

A signboard in English and Sinhala at Muhamalai, Jaffna, separates the army and LTTE lines Pix by Buddhika Weerasinghe

'World support depends on deal'

By A Staff Correspondent

The nature of continued international support for the United Nation Front's (UNF) peace ef-

forts will depend partly on the constitutional arrangement for regional autonomy the government can offer to the minorities, Asian

diplomatic sources said. In the absence of a viable plan for comprehensive regional autonomy, Colombo cannot expect a carte blanche from all sections of the international community, according to them.

Financial backing from donors for reconstruction and development in the northeast will be determined largely on the basis of the structure and powers of the interim administration, the sources said.

"The LTTE is currently advising on matters relating to the efficient functioning of the central and provincial administrations with view to expedite rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in the northeast province. This means an interim administration would have to include powers to oversee the provincial administration and a substantial portion of the central government institutions in the province. But so far we have had no indication of how the government is going to approach the matter," a Northeast provincial council official said.

"The international backing for the UNF government's peace efforts settlement of the Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict will have to ensure the rights and aspirations of the Tamil people.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is certain that the international community will be able to successfully advise the UNF government to understand that any solution should be based on the legitimate and democratically articulated political aspirations of the Tamil people.

"The government has to have a basic idea of what the powers it is prepared to grant the interim administration before it goes for talks with the Liberation Tigers in Thailand," said Joseph Pararajasingham, TNA MP for Batticaloa.

The comments came in the wake of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe meeting Wednesday with US President George W. Bush and other senior officials of his administration in a bid to explore closer strategic cooperation, expand trade ties and increase government-to-government links.

President Bush, according to the White House, welcomed the prime minister's initiative, supported by the Norwegian government, to bring the LTTE to the negotiating table. The president offered American support for Sri Lanka's pursuit of peace in this endeavor and economic development, and proposed to send several teams to assess how best we can work together in those areas. The president and the prime minister welcomed the intent of the Peace Corps to return to Sri Lanka - as soon as conditions permit."

Wickremesinghe in an interview with the 'New York Times' on Tuesday said that Sri Lanka had benefited immensely by the U.S. war on terrorism after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Sri Lanka was also expected to sign Amenities and Cross Services Agreement with the US government and is scheduled to participate in joint naval exercises with the US and other Asian countries in Bangladesh later this year.

Canada releases terrorism list

OTTAWA - The federal government released a list of seven alleged terrorist groups Tuesday, warning Canadians not to associate with them or face up to 10 years in jail. "If we're going to be successful and stop terrorism, we need to deter, disrupt and dismantle terrorist groups and those who engage in terrorist acts," Solicitor General Lawrence MacAulay said in announcing the list.

The list is part of the Anti-Terrorism Act, passed after the Sept. 11 attacks in the U.S. "By this listing, we are publicly identifying those entities for Canadians, and we are telling entities and the people who support them

that you can't do business here." MacAulay said helping terrorists could involve anything from hooking up a telephone for them to renting them an apartment. The government said it has determined that the following groups have knowingly engaged in terrorist activity:

1. Al Qaida , 2. Al Jihad , 3. Vanguards of Conquest , 4. Armed Islamic Group , 5. Salafist Group for Call and Combat , 6. Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya , 7. Al-Ittihad Al-Islami
- The government wouldn't say if any of the groups are active in Canada. MacAulay said more groups will be added to the list.

Self-determination referendum part of Sudan peace deal

Last Saturday, 20th July 2002 the Government of Sudan and the secessionist groups from the southern parts of that country which have been fighting for independence for the last 19 years signed an agreement in Nairobi.

The war of secession broke out in Sudan in 1983. The northern Sudan is populated by an Afro-Arabic ethnic people. The southern Sudan is populated by Afro-Nubian peoples who are distinct from the northerners. Both populations are the majority in their respective areas of domicile.

The Sudan Accord acknowledges the southern peoples' right to self determination. The southern peoples are to have autonomous government of their choice. A transitional government would be in power at the centre for a period of six years. Representatives of the Islamic government and the secessionist forces will form the transitional government.

