

High security zone renders
Jaffna IDPs in vulnerable
position

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NORTHEASTERN HERALD

Media, ethnicity and
democracy

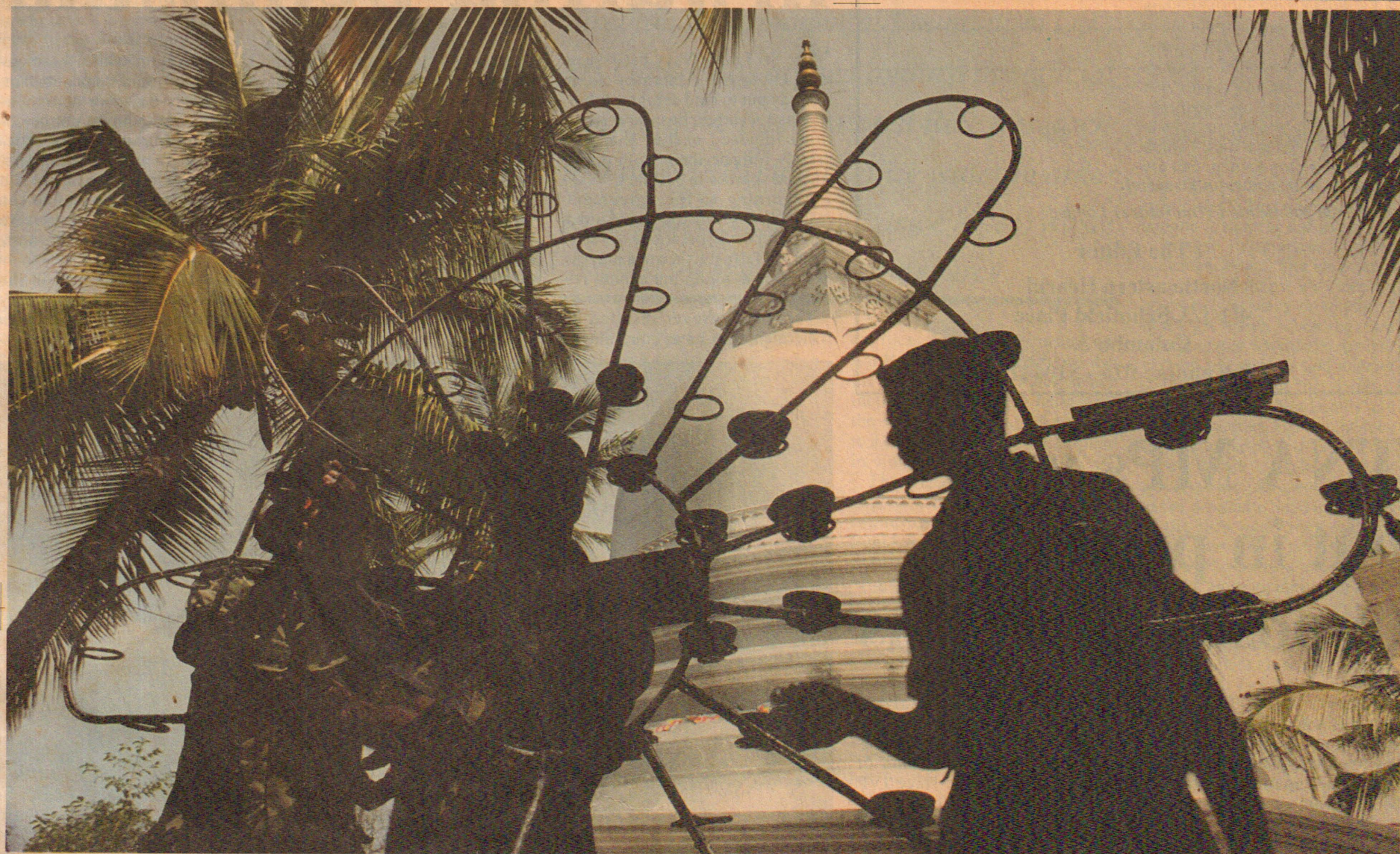
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Soldier silhouetted against the Nagadeepa temple

Pic by Buddhika Weerasinghe

Tigers prevent IDPs' forcible march onto Security Zone

By A Staff Correspondent

IDPs displaced from Weligamam North planning to enter the High Security Zone (HSZ) forcibly to reclaim the homes, were prevented from doing so by the LTTE in view of the forthcoming second round of talks in Thailand next week, informed sources told the *North-eastern Herald*.

The LTTE has reportedly told frustrated IDPs their problem will be discussed in Sattahip during the talks. In his discussions with Norwegian delegation LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran said matters pertaining to the HSZ and resettlement of refugees will be taken up at the second round of talks.

A large number of Weligamam north refugees fled to the Vanni in 1995 when the Sri Lanka army was advancing onto Jaffna. The

area they vacated was transformed into a HSZ surrounding the Sri Lanka military's Palaly - Kankensanthurai military base.

With the Ceasefire Agreement signed in February, IDPs began returning to Jaffna hoping the government would withdraw its security forces and allow resettlement.

Thirty Valigamam north refugee families that returned to Jaffna in August were sent to the Sabapathy Welfare Center. They have received neither refugee relief nor assistance to put up a shelter. Some of them have made homes with sticks and old polythene sheets. The floor space of this temporary shelter in which they now live is 10 feet by 12 feet.

"We made the terrible mistake of coming back," said the refugees lamenting about the squalid condition at the camp, where they are so near

home yet so far.

Sabapathy Welfare Center is the largest refugee camp in Weligamam north, near the Maruthanamadam junction. There are 185 families living here. The structures are mostly of sticks and thatch. The only cement and brick structure at the welfare center is its Church.

Heavy rains flood the refugee camp premises. The latrines are unusable during the rainy season. They cannot be flushed because the water in the cesspits rises above ground level. Worse, refugees fear that the excreta from inevitable leaks in the water filled cesspits is polluting the camp and its shelters.

Meanwhile, landlords on whose private lands some of these welfare centers are situated are asking the refugees to leave. The owner of the 'magistrate camp' premises in Mallakam has sent legal notice, asking the refugees to vacate.

The Tellipalai Divisional Secretary's Office has told the refugees in this camp to move to another place. It has asked them to find an-

other location if they are to receive the full payment from the government to build homes.

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Karuna and T'selvan in LTTE team for Thailand

The Liberation Tigers have finalised their negotiating team for the second round of direct talks between the movement and the Sri Lankan government scheduled to be held in Thailand next week, the Tamil Guardian newspaper reported this week.

The head of the LTTE's political wing, Mr. S. P. Thamilselvan, and Col. Karuna, the LTTE's Special Commander for the Batticaloa-Amparai district would be joining the LTTE team which will be led

by Mr. Anton Balasingham, the movement's chief negotiator and political advisor, the London based paper said.

Mrs Adele Balasingham will function as Secretary to the negotiating team, which will travel to Thailand via Colombo, the paper reported, quoting LTTE officials.

Mr. V. Rudrakumar, the LTTE's legal advisor and Dr. Jay

Cont. on page 2

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TNA MPs walk out in protest of opposition actions

Members of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) staged a walk out in parliament Wednesday evening protesting at not being allocated time to speak on the adjournment motion moved by the Sinhala nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) censuring the United National Front (UNF) government for failing to provide security to the people of eastern province.

When JVP parliamentarian Mr.Sunil Handunetti moved the said adjournment motion, Mr.R.Sampanthan, leader of the TNA parliamentary group rose to a point of order stating that the JVP has not allocated time for the TNA parliamentarians to speak on the motion as the subject matter of the said motion had direct bearing on the people of the northeast province.

Mr.Sampanthan said: "As a party in the opposition the TNA should have been allocated time to participate in the debate on the JVP adjournment motion. Earlier the JVP agreed to allocate time for us. But later they declined. The JVP has moved this adjournment regarding incidents that had taken place in the east. TNA has fifteen parliamentarians who represent northeast people. Therefore the TNA should have been allocated time by the leader of the opposition. We spoke to the leader of the opposition and the chief whip of the opposition. The JVP refusal to give TNA time is tantamount to showing disrespect to the northeast people. It shows the hypocrisy of the JVP."

When Mr.Sampanthan was on

his feet JVP parliamentarians started to interrupt. Thereafter heated arguments ensued between the parliamentarians of TNA and JVP. At one-stage JVP members hurled accusations that TNA parliamentarians are following the orders of the LTTE.

At this stage the chief whip of the ruling party Mr.Mahinda Samarasinghe offered ten minutes from the government time to the TNA parliamentarians to speak on the JVP adjournment motion.

But Mr.Sampanthan refused to accept the offer. He stated, "we are here as a part of the opposition. We are not begging for time to speak. We demand that we should be given time by the opposition leader to speak."

Following this seven TNA parliamentarians, Messrs Chandra Nehru, Mavai Senathirajah, N.Raviraj, G.G.Gajendrakumar, G.Krishnapillai and K.Thurai-retnasingham led by Mr.R.Sampanthan walked out.

The debate on the adjournment motion continued without the TNA. Moving the motion JVP MP Mr.Sunil Handunetti said that government has failed to provide security to the peace of the east. Seconding the motion JVP parliamentarian Mr.Wimal Weerawansa said the TNA has not been given time to participate in the debate, as it would have opposed the motion.

Tourism Minister Mr. Gamini Lokuge speaking on the motion said the JVP is once again trying to create unrest in the country. No responsible political party would support the JVP in its attempt to sabotage the peace process.

New fishing orders in Jaffna peninsula

The Sri Lanka Navy has issued instructions that fishermen out at sea may put to land at night if they fear bad weather, despite restrictions imposed earlier that expressly forbade them from doing so, said sources in Jaffna.

According to the agreement reached between the Sri Lanka Navy and the Federations of Fishermen in Jaffna, fishermen may go out to sea at night, but cannot return till daylight.

This has however resulted in fishermen who have gone out to

sea in the past few weeks to remain at the mercy of the elements in the event the seas turn rough as they do with the onset of the northeast monsoon.

