was invariably accompanied by US statements that large numbers of Iraqi troops were unwilling to fight for Saddam Hussein, a theme endlessly reiterated by Rumsfeld and the Pentagon.

The censorship and self-censorship on the captured US POWs is far from an isolated occurrence. While all networks ran the dramatic footage of the

"shock and awe" bombing of Baghdad, there is scant coverage in the US of the casualties or wounded in the attacks, despite ample on-the-spot footage from the Iraqi news agency and Al Jazeera and public statements from the International Red Cross giving figures for the wounded in Baghdad and Basra hospitals.

The divergence between the US and other Western media, on the one hand, and the coverage throughout the Middle East and elsewhere is stark. One photograph widely published internationally showed the head of a child, aged about 12 that had been split apart in the US-led assault

Part of the reason for the completely distorted US coverage lies in the Bush administration's establishment of an Orwellian Office of Global Communications (OGC), operating out of the White House, which seeks to manipulate what the public sees, reads and hears about the war 24 hours a day.

on Basra.

Another newspaper picture showed two dead Iraqi soldiers, slumped in their trench, the back of their heads blown off. One of them is holding a white flag of surrender. Other pictures came from northern Iraq, where American missiles killed Kurdish villagers, supposedly while targeting the Islamist Ansar al-Islam organization. None of these images have been shown by the mainstream US media.

Part of the reason for the completely distorted US coverage lies in the Bush administration's establishment of an Orwellian Office of Global Communications (OGC), operating out of the White House, which seeks to manipulate what the public sees, reads and hears about the war 24 hours a day.

Advised by Karen Hughes, a longtime Bush confidante, senior officials in the White House, Pentagon, State Department and National Security Council work around-the-clock, in coordination with British Prime Minister Tony Blair's media office.

These officials work with Rumsfeld and Bush to manufacture and then feed the media thematic story lines each day, providing constant access to senior administration figures to reinforce the message. The operation starts at dawn when White House spokesman Ari Fleischer briefs the television networks and the wire services before the morning news programs. Then at 9:45 a.m. he gives White House reporters an outline of what the daily message will be.

Later, in the words of its web site, the OGC leads a daily conference call of administration leaders to coordinate "communications planning" and "ensure rapid response to allegations and rumors in the war on terror." To hammer out its messages for media "bites", the OGC produces the *Global Messenger*, a one-page fact sheet sent world-wide to US

nity, security and liberty for all people, everywhere."

The truth of the OGC's origins and functions is somewhat different. Before January, it operated out of the White House for six months without any formal authorization, seeking to stifle mounting public criticism, notably in the Middle East, of the ongoing civilian death toll and poverty in US-occupied Afghanistan.

In February 2002, the Pentagon shut down a previous propaganda office meant to influence global opinion, particularly about designated enemies such as the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The office's purposes had been exposed by the leak of an internal memo proposing to use the Internet and other media to spread false information.

Of course, the OGC insists that its mission is to provide only "truthful information." This claim can best be judged by recalling some of the "messages" that have flowed from OGC over the past week. Two nights ago, all the US networks featured reports from "Pentagon sources" that a suspected chemicals weapons plant had been discovered in southern Iraq—a story that was later admitted to be unsubstantiated.

The next night, the same treatment was afforded to claims that the Iraqi regime had drawn a "red line" around Baghdad and was planning to use chemicals weapons if it were crossed.

Despite several television appearances by Saddam Hussein, Rumsfeld has deliberately kept alive rumours that the Iraqi leader is either missing, injured or dead. These comments have been dutifully reported daily. Rumsfeld and the OGC have also dropped hints about unofficial contacts between US intelligence, US Special Forces and elements of the Iraqi military.

These psychological warfare operations (psy-ops, to use the Pentagon jargon), coupled with the dropping of 25 million leaflets in Iraq, the decapitation attempt on Hussein's life and the bombing of his symbols of power, are all integral to the US military campaign.

Not since Joseph Goebbels served as Hitler's Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda from 1933 to 1944 has the world witnessed such far-reaching media orchestration.

This propaganda operation has begun to backfire, however, amid signs of widespread Iraqi hostility to the invading forces. Recent days have seen new OGC messages: that the war could last longer and be tougher than expected. (WSWS)

officials to disseminate key points and daily activities.

According to the January 21 press release announcing the OGC's creation: "Created by Executive Order of the President, this new office within the White House coordinates strategic communications with global audiences, integrating the President's themes into new and ongoing programs. This new office assists the President in communicating his message to the world — dig-

Tamils of Indian origin: unending exploitation

By A. Sarveswaran

This paper is neither an in-depth study of the issues relating to the employment of Tamils born in the hill country, nor a critical analysis of law relating to their employment. This paper is to trigger some thoughts relating to standards and conditions of their employment so as to protect them from further exploitation and to ensure for them just and fair conditions of work.