According to Associated Press Writer Donna Bryson:

Over 19 years of fighting, Sudan has seen truces brokered and broken, accords announced and denounced. But some observers say renewed U.S. interest and an international atmosphere transformed by Sept. 11 has given them hope that the latest Sudanese agreement will be different.

"There is a chance," Rev. Enock Tombe, head of the Sudan Council of Churches, said Tuesday in a telephone interview from Khartoum, Sudan's capital. But "what worries us is whether the parties will implement the agreement, given that previous agreements have not been implemented."

Among many Sudanese, hard hit by a war that pits the Islamic north against the largely Christian and animist south and has resulted in the deaths of 2 million, reaction was equally cautious. As short-

wave radios carried word Saturday of a major agreement reached at talks in neighboring Kenya, no one celebrated in a camp near Wau, 500 miles south of Khartoum, for people displaced by war and related famine.

"When I can go back to my village and come back with cows to sell and continue my education, then that means peace has come, not before," said camp dweller Wilson Wole, 20.

With Saturday's announcement in Kenya, the government, which had vowed to create an Islamic state after seizing power in 1989, agreed state and religion should be separate. It also said that six years after a full peace agreement was signed, Sudanese in the mainly Christian and animist south would be allowed to vote on whether to remain part of the country.

The government had for years resisted those rebel demands.

John Ashworth, a South Africa-based analyst who works for Sudanese churches, said leaders in Khartoum could be yielding now in hopes peace will open the way to international aid and oil entrepreneurs. An end to fighting could also end talk of their extremism — a label they fear could make them targets in the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

"They've been looking for international credibility and international respectability," Ashworth said in a telephone interview.

"After Sept. 11, things changed," Tombe agreed.

Sudan's desire to be seen as an ally by the United States gives Washington great influence. Strong U.S. interest in resolving Africa's longest war, fueled in part by U.S. Christian groups who have rallied to the southerners' cause, was expressed in the appointment last year of former U.S. Sen. John Danforth as special presidential envoy to Sudan.

John Prendergast, a former U.S.



diplomat who as co-chair of the Africa Program of the International Crisis Group has closely followed Sudan's war, said the United States is the only mediator to whom both sides will listen. It must remain heavily involved for the Kenyan framework to become a peace agreement, he said in a telephone interview from Washington.

"If we're going to get to an agreement, it's going to be very wrenching for both sides. They have to be pushed and pulled and prodded," Prendergast said.

Hard-liners in Khartoum already have questioned whether the government was offering to give up too much.

"Issues and established facts such as Islamic law, federal rule and unity should not be compromised," Mohammed Hassan al-Amin told The Associated Press Sunday. Al-Amin is an official of the Popular National Congress headed by Hassan

Turabi. Turabi, now feuding with President Omar el-Bashir, was the ideologue behind the fundamentalist brand of Islam that is the basis of Sudanese law.

The southerners also have their hard-liners, who hold out hope of wresting independence — or at least a better deal — on the battlefield.

Sudan Background:

A civil war has raged in Sudan for most of the 45 years since independence in 1956. The origins of the conflict are found in the underdevelopment of the south during the colonial period, which prompted the emergence of the southern-based Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has battled successive northern-based governing regimes. Following a 1989 military coup led by the National Islamic Front, the SPLA was joined by northern parties opposed to the Khartoum regime in a coalition

called the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

The war, although still waged mostly in the south, is now national in scale. The principal factors driving the conflict are: disparities in the allocation of power, land and resources; the imposition of sectarian laws; and the violation of the human rights of Sudan's marginalized people. As is common in contemporary conflicts, civilians are the principal casualties. According to the United Nations, nearly two million people have died since 1983 and over four million people have been displaced from their homes, resulting in the largest internally-displaced population in the world.