"Nearly all the fishermen along the northern coast complained to me about this." Said Gajen Ponnambalam (TNA-Jaffna District).

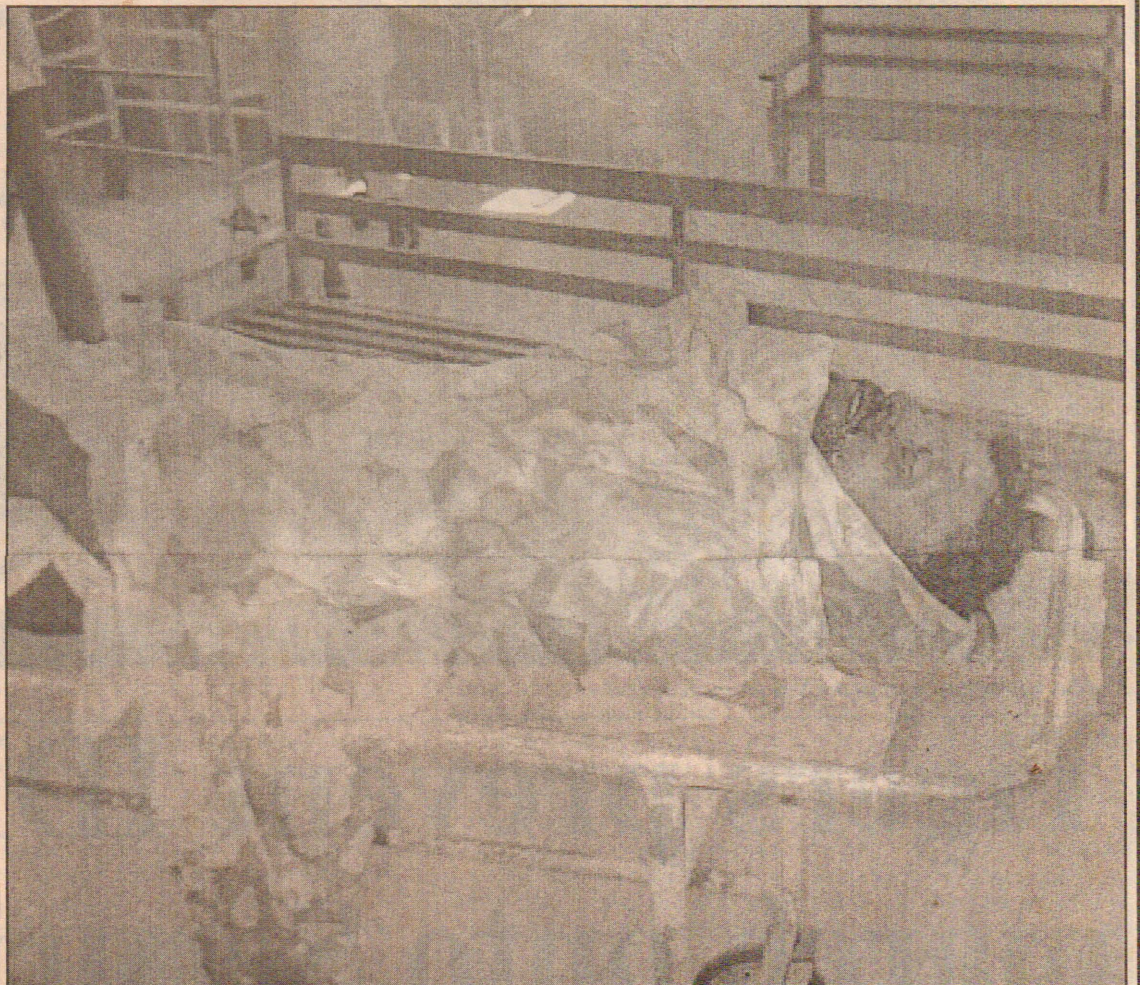
The complaint was forwarded to Minister Milinda Moragoda and referred to officers commanding the navy and army in the respective sectors in Jaffna Peninsula.

"They have agreed to suspend

the restriction while the monsoon lasts." Said Ponnambalam.

There is however apprehension that there might not be cooperation from the junior officers to implement these orders. But the sector commanders had assured Moragoda that in the event the new instructions were breached they should be notified.

As of now, fishermen in the event of inclement weather may put to land, said sources in Jaffna.



Corpse of a victim of police firing on Friday 11th October at Trincomalee Hospital

Karuna... Cont. from page 1

Maheswaran, a rehabilitation and development expert who were in the LTTE team which participated in the first round of talks held mid-September in Sattahip, Thailand would

also be present at the second round as resource persons, the Tamil Guardian said.

Mr. and Mrs. Balasingham arrived in the Vanmi-Tuesday last week on

a Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) helicopter which they boarded in Colombo, having arrived there by a SriLankan airlines flight from London, where they reside

Tigers prevent... Cont. from page 1

The D. S office has granted families Rs.10, 000 each to build houses. However, it is stipulated that the full payment of 25,000 rupees per house can be disbursed only if one builds it on land he/she owns.

"But how can we build on land that is ours. Our lands are in the high security zones. The army is camped there. How can we go back?" asks N. Ganeshan, president, Federation of IDP Welfare Centers in Jaffna.

"The government is neither giving us money to build nor finding us alternative but habitable land to own," he said.

The refugees of the 'magistrate camp' refused to relocate on the land shown them by the DS office because it had no access to roads and was in the midst of an inhospitable shrub jungle.

Disgusted with the treatment meted out to them, the refugees formed their own association in

Jaffna to fight for their welfare and resettlement seven months ago. The organization is mainly based among the IDPs of Waligamam north.

"Our predicament has been miserable because we have been depending on others for our welfare. It is time for refugees like us to do everything possible to demand the return to our lands," Ganeshan reiterated.

(See full story on Page five)

Shadow of Gopalapuram massacre on recent killings in Trincomalee

By Taurus

A curse seems to hang over Trincomalee. On more than one occasion when Tamil civilians plucked up sufficient courage to publicly demonstrate against the iniquities of the government or the armed services, they were set upon and murdered by their detractors.

The inquest into the killing of three Tamil youths earlier this month, allegedly by Sinhala policemen and home guards who shot and lobbed grenades at them, has commenced in the Trincomalee magistrate's courts.

Legal sources expressed dissatisfaction that police rather than the state counsel from the attorney general's department is leading evidence in a case where police personnel are accused of being the perpetrators.

The inquest, due to begin on 15th October, was postponed because the Uppuveli police who had recorded statements from witnesses were not present to lead evidence. To avoid blame they passed the buck to the Trincomalee headquarters police.

At the inquest, Assistant Superintendent of Police Ajith Rohana's motives were evident from the beginning when he took great pains to put leading questions to the wit-

nesses and some times even cross-examined his own witnesses to absolve both the Sinhala mob and/or the police from the responsibility for the deaths. He seemed to be interested in manipulating the witnesses to state the grenades they had brought had accidentally exploded injuring fellow participants at the hartal!

However, what witness after witness described was gross negligence of the police and how Tamils had to carry the injured and transport them in vehicles to Alles Gardens UNHCR camp and thence to Trincomalee hospital by boat.

These young lives might very well have been saved if the police had acted impartially and bravely even after the shooting, making way for the ambulances to carry the wounded for medical assistance.

A similar incident occurred almost two years ago. On 10th December 2000, a demonstration took place at Gopalapuram, a village near Nilaveli, to protest against a military outrage on the evening of 22nd November that year when James Prathap, a 15-year-old, J. Prasanthan, Sinnathamby Vijayakumar and Vijayaraj Jeyakanthan from the village who went out fishing did not return.

The villagers had heard gunshots but as it was getting dark did dare to go out and investigate. The next morning they found the corpses of all four.

At the inquest the witnesses stated the deceased were shot dead by the navy.

The acting magistrate, Trincomalee, M. K. Sellarajah, who conducted the inquest pronounced a verdict of homicide, stating that the four persons had been died due to gunshot injuries. The navy maintained the youth were LTTE cadres who had attacked them.

The public, incensed by what they knew was the killing of four innocent village youth, blocked roads in a demonstration against the navy's atrocities on 10th December, Human Rights Day.

On December 14, two youths also from Gopalapuram - Mahalingam Thamiran and Shanmugarajah Swarnahasan - were returning to their village about 6.00 p.m., when they were ambushed at a place called Iqbal Nagar about nine kilometres away from Trincomalee.

Around 11.00 o'clock that night residents in this predominantly Muslim village said they heard several gunshots. The next morning the navy handed over the bullet-ridden bodies of the two youth with broken skulls, eyeballs plucked from the sockets and chunks of flesh wrenched out from various parts of their bodies. The navy said these were bodies of LTTE cadres who tried to attack them.

The public of Gopalapuram gave

reasons for this torture and killing. Thamiran was prominent amongst those who demonstrated against the atrocities of the navy on Human Rights Day. It was said navy personnel threatened the parents of the deceased to sign a statement that Thamiran and Swarnahasan were from the LTTE if they were to get the bodies of their children back. The parents refused to do so.

No inquest was held into these later killings under the infamous Section 55 of the Emergency Regulations then applicable. At the request of the DIG, Eastern Region, only post-mortem was held at the Trincomalee Base Hospital.

After about one year and two months, the inquest commenced at the Colombo High Court. Once again the bias towards the military is evident because, despite emergency regulations that empowered the inquest to be held at the Colombo instead of Trincomalee having lapsed, the inquest is yet to be transferred back to Trincomalee. There is no reason for it to continue in Colombo except that it harasses poor witnesses who have to travel under extreme hardship and expense to give evidence.

But to human rights activists in the south, perhaps these witnesses should be thankful for the present climate. It was much worse for them during the height of the state terror in Colombo

when lodges where Tamils stayed were regularly raided and when they had to register with the police like indentured labourers of Indian origin in South Africa against whose oppression Mahatma Gandhi fought.