The British rulers opened coffee and tea plantations in the hill country of the then Ceylon during the middle of the 19th century. They were not able to persuade indigenous Sinhala labour to work on these plantations – they had to bring Tamils from South India. Hard work and sacrifice by the indentured labour from South India converted forests into income-generating plantations. Their descendants too toiled under difficult conditions on the same soil. A small number of them have however moved away from the plantations to other sectors seeking greener pastures.

These people are known "Sri Lankan Tamils of Indian origin." Their composition is little more than 5.0% of the total population of the country. Their numbers in official statistics have been declining however, due to repatriation, drop in population growth and because many of them register not as "Sri Lankan Tamils of Indian origin" but as "Sri Lankan Tamils."

These Tamils born in the hill country are subject to many forms of exploitation arising from their socio-economic circumstances. Issues relating to their employment are considered in this paper. Some of these issues are invariably applicable to employees from other parts of the country as well.

Constitutional rights

Article 14 (1) of the Constitution guarantees to the citizen of Sri Lanka trade union rights and other allied rights and also the freedom to engage by himself/herself or in association with others, in any lawful occupation, profession, trade, business or enterprise. There are many thousands of Tamils born in the hill country who are not citizens of Sri Lanka. Therefore, they cannot enjoy the rights guaranteed by the Constitution to the citizens of the country.

Inequality in employment

Tamils of Indian origin are denied equality in employment though Sri Lanka ratified in 1998 the ILO Convention on Discrimination (Employment and Occupa-

Many domestics are subject to physical and psychological torture. In some cases they are subject to sexual harassment as well. Many children under the permissible age of employment are also employed as fulltime domestics. In some cases, the children are handed over to the employers or middlemen by their parents for a matter of few hundred rupees.

tion) of 1958. However, employees in the public sector and semi-public sector have the fundamental right to seek redress against discrimination by petitioning the Supreme Court against inequality of employment. However, equality and non-discrimination in employment is not positively guaranteed to the employees in the private sector. Employees in the private sector do not have any effective and positive legal avenues to seek redress against discrimination in employment.

Tamils born in the hill country are also subject to discrimination in equal access to employment both in the public and private sectors. When they are discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity, because they are citizens by registration and not by descent, due to their place of birth, or on any other grounds, they do not have any effective and positive legal avenues for redress.

Mobility of employees

Although the non-possession of a national identity card is not an offence, the possession of an identity card has become a necessary requisite for security reasons. Many thousands of Tamil employees born in the hill country do not possess a national identity card for various reasons.

Non-possession of a national identity card is a major hindrance to the mobility of employees. Therefore, the Tamil employees who do not possess national identity cards are prevented from leaving the hill country to seek employment in other parts of the country, especially in Colombo and other major towns.

Until the Thundu Prohibition Ordinance was enacted in 1921, the 'thundu' system restricted the mobility of the employees born in the hill country. Presently, the identity card system restricts the mobility

of thousands of employees hailing from the same area from bettering their prospects.

Estate workers

Special legislation was enacted with regard to estate workers during the colonial era. Such legislation and most of the general labour legislation are applicable to the employment of estate workers. However, just and equitable concepts of employment present in

special legislation relating to estate workers were enacted before the establishment of the ILO. It is imperative that the special legislation should be repealed and be substituted by a single legislation, which incorporates ILO standards and the just and equitable concepts of modern employment law.

Monthly wages are not paid to estate workers. This has become an issue in the estate sector. Inadequate housing accommodation and poor health conditions are also concerns of estate workers.

A vibrant trade unionism is necessary to assert the collective rights of the estate workers. There are many trade unions rooted in the estate sector. However, allegations are levelled against them for being over-politicised and not being united on common issues of the workers.

Shop employees

The per centum of the "Indian Tamils" employed in shops all over the country is very high relative to their community's ratio to the total population of the country. One of the main reasons for managers to employ Tamils born in the hill country is because they are more gullible and easily ex-

ploited. Many shop employees engage in work for long hours without overtime payment, neither are they entitled to weekly holidays. EPF and ETF contributions are also not remitted in the name of many shop employees. In some shops, children within the prohibited age for employment, which is under 14 years, are employed. Females employed in some shops are subject to sexual harassment by

Domestic aids

The per centum of the "Indian Tamils" employed as domestic aids is very high in comparison to their community's ratio to Sri Lanka's total population. Domestic aids are employed as cooks, helpers, maids, gardeners, watchers and chauffeurs. Domestic aids are perhaps the most exploited group of workers in Sri Lanka. There is no legislation to protect their rights. They are engaged in work for long hours. They are paid very low wages, which are determined according to the whims and fancies of their employers. Overtime payment is not given them. Most of them work without weekly leave or any other leave. Domestic aids are not entitled to EPF and ETF payments.

Many domestics are subject to physical and psychological torture. In some cases they are subject to sexual harassment as well. Many children under the permissible age of employment are also employed as fulltime domestics. In some cases, the children are handed over to the employers or middlemen by their parents for a matter of few hundred rupees.