Since the early 1990s, the principal forum for a resolution of the war has been the regional mediation conducted by the Inter-governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), which consists of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and Somalia. In 1994, IGAD obtained the agreement of the conflicting parties to a Declaration of Principles (DOP) as a basis for resolving the conflict. The DOP maintains that the unity of Sudan and the establishment of a secular state are given priority, while reserving the right to self-determination of the south. However, progress in moving from the DOP to a comprehensive peace agreement has been extremely slow.

In recent years, a competing peace initiative has been put forward by Egypt and Libya, which have so far been excluded from the IGAD process because they are perceived as being pro-Government of Sudan (GOS). The Egyptian-Libyan Initiative has little credibility in the international community; however, it is widely recognized that its proponents—particularly Egypt—will need to be brought into the IGAD equation eventually if this process is to succeed.

Democracy difficult to keep, UN study finds

Democracy is in retreat in almost half of the countries where it put down roots during the past 20 years, says a United Nations report published Wednesday on the state of the world.

The Human Development Report 2002 found that while democracy made progress for the first time in 81 of the planet's nearly 200 countries during the 1980s and 1990s, it has proved a slippery road.

Just 47 of those 81 countries have retained their democratic systems. Others slid back into authoritarian rule or entered what the UN called a "pseudo" democracy. Pakistan is an example of the first and Zimbabwe the second.

The United Nations Development Program has published its re-

port every year since 1990, ranking nations according to a host of factors, including income and human dignity. Canada ranked third on the list. Norway was first.

Omar Noman, one of the co-authors of the report, said that the UN Development Program made democracy the theme of its report this year because it wanted to draw attention to the fragile state of new democracies. Just two years ago, it wrote a report celebrating the spread of democracy through Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, parts of Africa and Asia, and the Philippines.

"Now that is tempered with the realization that a number of democracies are in serious difficulties," Mr. Noman said in an interview from London.

Progress toward democracy is

stalled in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone, the report said; Belarus, Cameroon, Togo and Uzbekistan allowed elections but limited the power of the opposition.

The report was also prompted by events of Sept. 11. In the months since the attacks on the United States, some countries have put it about that authoritarian rule would help to stabilize unstable countries. In other words, fostering democracy might endanger world security.

Wednesday's report hopes to dismember that argument.

"We shouldn't forget the horrors of authoritarianism in the 20th century," Mr. Noman said.

He said research from around the world shows that the best recipe for stability and development is democracy. He said the report found

dreadful flaws in the theory that development must come first and democracy afterward.

"That old debate on democracy and development is dead," Mr. Noman said.

He pointed to South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Thailand as examples of Asian countries that recovered economically in the late 1990s and were also democracies.

And he said Pakistan, taken over by military rule in 1999, is the "nightmare warning of the failure of democracy."

"The military took over and there was virtually no protest at the fall of an elected government," he said.

Mr. Noman said the goal is to prevent wealthy countries from abandoning their financial support of nascent democracies. So far, the

United States has not reduced the \$1-billion (U.S.) a year it provides to spur democracy in other countries. The temptation is to put aid into poverty reduction, education and health and to draw back from supporting democracy itself.

But Richard Sandbrook, a professor of political science at the Munk Centre of International Studies at the University of Toronto, said that it should come as no surprise that new democracies are unstable. The task of democratization is usually long, painful and fraught with danger.

Some European countries have taken centuries to form strong democracies, he noted. Latin America has been on the road to democracy for more than 100 years.

Coal power plant wont be allowed under any circumstance - Sampanthan

Our Trincomalee correspondent

A group of environmentalists and leading citizens have formed an organisation called Trincomalee Environment Protection Society (TEPS) to oppose the controversial power generation project in Trincomalee. Expressing solidarity with the group, Trincomalee district Parliamentarian R. Sampanthan said, "The controversial coal power plant cannot be allowed at Clappenburg in Trincomalee under any circumstance. I have already taken up this matter with the Prime Minister. I have decided to discuss it with the Liberation Tiger leaders too shortly."