Regarding the brutal killing of the four fishermen at Gopalapuram, the case is as good as closed. Even an identification parade, essential for the magistrate to decide whether there is a prima facie case necessary for an indictment, is yet to be held.

These are two incidents at Gopalapuram highlight the 'excellent' human rights regime Tamils enjoyed in the East during the last decade, which human rights champions from Colombo seem unaware of. This regime of terror will no doubt have a bearing on the proceedings that have begun against the killings in Trincomalee last week.

It is a shame TNA parliamentarians should settle for a commission consisting of 'retired and present senior police officers' to inquire into last week's killings. The very least they could have done was to press for a commission of independent eminent persons. Even a fool can predict, if not the TNA members of parliament, the outcome of the enquiries that will be held by a commission of policemen probing allegations against policemen.

Trinco hartal killing inquest begin

The inquest into the killing of three Tamil civilians on October 11 at Abeyapura in the east port town in a gun and grenade attack commenced Wednesday before the Trincomalee Magistrate Mr.S.Thiagendran.

Two of the injured Tamil civilians said in evidence that grenade was thrown on the Tamil crowd together with stones on the day of incident. They said that they were taken to Trincomalee hospital by sea, as the crowd did not allow them to be taken by road. The Assistant Superintendent of the Police who was at the scene on the day of incident said that the only instruction he issued to the Police was to use tear gas to quell the disturbances to bring the situation under control.

The Assistant Superintendent of Police Mr. Selliah Suthesanathan said in evidence, "I received a message on the morning of October 11 that Tamils in Trincomalee have decided to stage a hartal (general shut down) expressing sympathy to those killed at Kanchirankuda earlier. Immediately I issued instruction to the officers in charge of Kuchchaveli and Uppuveli police stations to strengthen the security of their areas.

"I received a message from the OIC, Uppuveli Police that tyres were burning at Anuradhapura junction

around 3 a.m. on the day of incident. I was told that there were 10 to 15 persons at the scene. On the instruction of the Senior Superintendent of Police I went to the Uppuveli Police station around seven in the morning on the day of incident.

"As there were roadblocks at third milepost I went through Abeyapura. On my way I saw a large number of Sinhala people were standing in front of their houses. I told them not to panic. As I proceeded towards Anuradhapura junction I saw tyres burning near Downtown Hotel. About 700 to 1000 people were standing between Anuradhapura junction and the Downtown Hotel area. Most of them were youths. I told them not to obstruct vehicular and people movements.

"I immediately took steps to strengthen the security in the area by deploying more police personnel including six officers, four sergeants and fourteen constables as I felt that the situation could get out of control. Then I saw a crowd advancing from Anuradhapura junction towards Abeyapura junction burning tyres on the road. Likewise I observed another crowd advancing towards Anuradhapura junction from Abeyapura.

"I instructed the OIC, Uppuveli Po-

lice to form a human shield preventing the advancing crowds from both ends and to remove them from the middle of the road in order to allow vehicular movement without any obstruction. I was successful in my effort. Around 9.30 a.m. I saw some disturbances on the side of Abeyapura. At the same time I observed several youths from Downtown hotel area were rushing to Abeyapura area with stones, bottles and clubs. Youths from Abeyapura also were seen rushing to the Downtown with stones, bottles and clubs. Both groups were facing each other started throwing stones, bottles and clubs. The distance between the two groups was about 150 feet.

"Normally the Police could have used weapons in such circumstances. But I instructed the Police to clear the crowd without using force. When the Police tried to disperse the crowd in a peaceful manner, the rival groups continued to move towards each other. Thereafter I instructed the police officer in charge to use teargas to avoid violent clashes between rival groups.

"Four teargas canisters were fired, two each on rival groups. Immediately both groups withdrew from their advancing positions. However they continued throwing stones and bottles at their rivals.

"When I was looking towards

Abeyapura area, a stone hit me from behind. I sustained injuries on the back of my head. Though I was conscious I felt my eyesight had been affected slightly. Immediately my two security officers came to my rescue and took me to a house at Palaiootu. Then I heard an explosion. Later I was taken to navy hospital where my head was x-rayed.

"Though I was asked to take rest, I returned to the spot and commenced inquiry into incidents on the instruction of the Senior Superintendent of Police. When I returned to Abeyapura I came to know that three persons had been killed and about twenty five injured," said the ASP Mr. Suthesanathan.

Nallathamby Punyamoorthy, a labourer from Poompuhar of Palaiootu said in evidence that a grenade was thrown by the group from Abeyapura side where Sinhalese youths were standing. They should have thrown grenade with stones on the Tamil crowd standing on the other side.

"On the day of incident I went to the scene where I saw a crowd of about one thousand persons. I saw tyres burning on the road. Sinhalese and Tamils were seen throwing stones and bottles at each other. At around 10 a.m. a grenade was thrown to the side where Tamils were standing. I sustained sev-

eral injuries following the explosion of the grenade. As Sinhalese youths at the scene did not allow me to go to hospital by van, I was taken in a three-wheeler by some persons through another alternate route, first to a refugee camp at Alles Garden and then by boat to Trincomalee general hospital," witness Punyamoorthy said.

Another witness Baskaran Pirkakaran (25), a mason by profession said, "I saw a large number of people standing near Downtown hotel area. Tamils on one side and Sinhalese opposite side facing each other. At that time some one told me that Sinhalese had abducted two Tamils. I did not know who had been abducted. Thereafter I heard a sound of explosion. I did not know from which side the bomb was thrown. With the explosion I received injuries. Then I saw some persons fallen on the ground. Some unidentified persons took me in a three-wheeler, first to a refugee camp at third milepost and then to Trincomalee hospital by sea in a boat. At the hospital I was told that Police had thrown grenade. Shrapnel of bomb were removed from my body at the hospital," witness said.

At that stage further hearing was put off for October 29.

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Sattahip talks should solve high security zone problem

The predicament of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Jaffna has reached almost intolerable proportions.

Our correspondent reports inmates of the Sabapathy Welfare Centre, living in unbearable conditions, were contemplating marching on to the High Security Zone (HSZ) in a 'peoples' action' type move, since all other avenues of persuading the government to vacate Waligamam north seemed to fall on deaf ears.

What is unfortunate is that many of the displaced were living as refugees in the Wannu but returned to Jaffna in the hope that with the signing of the ceasefire agreement things would return to normal permitting their resettlement.

But what seems to be happening in the northeast is quite the opposite. Rather than vacate the HSZ, the security forces seem to be intent on consolidating their grip on Jaffna by building more fortifications, some of which were halted by the LTTE complaining to the SLMM.

There have been a number of instances where frustration and the sense of outrage built up after almost 20 years of continuous war has pushed Tamils of the northeast to attempt securing their rights by direct action rather than conforming to the procrastination of bureaucracies and the agendas of politicians that have crept into resettlement programmes.

The first was in Pt. Pedro some weeks ago where impatient with their pleas for opening Hartley College and the Methodist Girls School, students and the public began a demonstration that ended in violence where structures of the army on the perimeter of its camp were gutted and destroyed. The army retaliated by assaulting civilians and going on a witch-hunt of persons suspected of instigating the violence.

The incident at Kanjirankudah followed the problems at Pt. Pedro, where the public in a fit of anger charged into the STF camp provoking the defenders to open fire, ostensibly in self-defence. Seven persons were killed and many wounded.

In both these incidents the pundits who take a 'law and order' view of everything have come up with the simplistic argument the military and the police are the custodians of the law and in the event of an attack are compelled to retaliate, sometimes with firearms.

The matter has to however be examined more closely. We are not suggesting here that since Tamils have challenged the Sri Lankan state because of its systematic genocide against that community, Tamil civilians have the right to break into police and security forces installations.

What we are saying is that after 20 years of war and in the case of certain IDPs repeated displacement (those at Sabapathy Welfare Centre were displaced six times) some consideration should be shown to the emotional and mental state into which they have been driven.

It is therefore understandable they should want to take matters into their own hands to destroy the forces that are preventing them from returning home. And inevitably the symbol of state oppression – the military and police – are those on whom the incensed public vents its loathing.

The government too should realise this and act wisely. It will only be a good thing if the talks at Sattahip next week find a solution to the vexed problem of high security zones and resettlement, because if they do not, keeping back a recalcitrant and headstrong public will be almost impossible.

The joint task force: problems, questions

By J. S. Tissainayagam

Though the draft of the joint task force (JTF) has been published, concerned civil society activists believe only time will tell whether both sides honour the small print in the draft.

The JTF was conceived with the objective of allowing the LTTE to become an integral component of the peace process through alleviating the consequences of war on the people of the northeast.

This was to be achieved by the Tigers participating directly as co-equal partners of the government in rehabilitation, reconstruction and development of the war affected areas.

In other words, the JTF is a body formulated primarily with a political objective in mind. It is to see the government and LTTE are jointly responsible for something that would keep them engaged in the peace process. The alleviation of the suffering of the victims of war is secondary. It is important to know what are the means and what are the ends.

Second, the main girder on which the peace process is built is the ceasefire agreement (CA). It contains various components that not only ensure the protagonists suspend hostilities, but also establishes a modicum of contact to ensure certain vital humanitarian aid is delivered and human rights norms observed.

It was in accordance with the CA that the economic blockade was lifted, checkpoints, public buildings and places of religious worship vacated by the warring parties, the PTA restricted in its application and a ban on abductions, destruction of civilian property etc. imposed.

It should be noted however the CA receives its legitimacy purely from the fact the two conflicting parties have signed the document. It admits no other party, except the facilitators – and that too in a limited role – in implementing the ceasefire and the attendant humanitarian and human rights guarantees.

Therefore the CA is clear on one thing. By virtue of the fact the two warring parties signed the agreement, it recognises two armed groups, one a state and another of semi-state status that would suspend military operations and implement what is agreed on in the CA. In other words, it is a bilateral agreement and it is bilateral because the two parties recognise they are the protagonists who have to suspend conflict according to some structured form, which is spelt out in the CA.