Although the domestics have right to make an application to a labour tribunal for compensation against unjust termination, they do not seek relief from the tribunals due to a lack of awareness of their rights and for socio-economic reasons.

Temporary employees and casual employees

Types of employment are not necessarily types of exploitation. But they are in the employment of many Tamils born in the hill country. They are employed as temporary or casual employees in various sectors although the nature of their employment is actually permanent. Employers are able to terminate their services unilaterally by resorting to these modes of employment.

The labour courts established under the Industrial Disputes Act have power to award just and equitable relief notwithstanding anything to the contrary if there is a violation in any contract of employment. Therefore, labour courts have power to award relief to employees when the employers unjustly terminate their services by resorting to unethical methods.

However, due to a lack of awareness, employees who are labelled as temporary or casual do not resort to legal relief when their services are unjustly terminated.

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Children above the age of fourteen too cannot be indiscriminately employed as there are statutory restrictions for the employment of children between the age of fourteen and eighteen in accordance with their age. However, children are employed in street trades, eating houses, shops, garages, tanneries and homes disregarding such statutory restrictions. Children thus employed are subject to physical as well as psychological torture and sexual abuse.

modern law are not incorporated into the provisions of the special legislation relating to estate workers. Most of the provisions in the special legislation have become obsolete.

Sri Lanka is a member of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and has ratified most of the core Conventions of that body and the Plantation Convention of 1958. Most of the provisions of the spe-

cial legislation relating to estate workers were enacted before the establishment of the ILO. It is imperative that the special legislation should be repealed and be substituted by a single legislation, which incorporates ILO standards and the just and equitable concepts of modern employment law.

பொது நலம்
யாழ்ப்பணம்



Muslim protestors burn the U.S flag at Lipton Circus, Colombo during the protest launched last week against American and British attack on Iraq

Pic. by Buddhika Weerasinghe

Tamils of ...

Contd. from page 9

Employees in the informal sector are generally non-unionised and are therefore more vulnerable to exploitation due to the abuse and evasion of statutory obligations by their employers, than those working in the formal sector.

Sexual harassment

Female employees who work in the estates and tea factories are subject to different forms of sexual harassment. In the estates, their supervisors harass the female workers by making sexually coloured reprimands, remarks, requests and jokes, and gestures associated with sexuality.

The female employees in the factories are subject to verbal and physical sexual harassments by their supervisors and co-workers.

Children employed in different sectors and domestic aids are also subject to various forms of sexual abuses and harassment.

Child labour

Although many measures have been taken to prevent child labour, it is an undeniable fact that child labour is an issue of concern in Sri Lanka. Employment of a child below the age of 14 in any sector, including the plantations, is an offence in this country. Children above the age of fourteen too cannot be indiscriminately employed as there are statutory restrictions for the employment of children between the age of fourteen and eighteen in accordance with their age. However, children are employed in street trades, eating houses, shops, garages, tanneries and homes disregarding such statutory restrictions. Children thus employed are subject to physical as well as psychological torture and sexual abuse.

Tamil children born in the hill country constitute a high per centum of child labour in relation to their population in the country. It is said that the 'employment

agents' in the hill country, mostly from the same community, recruit children for employment in other parts of Sri Lanka.

Social stigma and indignity

Indignity of employment is another excruciating experience Tamil employees born in the hill country have to undergo. Most of those from the hill country are generally employed in work that may be defined as 'low-level' employment. The perception and social stigma attached to such employment leads them to be treated in a degrading manner that amounts to discrimination. The equivalent Tamil words for the word 'he' are 'avan' and 'avar.' Generally, the professionals and the so-called 'high-level' employees irrespective of their age are called by the word "avar" whereas the employees in the so-called 'low-level' employment are called by the word "avan." There are many other such words, which stigmatise those against whom they are used.

Employees doing so-called 'low-

level' work do not enjoy a dignified status in employment nor in the eyes of society. This status is inconsistent with human rights norms that guarantee equal treatment. The mind-set with regard to social stigma has been changing in Sri Lanka. The pace of the change however is slow in comparison to most of the countries in the west.

Role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Very few NGOs are concerned with the rights of the Tamil employees born and living in the hill country. NGOs play an important role in preparing workers to assert their rights and in creating awareness by educating employees and sensitising them about their rights. Some methods available to NGOs for this purpose are conducting seminars and workshops, publishing handbooks and handbills on workers' rights and airing television

and radio programmes on the same subject. It is also useful to have a hotline to provide legal advice to all employees.

The NGOs could also provide legal aid to employees who are taking legal action against their employers. It should be stressed that when NGOs educate employees about their rights they should also emphasise the obligation of employees towards their employers in discharging their services faithfully and meritoriously, which is the other side of the same coin.

Conclusion

Some of the issues focused above are common to all employees irrespective of their place of birth and work. However, the employees born in the hill country constitute high per centum of exploited workers in proportion to their ratio to the total population.

(Beyond the Wall)