TEPS was formed when the United National Front (UNF) government decided to go ahead with the construction of controversial coal power plant in Trincomalee. A cabinet paper about the project submitted Power and Energy Minister Mr. Karu Jayasuriya has been accepted now.

Private sector participation is anticipated for the project. Recently a high-powered delegation led by Minister Karu Jayasuriya inspected the site selected for building of the coal power plant, which will have an installed capacity of 300 MW. Clappenburg is close to the Trincomalee harbour. The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) has already set up a coal project unit to coordinate the construction project. In late eighties, the UNP government selected Trincomalee to establish the first coal fired power plant in Sri Lanka. This did not materialise due to protests by environmentalists and partly due to security risks.

The government then shifted it to Mawella in the south. It also failed due to protest by the people and the

then President R.Premadasa shelved the proposal. Later the Peoples Alliance led by President Chandrika Kumaratunga canvassed support for the establishment of the controversial project at Nooraichcholai in the Chilaw district. The PA had to abandon it due to strong anti-coal power propaganda led by the Catholic clergy.

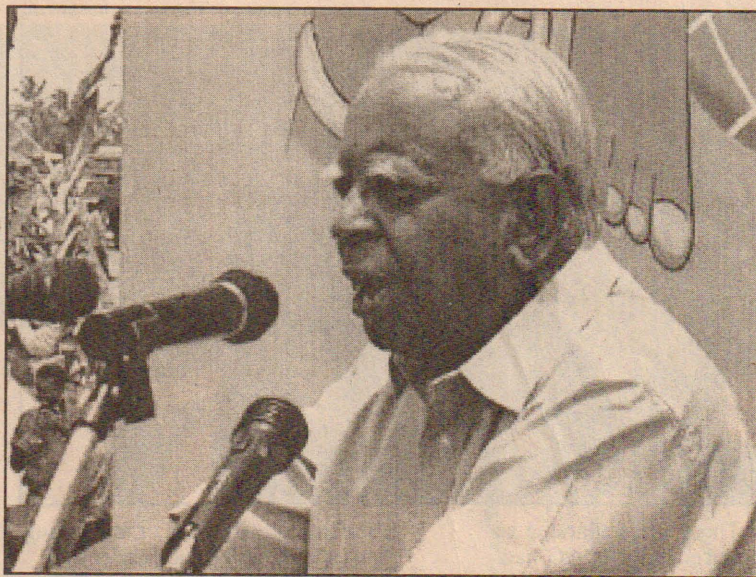
The UNF government has revived its earlier decision to set up the project in Trincomalee causing concerns among the people of Trincomalee district regarding the future development of the east port town.

Trincomalee born academic, Professor Sivanandam Sivasegaram at the inaugural meeting of TEPS recently warned, "We must not allow the establishment of the coal power project that will cause unimaginable damage to the ecosystem of the Trincomalee district."

"The government might tell us that high quality coal minus sulphur will be used to generate power to avoid environmental damage but the people of Trincomalee should not allow themselves to be taken for a ride on this assurance," said Sivasegaram.

Sivasegaram rejected the claim by energy experts that coal power generation is the cheapest option available to Sri Lanka. "Coal power generation would certainly cost more than hydro generated power and this would become a white elephant for the country's economy," the Professor stressed.

According to the chairman of the Trincomalee anti-coal power plant campaign, Attorney at-Law K. Sivapalan, "Trincomalee is already in the high temperature zone. The establishment of a coal power plant will increase the temperature level to a point that would result in acid rain and skin diseases to the people of



"In the past, no one showed any interest in launching development projects in Trincomalee. But every one is thinking of developing Trincomalee district after the ceasefire agreement was signed. The proposed interim administration should be fully empowered to develop the wartorn northeast province."

Trincomalee and also destroy the natural resources of the district. The waste particles of the plant would create a lot of health problems such as asthma, cancer and other diseases".

"It would even affect human foetuses", he added. "If people in Trincomalee think the establishment of the coal power plant will provide more employment to the youth of the district, it is a myth," Sivasegaram asserted.