The JTF according to the draft will function under the Prime Minister's Office and consist of six persons – three from each side of the two warring parties – and a single representative from the Norwegians who will act as facilitator. One of the three from each party will be in the respective delegations of the LTTE and the government to the peace talks.

Meanwhile, the JTF might have to be adapted to accommodate cer-

It is to see the government and LTTE are jointly responsible for something that would keep them engaged in the peace process. The alleviation of the suffering of the victims of war is secondary

tain programmes and structures already in place and would require innovative mechanisms to deal with it.

One of these areas is the government's Three-R programme (3RP) that has to be adapted to suit the requirements of the JTF. The 3RP (which stand for relief, rehabilitation and reconciliation) is the most comprehensive programme of its kind drawn by the government.

The 3RP was drawn up during the time the country was at war; therefore it failed to envisage structures such as the JTF. However, though the LTTE was informed of the programme, reportedly some of its recommendations were not taken into consideration when 3RP was finalised and monies pledged at the Donor Forum meeting in Colombo. The Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) was however represented at the meeting.

The 3RP assigns different duties to international NGOs, NGOs and government to implement the programme. The consolidated recommendations included adhering to the norms of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and recommends action agencies including the government and NGOs and a timeframe within which targets have to be met.

Another important component of the 3RP is the rights of the displaced, where the UNHCR's Guiding Principles of Rehabilitation have to be adhered to in rehabilitation and development work. Under this, the government's implementing agencies have to be identified to smoothen the movement of goods and persons in resettlement programmes and to ensure their security.

The next set of problems concern donors and funding, where up to now international agencies were able to function within governmental structures, while at the same time abiding by the demands of the LTTE.

Under the law, all foreign grants and loans as well as major development and rehabilitation plans have to have cabinet approval. Second, all expenditure above Rs.20 million as well as tenders of the same amount need cabinet approval.

Though the draft of the proposed JTF states that all foreign funding will be channelled through the Department of External Resources of the Ministry of Finance, they too will need cabinet approval.

All cabinet approvals rest on presidential sanction. With problems of cohabitation deepening in the past few weeks, soliciting presidential approval might not be forthcoming due to both the president realising that without rehabilitation and development plans going ahead the government's peace initiative would fail, as well as having a convenient excuse to reject such plans blaming the LTTE.

Further, it is believed the JTF is the embryo of the interim administration for the northeast – a concept President Chandrika Kumaratunga heartily loathes.

In the rush NGOs believe a human rights programme has to be put together and be overseen in its implementation by the JTF. This will hold both government and LTTE accountable to adhere to human rights standards through their representatives in the JTF. Though there is a clause in the draft stating human rights concerns will be taken up, it is predicated on the political will to do so.

According to the draft the JTF will function under the Prime Minister's Office. However, the basic contention about the JTF – whether it is going to be a meticulously constituted legal body, or one that meets the approval of the Sinhala people represented by the UNF government and the Tamils represented by the LTTE thereby having nationwide political backing, but no legal status – is yet to be answered.

According to the draft, the JTF remains a body constituted primarily by the government and the LTTE. It continues to be a bilateral exercise, but which has not rejected a consultation process with other groups such as civil society.

Both the UNF and the Tigers have reason to distrust civil society. The government because certain NGOs and religious bodies continue to promote cohabitation, which the UNF feels is a prescription to derail the peace talks, and the LTTE because it believes international NGOs work to promote the agendas of their respective governments, while certain local NGOs are hand-in-glove with the reactionary sections of the government and the military establishment.

These are some of the issues that might need clarification from the leaderships of the respective warring parties, which will have to be resolved for the successful delivery of relief, rehabilitation, development and hopefully reconciliation so vitally needed for the northeast.

High security zone renders Jaffna IDPs in vulnerable position

By D. Sivram (Taraki)

A US state department official who visited Jaffna after it was captured by the army said that the peninsula provided a window of opportunity for reconstruction and development. Even today there is much hype about rebuilding Chavakachcheri, Jaffna town, improving telecommunication facilities, roads and tourism in the north.

Thousands of tourists from the south visit Jaffna today. Ministers and diplomats come and go. New banks and insurance companies from the south have started business in Jaffna and are reporting handsome profits already. Business seems to thrive. Flashy new Indian motorbikes are on the roads everywhere.

All this leaves the impression in one's mind that Jaffna is almost fine. Little would the average visitor know that there are thousands of refugees living in run down refugee camps amid squalor and official negligence.

This is the other side of Jaffna, a reality that the government pretends not to see. The ever-flamboyant Dr. Jayalath Jayawardena would rather be seen walking about Chavakachcheri in the company of diplomats and obsequious Kachcheri officials.

But the refugees of Jaffna remain a neglected lot. Eight months have gone by since the ceasefire agreement between the LTTE and the government was signed, ensuring the suspension of armed hostilities.

There are 113 refugee camps in the Jaffna peninsula. There are more than 10,000 Internally Displaced Persons comprising 2584 families in these camps. The government has made little effort to care for these camps. In fact the government set few up for the purpose of accommodating IDPs.

IDPs who were forced out of their villages in the northwestern parts of the peninsula known as Valigamam North between 1990 and 1992 live in forty-eight camps.

The majority of the IDPs in Jaffna are from this region.

They live in 16 refugee shelters in the Uduvil Division, 5 in Tellipalai, 6 in Kopy, 9 in Chandilippai and 4 in Sanganai. Most of these camps are on private property.

There are eight camps located along the northeastern coast where fisher families that fled military operations from the coastal villages of Valigamam North such as Myillidy now eke out a living in run down shelters along the Pt. Pedro - Thondamanar Road.

The northern part of the Valigamam division was the most populous part of the peninsula before 1984. Today only soldiers live there. Scores of villages are no go zones, sown with minefields.

Kankesanthurai, Tellipalai, Vasavilan and Maviddapuram were densely populated and fast expanding towns before the war began in 1984. Today they lie within the largest high security zone in the country, ruined.

The largest refugee camp for Valigamam north IDPs is the Sabapathy Welfare Center near the Maruthanamadam junction. There are 185 families living here. The roofs of the shelters in this welfare center are mostly made of dried Palmyra frond Thatch. The huts have been built with mud and sticks. The only cement and brick structure at the welfare center is its church. Although the majority of the refugees at this camp are Hindus, everyone worships at the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary. All the refugees here had contributed funds to build the church.

Our Lady of the Rosary was a church in the Kankesanthurai electorate where people of all faiths worshipped. It is partly destroyed and stands derelict in the Sri Lanka army's high security zone in Valigamam north.

Hence the decision of the IDPs to build a replica of it in their camp.

Water is scarce here. There are only four tube wells for the use of the 185 families in the camp. There is one well in the camp which is only

used for bathing and washing. The water in it is undrinkable. There are queues in the morning before the tube wells and the sole water well. Inmates have to take turns to wash and bathe, as the water supply is woefully inadequate.

Latrine facilities are a nightmare for the people in the Sabapathy camp. Initially there were 23 latrines in the welfare center. But only sixteen are usable now. The toilets have to be maintained by the refugees themselves.

"We do minor repairs that we can afford to prevent the remaining toilets from falling apart. We get no help from the authorities for the upkeep of the toilets", says an inmate.

One can see schoolchildren standing in queues in the mornings before the latrines.

The welfare center is on a low-lying, rocky land. The cesspits for the latrines here were built partly above the ground, as it had been difficult to dig deep, breaking the rock below the surface.

Heavy rains flood the refugee camp premises. The latrines are unusable during the rainy season. They cannot be flushed because the water in the cesspits rises above ground level. Worse, refugees fear that the excreta from inevitable leaks in the water filled cesspits is polluting the camp and its shelters.

Even brief showers leave pools of muddy water in the camp.

A large number of Valigamam north refugees fled to the Vanni in 1995 when the Sri Lanka army was advancing into Jaffna. They have begun gradually to return to Jaffna since the ceasefire agreement was signed in February.

These IDPs lament that they made a terrible mistake in deciding to come back. Thirty Valigamam north refugee families that returned to Jaffna in August were sent to the Sabapathy Welfare Center. They have received neither refugee relief nor assistance to put up a shelter. Some of them have made homes with sticks and old polythene sheets. The floor space of a temporary shelter in which they

now live is 10 foot wide and twelve foot long.

The refugees of the Sabapathy camp have been on the run for 12 years.

They have moved bag and baggage six times to six different places since they were rendered refugees in 1990.

The biggest calamity that the Valigamam north refugees face today is that the owners of the lands on which the Welfare Centers are situated are demanding that their property should be returned to them.

The landlords are asking the refugees to leave.

The owner of the 'magistrate camp' premises in Mallakam has sent legal notice, asking the refugees to vacate. The Tellipalai Divisional Secretary's Office has asked the refugees in this camp to move to another place. It has asked them to find another place if they are to receive the full payment from the government to build homes. The D. S office has granted them 10000 rupees each to build houses. However, it is stipulated that the full payment of 25,000 rupees per house can be disbursed only if one builds it on land he/she owns.

"But how can we build on land that is ours. Our lands are in the high security zones. The army is camped there. How can we go back?" asks N. Ganeshan the President of the Federation of IDP Welfare Centers in Jaffna.

"The government is neither giving us money to build nor finding us alternative but habitable land to own," he said. The refugees of the 'magistrate camp' refused to relocate on the land shown them by the DS office because it had no access to roads and was in the midst of an inhospitable

shrub jungle.

Eight months of peace has helped reopen two main schools in two minor sectors of Valigamam north. But refugee children stand little to benefit.

The Tellipalai Union College and the Vasavilaan Central College are functioning again. Yet students in the camps who studied in these schools before they were displaced are unable to go back to their own schools because they live in distant refugee camps.

The refugees formed their own association in Jaffna to fight for their welfare and resettlement seven months ago. The organization is mainly based among the IDPs of Valigamam north.

"Our predicament has been miserable because we have been depending on others for our welfare. It is time for refugees like us to do everything possible to demand the return to our lands", N. Ganeshan said.