It was observed by one of the chief convenors at the inaugural meeting, "Several state aided

colonisation schemes were foisted on Trincomalee since the country gained independence, depriving the land rights of the predominant people in the northeast province. Likewise it has been proved that several factories and development projects started in Trincomalee have provided employment opportunities to the majority community from other provinces and not to people of the district.

"All government development projects are aimed at changing the ethnic ratio of the Trincomalee district and in the northeast province. We have no

grounds to consider that the motivations behind the coal power plant would be different."

R. Sampanthan, Trincomalee district parliamentarian and the National List parliamentarian K. Thurairatnasingham addressed the second meeting of the TEPS on the last day to express their solidarity with the anti-coal power plant campaign.

Addressing the meeting Sampanthan said, "In the past, no one showed any interest in launching development projects in Trincomalee. But every one is thinking of developing Trincomalee district after the ceasefire agreement was signed. The proposed interim administration should be fully empowered to develop the wartorn northeast province."

He continued, "I visited the site selected by the government for building the coal power plant in Clappenburg. The site is very close to the Trincomalee harbour. The future development of the Trincomalee harbour entirely lies on the extent of the land available in Clappenburg. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe is already on record saying that the Trincomalee harbour should be developed to provide employment opportunities to the youth of the northeast province.

"Hence the establishment of coal power plant at Clappenburg will certainly hamper the future development of the Trincomalee harbour and the upgrading of the Chinabay airport to the status of international airport. The construction of 200 feet high chimney for the coal power project, which is close to Chinabay, would certainly hinder the development of Chinabay airstrip as an international airport."

Gajendrakumar demands Waligamam resettlement

By refusing to allow displaced civilians to resettle in Valikamam north in the Jaffna district, the Sri Lankan military is violating the ceasefire agreement the government signed with the Liberation Tigers, said Jaffna district parliamentarian Mr. G. G. Gajendrakumar, addressing a press conference this week at the office of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) in

Jaffna.

He met the local journalists after two-day visit to the region by the Defence Secretary, Mr. Austin Fernando, last weekend.

The MP further said that protest rallies will be organised through out the Jaffna peninsula, if the displaced are not allowed resettle in their villages before July 30.

Mr. Gajendrakumar participated in conferences held Saturday

and Sunday, attended by the Defence Secretary, regarding the resettlement of displaced in the Jaffna district.

The Defence Secretary told representatives of the displaced that a final decision on this issue will be taken at a conference scheduled for July 30 between the Prime Minister and a delegation of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), of which the ACTC is a member.

Jaffna cricket team tours England ahead of sports gala

A cricket team from Jaffna is touring Britain ahead of a guest appearance at a Tamil expatriate sports festival, according to sources in London. The Tamil team, comprising students from Jaffna university, beat a Welsh team last week.

The Jaffna University team beat Newtown CC in Wales on July 16 and are playing other teams in Britain. The tourists are to play at the Tamil Sports Festival in London next weekend, according to the sources. This is the first time that a sports team from Jaffna is touring abroad.

AG reneging on promises provokes prisoners' hunger strike

By A Staff Writer

The failure of the attorney general (AG) to deliver on promises to Tamil political prisoners arrested and detained under the PTA triggered a fresh wave of protest among them, which they said would be the final.

The fast unto death campaign by Tamil political prisoners at Kalutara prison went into its sixth day on Wednesday with 45 remand prisoners, 24 of them on the gaol's roof, demanding they either be released or brought to trial.

Twenty-eight prisoners from Batticaloa, who are also detained without trial or release, joined them on Tuesday. Detainees in other prisons are expected to join too if an acceptable solution is not found fast.

The fast unto death is a resumption of a series of similar protests by Tamil political prisoners for the past two years. They intensified after the government and the LTTE signed the MOU on 22nd February.