He added that petty crimes and anti-social activities are on the increase in the welfare centers. Teenage marriages are also common, according to him.

The refugees were planning to start a campaign to enter their villages in the high security zones without permission from the government. The Valigamam north IDPs are the only ones in the northeast who have not seen their houses and property since they fled their towns and villages 12 years ago.

However, the LTTE has persuaded them not to start their protest now on the grounds that their problem would be taken up during peace talks in Thailand.

Post-trauma stress hits war correspondents

A study shows that many war correspondents exhibit symptoms of serious trauma more usually associated with police officers and combat veterans.

For the study, Dr Anthony Feinstein of the University of Toronto tested 140 male and female war correspondents, and found that they scored higher on tests measuring psychological stress, trauma and depression than 107 journalists who had never covered conflicts.

Intensive interviewing of a core group of 28 war reporting veterans showed that more than a quarter had suffered post-traumatic stress disorder.

The study also suggested that some of the classic personality traits of certain war reporters - difficulty adjusting to peaceful conditions, problematic relationships with friends and partners, alcohol problems - had their roots in post-conflict depression or trauma.

Dr Feinstein acknowledged that

the findings of the survey point to the need for psychological help and back-up for stressed journalists. However, he points out that the survey results also show that war correspondents are a tough breed.

The study's findings match claims reported earlier this year in World Reporter, which suggest that while post-traumatic stress disorder is not uncommon among war correspondents, journalists appear to be more resilient than many when it comes with dealing with trauma.

Some organisations dispute this reading. It has been claimed that correspondents do not discuss trauma for fear of losing assignments. This phenomenon has led prominent BBC correspondents like Jeremy Bowen and David Loyn to urge their peers to discuss illness. Correspondent and editor Mark Brayne went further, and took a six-year psychotherapy training course.

(EPN Newsdesk)

US to install two radio transmitters in Afghanistan

Two 400-kilowatt, medium-wave (AM) transmitters with nationwide reach across Afghanistan will be installed in the country, according to the Iran report of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

The \$10.2 million project is the result of the U.S.-Afghanistan Radio Agreement, signed early in October in Washington.

Radio TV Afghanistan, operated by the Afghan government, will use one transmitter. The Afghan Radio Network Initiative, the

joint 24-hour service of Voice of America (VOA) and RFE/RL, will use the other.

The project includes construction, transportation, and installation of equipment and is expected to take about six months.

Under the agreement, the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors will also install FM transmitters in up to five places, including Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Herat.

According to RFE/RL, the Board

of Governors aims to assist Afghanistan in establishing a national radio network by providing and installing a large AM transmitter and related equipment at the Pol-i-Charkhi site outside Kabul, as well as FM equipment.

The board also seeks to provide Afghans with news and information about the United States and the world that is broadcast 24 hours a day, seven days a week in the Dari and Pashtu languages

(IJ NET)

The American mission in Jaffna: a catalyst of change

By J. S. Tissainayagam

The American Mission Seminary 1823 – 1855 and Modern Education in Jaffna by Bishop S. Jebanesan; privately published; foreword by Professor K. Sivathamby; pp 318 (including appendices, bibliography and plates)

This book, the expansion and translation into English of the author's doctoral thesis to the University of Jaffna in Tamil, deals with the American Ceylon Mission Society (ACMS) and its contribution to the modernisation of Jaffna through the Batticotta (Vaddukodai) Seminary and connected projects such as the fortnightly publication *The Morning Star*, the production of Tamil and English literature in the sciences and the liberal arts, and lives and work of missionaries including Dr. Samuel F. Green, who pioneered western medical studies in Jaffna.

There is a prevailing myth in Jaffna that the Church Mission Society (CMS) and the Methodist Mission being part of the British evangelist project, were at the forefront of establishing schools and converting souls to Protestantism. This book debunks these notions and places the importance of the ACMS and its work in Jaffna.

The primary impact of the ACMS was in modernising tradition-bound Jaffna, not through technology and industrialisation, but through education. Education, imparted by the dissemination of modern knowledge through critical analysis and scientific inquiry in the western tradition, brought in its wake social change.

Jebanesan's thesis could have been more forceful in calling a spade a spade. For instance though he says that the Puritan foundations of Congregationalism believed that knowledge was power and that the American missionaries were imbued by a sense of charity in promoting education as part of their evangelist project, he states elsewhere how they used western education to manipulate native thought and use it as a tool for proselytisation. The College Plan of the Batticotta Seminary stated unequivocally, "The light of erudition is always favourable to Christianity."

There is therefore no doubt the secular component of education at the Seminary was introduced with a motive of spreading the faith. Missionaries exploited scientific knowledge that had made vast strides in the west in the 18th and 19th centuries in controlling the material world to spread Christianity. They used modern science to show up inaccuracies in native (Hindu) knowledge systems of the physical, natural and social sciences and thereby tried to prove Christianity was superior as a religious doctrine to Hinduism.

It was for the same reason missionaries of the ACMS indigenised Christian worship and promoted Tamil studies. The introduction of

But then why did Governor Edward Barnes oppose so vehemently the ACMS? He was against the American missionary population increasing on the island and the establishment of the Seminary at Batticotta managed by the ACMS. What was more, an America missionary who brought with him a printing press was denied entry into the country

critical thinking in Tamil textbooks would lead to the questioning of traditional practices, thereby eroding custom and convention and allowing Christian values and attitudes not only in the practice of religion but in other walks of life too, to seep into the Tamil community.

This establishes that what was behind the missionary enterprise was not so much bringing souls to the faith, but to undermine the fabric of society and allow the penetration of ideas, attitudes and values current in the west.

The British were using education for the purpose of consolidating their hold on the colonies. This is seen in a quote from James Selkirk (P-33): "The mass of people are so bound together by ties of caste and family interest ... that those of the same class cannot be made to testify against each other. A native of influence can, therefore, scarcely be brought to justice... Were the knowledge of English more common ... they would act as checks upon each other ..."

This is cynical exploitation of education to break the hold of the 'influential' resisting colonial rule. Jebanesan goes on to state that there was agreement in the basic aims of 'civilisation' (Pax Britannia) and 'conversion' (evangelism) and the missionaries were interested in the rich dividends of converts by eroding traditional society at "its weakest links."

Though there was this congruence of interests between American Churchmen and British civil servants, Jebanesan believes it stopped short of the Americans having their own colonialist ambitions. But then why did Governor Edward Barnes oppose so vehemently the ACMS? He was against the American missionary population increasing on the island and the establishment of the Seminary at Batticotta managed by the ACMS. What was more, an America missionary who brought

with him a printing press was denied entry into the country.

Jebanesan suggests that this was due Barnes' "sentimental hatred towards the Americans," (P-35) because of their anti-British position during the Napoleonic wars. But does that mean America did not have its own overseas ambitions? The author states the enterprise of bringing souls to God was undertaken in Hawaii at the same time as in Sri Lanka. But Hawaii was to pass into and remains within U.S.'s influence. American imperialism in the Philippines was more violent but scarcely 50 years later.

There was more to Governor Barnes' reluctance in allowing the American missionaries. He might have known their presence had an ulterior motive of destabilising Britain's eastern possessions. There was evidence of this almost a century later when leading lights of the Jaffna Youth Congress who stood for 'poorna swaraj' from British imperialism were nurtured at Jaffna College, which succeeded Batticotta Seminary in 1872.

The indigenising strand in the ACMS' worldview produced a string of remarkable native scholars who helped in producing Christian literature in Tamil. But this was overshadowed by the copious production of secular literature in the same language. The core of the studies at Batticotta, was Tamil. Their preoccupation with Tamil led the missionaries to have close ties with the indigenous Jaffna elite, who had made a significant contribution to the development of Tamil studies.

The missionaries established a Tamil Academy to further their own and general development of the language. Though their appreciation of Tamil depended on the depth of their familiarity with it, Jebanesan quotes H. R. Hoisington an American principal of the Seminary saying, "No language can be more concise, copious, pliant, mellifluous than shen Tamil."

Supplementing this was literature in Tamil on algebra, logic, Hindu philosophy and astronomy, some of them written by the missionaries themselves. Such writings were purged of religious and traditionalist biases. One wonders whether this successful conversion of the Jaffna scholar to scientific reasoning was due to rationalism that forms the bedrock of traditional Tamil thought.

Translations into Tamil by Dr. Samuel Green included the then most up-to-date works in English on pharmacopoeia and medicine, demonstrating that Tamil was rich enough to explain concepts in modern western medicine. Green's hospital at Manipay was the most modern in the island till the medical college was established in Colombo imparting instruction in English.

In the final analysis it appears the evangelist project of the ACMS did not succeed entirely. First, the mission's plan was that a scientific education would lead to learning gaining ascendancy over caste and wealth.

Cont. on page 7

PRAYER OF A WILD GOAT

By V. I. S. Jayapalan

A wild goat am I.

Rocky wilderness, Sir, of course;
Yet it is my Mother Rock, you see!

The thorn in the cleft rock
Is sweet elixir to me.
No match is the sweetness
Of alien grass and bush.

Cleaving the earth
Runs my sweet spring.
Koels from bordering bushes
Compose their verses.

Buried holiness -
Forefathers' horns,
Defeating the lions.

Lord God with moon-breasts,
Bestowed with a sweep of His horns,
The earth on us -
A promise for generations.

Stakes lie
Between the stream and my
Mother Slope
On the slippery rocks,
Atop the rocky peaks,
In the promising meadows,
With their teasing green,
By the streams where hungry
leopards linger -
The stakes lie
Between the stream and my
Mother Slope.

Our epics celebrate
The expanse of meadows
Beneath the rocky mountain.
It was all ours once.
Then came hunger and
pestilence,
All on four in human forms,
Ghastly human forms.

Out of grace, we are told,
Our forefathers gave them
milk.
Fools they were,
They laid fruits and tubes in
fire
And ate them burnt.
I wonder...
If they would burn their
genitals too
Before coition.

We let those human devils
Sleep in our caves.
Rejuvenated were they.
But their minds, we are told,
Were stinking like their
excreta.