In the wake of the MOU, prisoners at Kalutara staged a strike on 17th April based on the same demands. A government delegation comprising Rehabilitation Minister Jayalath Jayewardene, Secretary, Ministry of Justice Dhara Wijetilleke and Solicitor General Rienzi Arsekularatne and NGO representatives met the fasting prisoners in a bid to resolve their problems.



There, Arsekularatne announced that the AG had appointed a three-man committee to look into the details of the political prisoners still in detention and submit a report. The committee was expected to recommend either their release or trial.

The AG gave an assurance that the state would withdraw cases of those who were charged under Section 5 of the PTA.

Section 5 deals with innocuous offences such as failure to give information about the LTTE. It states: "Knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that any person who has committed an offence under this act or is making preparations or is attempting to commit an offence under this act fails to report the same to a Police officer or having in his possession any information relating to the movements or whereabouts of any person who has committed or is

making preparations or attempting to commit an offence under this act fails to report the same to a Police officer shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to imprisonment of either description for a period not exceeding seven years".

Thousands of Tamils have been imprisoned under Section 5 since 1979 although human rights activists and lawyers have been telling the government that every Tamil in Sri Lanka can be charged under this provision of the PTA.

In the past, the state gave suspended sentences to those charged under its provisions, but later began to tighten up on Tamils charged under this provision.

Second, the AG gave an assurance that bail, which under the strict application of the law cannot be granted persons arrested under PTA, may be

allowed if the attorney for the defence were to request it.

Third, since hearings were being postponed and cases were getting delayed because witnesses for the prosecution were frequently absent during trials, the AG gave an allowance in the event this occurred, the high court judge could use his discretion to omit the absentees from the witness list and conclude the case.

"When these three promises were made, the prisoners agreed to suspend the strike because the government was to look into their problems. But they did not call off the strike," said N. Kandasamy, Secretary, Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD).

Human rights activists, however, complain that despite these pledges by the state, no practical steps have been taken to expedite the process of release or trial. They say that though the state promised to withdraw cases of those charged under Section 5, only a handful of detainees actually benefit because most of them have been charged for other offences too.

Similarly, counsels continue to object to bail despite the judge's willingness to grant it. And the non-availability of productions and witnesses cause the postponement of cases.

Finally, neither lawyers nor the public are aware of the recommendations the three-member committee has come up with – if it has done so at all.

"The AG says that 239 prisoners have been released

since 17th April. But these are under normal procedures that apply under the law. There is very little evidence that the relief promised by the AG under the three special categories were afforded to the prisoners," Kandasamy said.

One reason for the confusion over the release of political prisoners is the silence of the Prime Minister and the cabinet over issuing clear instructions on how the state should proceed with regard to releasing the prisoners.

Human rights activists say that the bottom line here is that the PTA has to be amended or repealed for any clear-cut position to emerge on the question of Tamil political prisoners. But Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe made his position clear at a press conference soon after his election. He said the PTA would not be repealed.

Human rights activists are of the opinion that a lacuna in the MOU on political prisoners is a grave setback for their expeditious release. The MOU does not speak about the release of political prisoners unlike the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord that granted a general amnesty to all those who were held at the time under the PTA.

"I believe that a general amnesty should be granted to all political prisoners taken in under PTA because it is a draconian legislation that contravenes international human rights law," Kandasamy insisted.

Tamil rights are no concession to LTTE

Will the ceasefire agreement hold beyond 2nd August, the day on which the last deadline set in the document is to expire?

Senior LTTE officials in Kilinochchi and Kokkaddicholai firmly say it will hold.

Article MoU 2.3 of the MOU states: 'Beginning on the date on which this agreement enters into force, school buildings occupied by either party shall be vacated and returned to their intended use. This activity shall be completed by D-day + 160 at the latest'.

LTTE's political wing leader, S. P Thamilchelvan continues to reiterate the point that all the deadlines set in the MOU pertain to restoring normal living conditions for the civilians of the northeast.

He deplores the fact that 'sections' of the media and the opposition in the south are



N. Karikalan

constantly trying to portray the measures in the MoU to help the long suffering people of the northeast as concessions to the LTTE.

"The right to school, worship and ply one's trade freely and

without fear of death is a fundamental right that any responsible government has to ensure all its citizens. This is why we thought it was very important to insist on restoring these fundamental rights of our

people as a key condition for taking forward the peace process. How can we sit down for talks on the interim administration as long as our people are denied their right to fish, school, use their community centres and libraries and worship in their village temples?" asks Karikalan, the LTTE's senior political official in the east, questioned about the 2nd August deadline.

However, he stressed that his movement will not do anything to harm the ceasefire agreement. "It was signed by our leader. Hence we would do our utmost to honour it," Karikalan said.

"Forces that are bent on scuttling the peace are drumming up the false refrain that the conditions we would like the government to fulfil are concessions to us, concessions that would give us a military advantage. The army was in occupation of all the schools, temples, hospitals and public buildings that come under the purview of

the MoU since 1990 and some from as early as 1985. But occupying them did not prevent debacles. The Sinhala people are being fed the canard that the fundamental rights of the Tamils we are talking about in the MoU are part of a sinister plan to undermine the Sri Lankan military's position in the northeast," he explained.

"We are taking a positive approach to the peace process on the ground. We are confident that things will move ahead. The opening of the A5 and the practical discussions we have had with the army and Muslim politicians in stabilising the situation in the east have helped build the people's confidence in the peace process. The media and opposition politicians in the south too should take a positive attitude," Karikalan said.

Rape on the rise in the hills

By Jude L. Fernando

Incidents of rape in the tea plantations areas are on the rise. In the first week of July, five cases were reported to the Nawalapitiya base hospital. The week prior to that, a teenaged girl was gang-raped. The perpetrators are allegedly of the same age group. The criminals are still at large.

Rape victims in the plantation sector face greater difficulty in obtaining legal and medical assistance than those in other parts of the country.

Low levels of literacy and cultural restrictions on women in the plantation sector are not the only factors that prevent them from obtaining appropriate assistance, but also the unique economic, political and legal environment in which they live.

Privatisation of the tea estates has placed workers at the mercy of individual companies. In many occasions, the authorities have used economic threats, such as throwing the victims out of work, to prevent them reporting such incidents to the police.

Under the regulations within which private companies operate, bypassing the authority of the company has become practically impossible because the well being of the families of the workers depends on it. Prior to privatisation, government officers and trade unions were better positioned to take care of the workers. Now they neither have resources nor power to interfere in labour

issues. In fact, the government is more duty bound to serve the interests of the companies than the workers. In other words, economic dependence on the companies has forced the workers to remain mute even on matters affecting their dignity and rights.

With increasing economic burdens, the domestic responsibilities of women have multiplied, while the employment opportunities for them outside the plantation sector continue to decline. A low level of literacy among females is also on the increase due to the reduction of state assistance for education and health.

There are numerous informal methods used by the authorities in the plantation companies to confine women to a subordinate position in order to maintain their role in the production process. Consequently, men have the option of finding alternative employment outside the plantation sector, which undermines the bargaining power of women, vis-à-vis men.

Trade unions that once proliferated in the plantations by taking up important political and

social causes such as statelessness are not of much assistance to rape victims.

such as rape are not a priority on their agenda. They tend to be dismissive about discussing gender-

related issues and women are uncomfortable to discuss these matters with the union officials.

Unlike in some other parts of the world NGOs have not given much emphasis increasing gender sensitivity among the organisations concerned with human rights in the plantation sector. So the women lack the agency to voice their concerns.

It is also rare for a rape victim to find female, Tamil-speaking police officers to make her complaint. Complaints are recorded in Sinhala and the number of cases that go unrecorded tends to be high and even in those that are recorded, the phrase 'rape' or its equivalent is not used.

It is customary that their husbands accompany women to the police station to make complaints. In addition to women's reluctance to inform men about rape incidents, in one case, a man beat his wife for seeking

legal assistance with the help of her brother. Men too receive indirect threats from various sources against taking legal action.