They refused to admit
The sanctity of our Lord,
With his nail-moon-horns,
Lightning beard and sun-fiery
eyes,
And made a god like them-
selves.

Rebelled against our Lord -
Our Lord who maketh the
rains,
Breaking the skies with a
storm
Caused at the sweep of His
horns.
The Lord in turn cursed them
To wander on two legs.

They then wielded only
stones,
Slung off their forelegs.
And now, it is thunder and
lightning.
But even they are ignoble

To the God of the Wild Goats,
Who is the ultimate Victor.

They too were then blessed.
They did walk on all fours.
They did dwell in stony caves.
They did eat the herbs like us.
Like unto the men and women
amidst us
Their men and women were
equal.
Their children did play with our
children.

We are told...
They sucked milk one dawn,
Off the breasts of the Primor-
dial Mother.
Right by noon,
They smothered her in coition.
Right by the even,
They fed on her.
Right by the night
They made a drum off her skin,
Sang and danced to the beat.

The forgiving God
Swayed His horns.
The next dawn filled the valley
With wailing through and
through.
Their cries spread through the
sky.
The blood and tears of the
Primordial Mother
They had gulped,
Poured out of the sinners'
bowels and mouths.

But for a -he and a -she,
The human herd had been
swept away.

The two procreated.
And they in turn sinned.
Lord God drove them into
caves,
Shoving them with His horns.
Gave us our rocky mountain -
His promise to our forefathers.
They might have opted for the
meadows,
Embodied of forgiving and pity.

I used to ascend to the rocky
top
To gaze at the moonlit sky.
The firmament is but a milky
river
Flowing from the breasts of
God.
The stars grazing on the banks
Are but the heroes great
Fallen for our sake.

Man ultimately robbed us
Of our caves.
Attacking even the last fortress.

We asked for five rocks.
Finally at least five stones.
But Man is more cruel than the
wolf,
He kills for the sake of killing.

O our great Goat God!
The Calvary promised to us
Fell at the feet of the foe.
Our innocent babes fell in the
war.
Has your heart,
Pitying for the being and yet-to-
be,
Turned to stone?

I hear Your music
On the banks of the milky way,
Are You pursuing turning ewes
In lust?

(Translated by Dr.
Ramaninaidu)

Media, ethnicity and democracy

V.T.Thamilmaran

Sri Lanka provides us a number of instances that identify and explain the forces which determine the role of media in society. This role is determined by the political, social and economic forces of a given community at any given point of time.

It is unfortunate and sad that the Sri Lankan media is sharply polarised along ethnic lines. Whether in

presenting views, comments or discussions, or in reporting news, there is a predetermined position that is assumed and any subject is approached from that position.

What are the basic reasons that have caused this unbridgeable gap among the communities in Sri Lanka? As I understand, it is due to a conceptually uncompromising stand has been taken by both sides of the ethnic divide.

Sinhala nationalism wants to see Sri Lanka as a single entity and as a Sinhala Buddhist state. Tamil nationalism demands equality and wants to maintain equal partnership in the business of governing the state.

Misunderstanding the defensive character of Tamil nationalism led the majority community of the country into believing that the demand of the minority had the sinister motive of destroying the state.

The media could have played a crucial role of educating the public about the history and experiences of other countries where in similar situations a clear understanding of conceptually opposed views had helped to bridge gaps and contributed towards state building. It is not so in the case of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan press, except a few exceptions such as the alternative papers Ravaya,

Yukthiya and Hiru,

while promoting Sinhala nationalism, engaged in vociferous attacks on Tamil nationalism, portraying it

as instigating and fostering terrorism. Terms such as terrorists, separatists, traitors and

unpatriotic forces have been used indiscriminately by the Sinhala and English press, which have never made any effort to understand the rationale behind the demands of the Tamils.

To create gullibility in the Sinhala readership, the Sinhala press continues to provide discourses based on 'real' myths, the veracity of which cannot be challenged. But the fact that we are not living in the 'Mahavansa' era is not impressed upon the minds of our brethren. In fact it is portrayed as a crime to even try to persuade people believe that such myths do not really in exist.

As long the just right of self determination of the Tamil nation is not recognized and accepted, there

will not be any peace in this country. It is the duty of the Sinhala press today to carry the message to the masses that what is going on in this country is not a war but a struggle. The forms and means of this struggle may vary from time to time but the struggle continues.

Furthermore, what the Sinhala press and some sections of the English press have failed to realize is that their attitude of promoting Sinhala nationalism, wittingly or unwittingly, would strengthen the hand of racist forces which want to oppress the Tamils into a submissive minority in this country.

It is quite natural that the degree of offensive attacks attracts an equal degree of defensive acts. The law permits this defensive action in the name of self-defense. If this could be allowed in

the case of an individual; why cannot it be exercised by a group in a collective sense? This is the rationale behind the struggle of the Tamils for their rights in this country.

Tamils do not see/treat/ consider Tamil militants as terrorists because of the simple fact they have taken up arms in self-defense in the face of pogroms and deliberate acts by the state to penalize Tamil society collectively. It was believed that there was no other way than armed militancy to defend the Tamil people.

Looking from 1947 onwards, all the avenues for expressing dissatisfaction with the Sri Lankan state were shut to the Tamils, including by violent means. This forced Tamil youth to resort to armed struggle. Hence, as far as the Tamils are concerned, the term 'terrorism' does not hold water. In fact the war was forced on the community when it was engaged in the struggle to win its legitimate rights.

Sometimes, idiots pose the question, "What are the aspirations of the Tamils?" Any sane person who has even a slight understanding of democracy and pluralism cannot afford to pose this question. The fact that one side is in a position to ask the other side about its aspirations itself shows there is something wrong somewhere. It would be clear evidence that the aspirations of one society have been ignored by the other.

If all are equal citizens in a given nation-state, how can one community ask the other about its aspirations? If all are equal then the conditions for posing such a question would never arise.

The greatest service our media could do for this country is to help promote pluralism and participatory democracy, which indeed is an important role expected of the press in democratic nations.

Canada criticised for discriminating against natives

Canada and a host of Central and South American countries are marginalizing and discriminating against their indigenous populations, human-rights group Amnesty International said Friday.

"More than half the countries on the (American) continent recognize the multicultural character of the state and guarantee indigenous rights in their constitutions and legislation," the group said in a statement.

"However, this is in stark contrast with the reality faced by the vast majority of indigenous people from Canada, through Central America, down to the very tip of Chile and Argentina, who are often treated as second-class citizens."

In Canada's case, Amnesty singled out the case of Dudley George, a native protester who was killed by an Ontario Provincial Police officer in 1995.

The group says that the shooting "has still not been the object of an independent enquiry despite repeated calls including by the UN Human Rights Committee."

Canada was also named among other countries in which indigenous people attempting to reclaim the lands of their ancestors are being opposed by landowners and corporations, often supported by the authorities.

Other countries criticized by Amnesty for mistreating native populations included Brazil and Mexico, where indigenous people are being adversely impacted by land developments, Argentina, where indigenous people were beaten by police and Honduras, where indigenous leaders have been killed.

"Amnesty International believes that governments throughout the American

continent are clearly lacking the political will to make indigenous rights a reality," the group's statement said.

The group said governments should respect indigenous rights "not only in the legal, judicial and political system, but throughout society as a whole."

Amnesty's comments came a day before the United States celebrates Columbus Day, to honour the landing of Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus on the American continent.

In recent years, the holiday has been rejected by those who view it as a celebration of conquest and genocide. In its place, Indigenous Peoples Day is celebrated.

Many Latin American countries observe this day as Dia de la Raza, celebrating the Spanish heritage of the Latin American peoples.

The report also detailed the case of a Brazilian Xavante leader forced to flee his home after receiving death threats. It said native leaders in Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia had also been threatened.

It cited Honduras for not implementing native rights agreements it reached in 2000 and Mexico, whose legislature watered down a native rights constitutional amendment so much Zapatista guerrillas rejected it when it was passed last year.

The report made no mention of natives in the United States.

The report was especially critical of Guatemala and Colombia.

It said Guatemala had done little to help Mayans recover from a 1960-1996 civil war. In Colombia, the report said paramilitary groups have killed and kidnapped several prominent native leaders.

(The Globe and Mail)

The American ...

Cont. from page 6

Though ACMS wanted students of any caste or sect to gain admission to Batticotta, this plan went awry because the missionaries used education as the catalyst for modernisation and therefore had to rely on the elite caste that was the only educated segment in the community. This resulted in compromises where the high caste students insisted on using separate wells and ate food cooked from outside than share them with children of the lower castes in the Seminary.

But if as envisaged by Selkirk in the quotation above, the objective of the British in introducing an En-

glish education was to break the strong bonds of kinship of the 'influential' families, English education seem to have done its job. With the passage of time, the social elite in Jaffna in search of an English education began enrolling at the Seminary.

Interestingly, Jebanesan gives names of Protestant families that were the "top-most class of the grade called Vellalas" (P-159) associated with the Seminary. What is not certain however is whether all these families are "top-most class of the grade called Vellalas." But with the non-Vellalas who were able to make social progress

due to a Christian education, colonial enterprise had succeeded in creating a new elite to break the dominance of the 'influential' families who Selkirk was trying to destroy.

Second, the American project of evangelism began to take a beating in the 1850s. Arumuga Navalar pioneered a socio-educational movement, which stressed on a traditional way of life associated with Saivism, coupled with a modern, scientific education. This led to falling numbers of Christians. In 1855 of the 96 students enrolled in the Seminary, only 11 were Christian.

This failure led to the American

Board of Commissioners demanding why missionary work in Hawaii of the corresponding duration was "astonishingly encouraging," whereas in 33 years of labour the American mission had won only 733 souls for Christ in Jaffna. The evangelist project was successful in Hawaii and made that island part of the U.S orbit, whereas in Jaffna it was not so fruitful but inspired a forward-thinking society. A wise people know what to embrace and what to reject.

Therefore, the ACMS' project of 'eroding traditional society at its weakest links' was unsuccessful because cast prejudice could not be

eradicated and the Hindu backlash was strong enough for the Seminary to be closed in 1855 on the excuse it served no purpose. As the author notes, its most enduring contribution is through modernisation brought into Jaffna society by western thought and ideas disseminated through education.

All in all, Jebanesan's work is commendable, though more likely to meet the fancy of the scholar and the historian than the general reader. It is unfortunately of uneven quality and could have done with more meticulous proof reading.

Sinhala nationalists will hold northeast IDPs to ransom

By D. Sivram (Taraki)

Answering questions at a brief press conference with the media in Jaffna, Norway's deputy minister for foreign affairs, Helgesen said that the proposed joint task force will deal with resettlement, rehabilitation and de-mining too.

He emphasised that the joint task force will not deal with the question of the high security zones of the Sri Lankan armed forces amid and encompassing Tamil towns and villages. Helgesen said that the matter would be considered separately from the setting up of the joint task force.

A journalist asked him whether the question of the high security zones (HSZ) could be considered separately from de-mining and resettling because the majority of the Internally Displaced People (IDP) in the northeast is affected by the Sri Lankan military HSZs.

Helgesen did not answer the question. Instead he said that he would discuss de-mining and resettlement with the leader of the Liberation Tigers in the Vanni on Wednesday October 23.

Thousands of IDPs in the northeast cannot be resettled in their villages and towns because the Sri Lankan armed forces are encamped in HSZs in their areas. The environs of the HSZs are heavily mined. Government officials say that such places should be de-mined to facilitate resettlement.

The biggest hurdle before the Norwegian facilitators today is the question of high security zones which the army considers indispensable to maintain a strategic edge over the LTTE in the northeast. It has thrown the UNF government and the Norwegians on the horns of a dilemma.

Among other things, the Sri Lankan state has to show its commitment to the peace process by looking after war afflicted people whom it claims as its own citizens. If the dividends of peace do not trickle down to them, then their faith in the process would begin to evaporate.

Also the peace process has given the Sri Lankan state a window of opportunity to lay the ground for regaining the confidence of a section of the country's population that has lost faith in its ability and legitimacy to rule over them.

Resettlement of IDPs is therefore the main task before the government now. How can anyone talk about Jaffna enjoying the dividends of peace when thousands of its people are

linguishing in refugee shelters?

Certainly the peace dividend is being reaped quite handsomely in Jaffna by the likes of Seylan Bank, Ceylinco Insurance, Browns, Dialog etc., while few are even prepared to talk about the IDPs of Jaffna and the immense deprivations that they have suffered for more than 12 years.

The government cannot get away with the tamashas and visits by local and foreign dignitaries to Jaffna.

At some point then, the UNF has to give a tangible peace dividend to the people of Jaffna and that is resettling those among them who were driven out from their towns and villages.

However, it appears that the UNF cannot disagree too much with the army on allowing IDPs to resettle in high security zones. The army feels and in some instances clearly stated that it cannot vacate any of the HSZs in the northeast until a permanent settlement is reached.

The stand of the President, the PA, the JVP and the majority of the Sinhala press is the same. In fact they are more vociferous on the matter.

And the permanent settlement envisioned by them includes the de-mobilizing of the LTTE.

The fact is that the majority of the IDPs in the northeast cannot be resettled without de-mining and the dismantling of HSZs within which their villages and towns are situated now.

Therefore, the proposed Joint Task Force to be set up by the government and the LTTE, would be able to do very little of its main job - resettling the IDPs - until a permanent settlement is agreed upon and 'constitutionalised'. Obviously given Sri Lanka's political arithmetic, this is going to be a very long haul.

Sinhala owned media and the majority of Sinhala politicians are stuck in a mindset that is more than seven years old.

They see every brush that the Tamil public has had with the Sri Lankan armed forces since the signing of the ceasefire agreement as veiled, desperate attempts by the LTTE to rid the northeast of HSZs.

Such friction with the public would have been inevitable if the armed forces had remained in schools, Buddhist temples and private houses in Matara and Hambantota after it crushed the JVP insurrection in 1990.

They have to understand that much water has flown under the bridge since the LTTE demanded that the government should remove the Pooneryn camp to help civilians travel between Jaffna and the Vanni mainland.

This time the LTTE has negotiated all the concerns it has

Thousands of IDPs in the northeast cannot be resettled in their villages and towns because the Sri Lankan armed forces are encamped in HSZs in their areas. The environs of the HSZs are heavily mined. Government officials say that such places should be de-mined to facilitate resettlement.

for the Tamils in the northeast into the clauses of the ceasefire agreement (CFA).

The Sinhala owned media and Sinhala politicians should note that the Tigers are not demanding anything outside the CFA.

The LTTE has not called for the dismantling of any high security zone in the northeast, barring those situated in schools, hospitals and temples.

They should also note that the Tigers have not stipulated that the Sri Lankan armed forces should vacate private homes and property. If the army has to leave the houses, buildings, lands and fields that it is occupying currently in the northeast, then most high security zones would have to be dismantled.

It has been pointed on many occasions that the Sri Lankan armed forces do not have any legal basis for occupying private property now.

After the Emergency Regulations lapsed and the Prevention of Terrorism was suspended under the terms of the CFA the military has no legal right to seize and keep moveable and immovable property from the public. Hence, the status of the HSZs can be legally challenged.

But the LTTE has not done so. In fact much to the disgruntlement of the IDP's of Valigamam north in Jaffna, it has dissuaded them from launching a protest campaign to go back to their homes in the Palaly-Kankesanthurai High Security Zone.

The LTTE has left the ball in the Sri Lankan state's court. As the peace process drags on, it is quite certain that the Sinhala owned media and the Sinhala polity would increasingly be seen as keeping Tamil IDP's ransom until the LTTE agrees to a solution and demobilizes.

I am sure Sinhala nationalists

are congratulating themselves every time they sternly warn the UNF against acts by the Tamil public to give vent to their frustration over the military occupying their homes and villages - congratulating themselves that they have seen through the LTTE ruse to evict the Sri Lankan armed forces from strategic positions in the northeast.

Do they know that the STF commandos have been occupying the whole village of Kanjirankudah after driving out its people in 1990? Do they know that hundreds of prosperous traders and farmers of KKS and Vasavilan in Jaffna have been driven to destitution after the Sri Lankan armed forces occupied their homes and property?

They do not know and would never want to know.

In the final analysis the Sinhala nationalists want the Sri Lankan state and its armed to hold thousands of IDPs to ransom, blocking resettlement, in the earnest belief they are helping the army maintain its strategic 'superiority'. Hence Tamil IDPs may languish in limbo for years to come while the Sinhala nationalists strive to achieve their objectives by thus influencing the content of the peace process.

Little do they understand the nature of the political folly they are indulging in for they cannot extricate themselves from the old paradigm with which they customarily measured the LTTE.

The war/peace paradigm of the Tigers has undergone a fundamental shift, which few have noticed, busy, as they are, crying wolf.

Therefore the LTTE will not ask for the dismantling of the high security zones. And Pirapaharan may say with a chuckle, "let the Sinhala nationalists stew in their own state juices".

Tamil needs state patronage

Tamil language and culture can never prosper as long as Tamils do not have state power. The Tamil language is demeaned by Tamils themselves in Tamilnadu. One cannot even engage in peaceful protest for Tamil rights in Tamilnadu. Tamilians and the Tamil language cannot survive until the Hindutva ideology is extirpated from Tamil society," said Mr. R. Thirumavalavan, member of the Tamilnadu legislative assembly, addressing a meeting in the University of Jaffna Wednesday.

Mr. Thirumavalavan is the leader

of the Liberation Cheetahs party in Tamilnadu.

"Tamils do not name their children in Tamil today. Tamil movies are given English names. Our ancient language has many Sanskrit words, which we take for granted as Tamil. Tamils build temples; they work hard to construct every part of the temple with their money and labour. Once the temple is complete, the Tamil is asked to stand away from god. When the temple is consecrated, he/she can worship only the building's pinnacle. The

Brahmins in Tamilnadu are bold enough to stop temple poojas being performed in Tamil. They say that Tamil is a despicable language (Neesa Basha). And the tamils in Tamilnadu listen to them because they have lost all sense of self respect", Mr. Thirumavalavan said.

The Tamil poet Inqulab, the vice chancellor of the University of Jaffna, the film director from Tamilnadu, Puhalethi Thangaraj, the writer P. Jeyaprakasam etc., addressed the meeting in the Kailasapathy Hall in the Jaffna University.

...And not a drop to drink

By Jude L. Fernando

"The stock markets in New York, London and Tokyo continue to record low trading in response to the uncertainty of the winner in last week's UK general elections and the public anxiously awaits a court decision on the re-count of election results. As this news spreads around the world, many nations, particularly in the Third World, are faced with severe water shortages, the threat of water born diseases, hyperinflation in water prices and violent water-riots" (Guardian, 1st April 2005)

Although fictitious, this 'news article' above, is a very possible scenario, unless we take concrete measures to prevent the worldwide privatization of water resources, now imposed on developing countries by the World Bank.

In Sri Lanka too, unless drastic preemptive measures are taken, the Bank will exploit the current political uncertainty as means of subverting the protests against water privatization in Sri Lanka.

The Bank's arguments about improving efficiency and environmental quality are theoretically flawed and based on unsound empirical evidence and usually implemented through deceitful policies, manipulation of political power and the NGOs.

Privatization means much more than simply charging a user fee for water resources. It means changing their ownership and control. *Water Vision* noted, "It is equally important to note that pricing does not automatically mean efficiency. If we take the case of oil, a natural resource, has the pricing led to efficiency? ...The term efficiency itself is undefined and non-specific."

There are also important implications of and distinctions between government sector and private sector charging user-fees. The latter leads to serious welfare, environmental and social crises, far outnumbering its benefits.

The global water industry is valued at about US\$400 billion annually. Ten corporate players dominate the global water industry organized as three clusters - two French companies control over 70 percent of the existing world water market, four consortia and a group of smaller water companies that includes three British, and one U.S.-based company hold the balance.

Framing of the privatization arguments in terms of 'efficiency and environmental sustainability' disguises its primary motive - profit. This means natural resources cannot be available for everybody based on need and environmental considerations but on one's ability to pay for them.

Privatization redefines natural

resource products as commodities, end-users as customers, and those who profit from them as their new owners. Profit maximization, in turn, is based on artificially producing a scarcity of water whether there is a natural abundance or not. This inevitably creates water shortages and quickens the process through which droughts and famines lead to chronic hunger and diseases because people lack entitlement over water, says Economics Nobel Prize Laureate Amartya Sen.

If one considers development as a basic human right, then both access to water and its commercialization cannot be treated equally under the law. Since profits are predicated on inequality, the priorities of the legal system and the state in a capitalist context are to serve commercial interests. Human rights simply 'trickle down' not as rights but as the fallout of the selfish interests of the Bank, the MNCs, and 'users.'

This means access to water for millions of people, (including deaths of 30,000 children daily, due to preventable causes) is now at the mercy MNCs whose decisions about the prices and the quantity of water available to the local communities are primarily based on the values of their stocks determined by investor speculation.

Traditional irrigation systems collect water leaving the paddy field. Their philosophy was to ensure that not a single drop was wasted. Indigenous knowledge systems are capable of efficiently managing natural conservation of water ensuring continuous availability. In contrast to this, the water from modern irrigation systems is mostly wasted as runoff.

The main pollutants of the water systems in rivers and lagoons in Sri Lanka are industry and the shrimp farmers, mainly located in Sri Lanka's Northwestern provinces. These industries in fact are in business because of they enjoy tax concessions and relaxed environmental laws because they are partners of the MNC's seeking to exploit domestic water resources.

Hemantha Withanage, executive director, Environmental Foundation Ltd., Sri Lanka, has argued against the official policy of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to privatize water in order to discourage (through price hikes) waste of scarce water resource. He points that paddy cultivation is far from inefficient, because traditionally agricultural sector has proved to be capable of being able to recover the water seemingly 'lost' by seepage further down the chain of agricultural production.

In most developed countries, the management of water resources is in the hands of the public domain and attempts at privatization have been mostly unsuccessful due to public protests. For example, in

Hemantha Withanage, executive director, Environmental Foundation Ltd., Sri Lanka, has argued against the official policy of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to privatize water in order to discourage (through price hikes) waste of scarce water resource

the United States, local governments have generally assumed responsibility for providing water services. About 80% of municipal and regional water systems in the U.S continue to be in the public domain, despite increased pressure to privatize them..

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), a non-profit organization representing the U.S's largest publicly owned water agencies that supply drinking water to 110 million people nationwide is concerned about the negative impact of privatization on local governments, especially since four of the major companies involved in the U.S. municipal / regional water market are based in other countries.

The National Public Radio (USA) reported on 15th October that environmental and citizen groups in Texas are protesting against the new water project by millionaire businessmen T. Boone Picken to draw ground water from a reservoir in his private property and sell it to a city in Texas.

In Britain, privatization has resulted in massive public protest over sudden increases in water prices, water shortages and thousands of low-income people having their water connections severed. It led to mass protests resulting in the reintroduction of stronger government oversight and regulation. In France, a former mayor of Angouleme and an executive of a major water company were convicted and imprisoned for taking bribes from companies that bid on public water concessions.

The worldwide privatization agenda is implemented and sustained through political patronage and corruption, although these practices in business circles in the west are known as 'networking' or 'strategic planning.' If MNCs lose profits have access to subsidies known as 'bail out packages' from their governments, while the third world has no such concessions in terms of debt repayment to companies from where they buy water.

The social, political and cultural adaptation to commercialization of water leads to serious societal (e.g. when commercialization reinforce the existing ethnic, territorial, and caste boundaries)

conflicts. For example, in the central Bolivian city of Cochabamba, the privatization of water, which included to a 40-year lease over the water resources in the region to a subsidiary of Bechtel, resulted in violence in January 2000.

The price of drinking water tripled and peasants in the surrounding arid region suddenly found that the water they had been drawing freely for generations no longer belonged to them. The people of Cochabamba resisted the takeover of their water and won back control, but only after clashes with government forces had led to several deaths and mass arrests. Bechtel is now suing the Bolivian government for US\$25 million for 'lost profits.'

Consequently, the World Bank has become extremely sophisticated in the methods used to implement water privatization. One comes under the guise of helping to improve the water quality and distribution currently run by the public sector. For example, the World Bank approved a US\$57 million equivalent an interest-free financing to assist the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka (MASL) to improve water resource management, internal efficiency, and streamlining.

The conditions attached to the loans included the transfer of responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the distribution process and field canals to farmers' organizations, and commercializing / privatizing MASL's business activities in areas such as civil works design. This is the beginning of gradual process of privatization.

Privatization of water is now widely used as a means of expanding the market for loans (the profitable aspect of the development industry) and a condition for debt relief and restructuring. This, ironically, is the Bank's response to a worldwide campaign (Jubilee 2000) for cancellation of third world debt.

The Bank loaned to Ghana US \$100 million for debt relief under the condition that it privatized water. Activist, Abugre says, "There is a lot at stake. The government is broke and \$100 million is a lot of money. It just picked up the privatization process and decided to fast-track it even though there

was no major debate about this."

"When the World Bank came and told us we were a Highly Indebted Poor Country, Ghanaians were offended," says Charles Abugre. "In our culture that concept means you are unable to do anything for yourself...If we now need assistance as a highly indebted poor country, then why are they putting yet more conditions like privatization on to our debt relief? This is just another agenda to control our lives."

Abugre summarizes popular sentiment thus: "The idea that a foreign company will decide whether I get water or whether I don't get water, when they are pumping that water from my rivers and my streams and turning it into something that I don't have access to when I can't pay - it's outrageous. What right does this company have to do that?"

In South Africa, after privatization, the poor rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal lost access to the safe water they had enjoyed even under the apartheid regime. For the first time in their history, poor communities are forced to pay for their water and corporate owners shut down water supply when they are unable to collect taxes resulting in widespread health hazards and local conflicts.

The World Bank is notorious for manipulating various governments and powerless people in deceitful ways. Jim Shultz and Tom Kruse of the Democracy Center, Cochabamba, Bolivia, pointed out that "The World Bank used every coercive power at its disposal to force water privatization on the people of Cochabamba. The process that resulted was carried out in a shroud of secrecy, with just one bidder and by a government completely unequipped to adequately negotiate with or regulate a private monopoly."

Finally, the Bank, with the help of NGOs and local consultants, exploit indigenous knowledge systems, decentralized political structures and farmer organizations to implement its privatization agenda. The use of highly seductive language of participatory development, particularly in situations where private property rights are not developed and political conditions are inappropriate for privatization, make local people believe that they are in control of their resources, while in fact they simply function as bonded laborers of MNC's and the World Bank.

Ultimately, because governments measure performance in terms of inflow of foreign aid, they simply cannot work against the interests of their donors. The efforts by societal groups struggling against privatization are bound to fail unless they have a national development plan based on socialized basic needs and a political agenda to implement it.



A civilian boat with military personnel going to worship at Nagadipa

Pic by Buddhika Weerasinghe

Peace in Nagadipa

Nainathivu looks busy after 12 years of isolation. Drinking water is scarce but it does not deter hundreds of Sinhala and Tamil pilgrims who visit the island daily now. There is free lunch for everyone at the Nagapooshani Amman temple, which is only a stone throw away from the Nagadeepa Vihara. On Poya days one sees many soldiers from army and navy camps in other parts of the peninsula being escorted to worship at the Nagadeepa Vihara.

The vendors by the road address you in Sinhalese and, if they do get

a reaction, in Tamil. One of the roadside vendors had come a long way from Kodikamam to sell Jaffna grown grapes. "Business is good with the Sinhalese", he says. So does the man who sells valuable coral reef rocks, torn freshly from their beds at the Kurikkattuvaan jetty from where you board the boat to Nainathivu. Some of the coral formations he has on sale are beautifully fluorescent.

One has to travel through the islands of Velanai and

Punguduthivu to cross the sea to reach Nainathivu. This island is referred to as Manipallavam in the medieval Tamil Buddhist epic Manimekalai. For the Buddhists, according to their legends, Nainathivu is one of the three places which Lord Buddha had visited in Sri Lanka.

It takes about two and a half to three hours to reach the island of delft by boat from the Kurikkattuvaan jetty. Until recently the island was controlled by the EPDP and few outsiders dared to visit the place.

Life is yet to return to normal in the islands. Resettlement is difficult not only because the Sri Lanka Navy is occupying whole neighbourhoods but also because the islands are running out of fresh water. The sea is gradually seeping into the soil.

There are eight inhabited and two uninhabited islands off Jaffna. They constituted a separate electorate in the 50s. Later, the island of Karainagar where the Sri Lanka Navy's largest base is located was severed from the Islands Electorate and was attached to the Vaddukkoddai Electorate.

Since then the islands of Mandaithivu, Leyden (Kayts), Eluvaithivu, Aanalaithivu, Nainathivu, Delft (Neduntheevu), Punguduthivu have come to be

known as the 'Islands'.

The islands of Mandaithivu, Leyden and Punguduthivu are well linked by causeways to the Jaffna town.

On the northern tip of the Leyden is Allaipitty, the main entrance to the islands guarded by the Sri Lanka navy.

If you take the turn on the main road from Allaipitty to Velanai junction, you would come upon the beautiful White Sand Beach (Vellaimanal Kadatkarai) village. Here you can visit the famous Chaatty Church and the Mankumpaan Mosque. Muslims returning to the village are renovating this picturesque mosque by the sea.

But developing tourism is the last thing on the minds of the people in the islands of Jaffna.



Pilgrims on their way to the shrine



Nagadipa vihare