Unlike in the other areas of the country, the general attitude of the law enforcement authorities is to ignore the problems faced by the plantation workers. It is as if plantation workers are outsiders, uneducated and do not know how to behave: hence they themselves are responsible for their problems they face.

A personal encounter reveals the attitude of the public to the plantation workers. I visited a plantation in the Kandy area. As I got off the bus, I met an acquaintance who proceeded to ask me what was I doing there. I said I was looking for a family working in the plantations. My friend promptly said, "Are you looking for a servant girl?"

Of course, he was correct. Why would people visit plantation areas other than for tourism and search of domestic helpers? When I said that I was investigating a rape case, the response of my friend would have met the approval of the law enforcement officials. He said, "In the tea plantations, both men and women drink and being uneducated they do not have good morals."

Another peculiarity in the plantation sector is that majority of the police offices, who are almost all Sinhala speaking, are essentially outsiders. They are not inclined to get involved in issues that might antagonise powerful and influential elements in the community who might

As a result of privatisation, the unions themselves have increasingly become subordinate to the dictates of private companies. What is more, males usually manage the trade unions and issues such as rape are not a priority on their agenda. They tend to be dismissive about discussing gender-related issues and women are uncomfortable to discuss these matters with the union officials. Unlike in some other parts of the world NGOs have not given much emphasis increasing gender sensitivity among the organisations concerned with human rights in the plantation sector. So the women lack the agency to voice their concerns.

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U.S. network news sources biased towards white, male, elite

A study of ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News and NBC Nightly News in the year 2001 shows that 92 percent of all U.S. sources interviewed were white, 85 percent were male and, where party affiliation was identifiable, 75 percent were Republican.

Conducted for FAIR by the media analysis firm Media Tenor, the study shows that the big three nightly news shows rely heavily on society's most powerful groups when they report the news of the day. More than one in four sources were politicians—George W. Bush alone made up 9 percent of all sources—versus a mere 3 percent for all non-governmental advocacy groups, the sources most likely to present an alternative view to the government's.

Even before the September 11 attacks, Republicans made up a full 68 percent of partisan sources

Racial imbalances in sourcing were dramatic across the board. ABC, CBS and NBC each featured a lineup where 92 percent of U.S. sources were white and 7 percent were black. Other groups were even more strikingly underrepresented... Out of a total of 14,632 sources, only one (on NBC) was identified as Native American.

(which surged to 87 percent after the attacks). These figures should dispel the myth of a liberal or pro-Democrat news bias, but don't necessarily prove a conservative or Republican slant. Rather, they reflect a strong tendency of the networks to turn to the party in power for information.

Sixty-two percent of all partisan sources were administration officials; when these are set aside, the remaining partisan sources were 51 percent Republican and 48 percent Democrat, suggesting a strong advantage overall for the party that holds the White House.

Big business, too, was overrepresented. In a year in which the country lost 2.4 million jobs, corporate representatives appeared about 35 times more frequently than did union representatives, accounting for 7 percent of sources versus labor's 0.2 percent.

Women made up only 15 percent of all sources (14 percent on ABC and CBS, and 18 percent on NBC), and were rarely featured as experts. Women were particularly poorly represented in the categories of professional and political sources, which were only 9 percent female. More than half of the women who appeared on the network news in 2001 were presented as ordinary Americans (as opposed to experts of some kind), versus 14 percent of male sources.

Racial imbalances in sourcing were dramatic across the board. ABC, CBS and NBC each featured a lineup where 92 percent of U.S.

sources were white and 7 percent were black. Other groups were even more strikingly underrepresented, with 0.6 percent of all sources being Latino, 0.6 percent Arab-American and 0.2 percent Asian-American. Out of a total of 14,632 sources, only one (on NBC) was identified as Native American.

For all the hype about the "death of network news," the fact remains that approximately one quarter of television-viewing homes in America tune in ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News or NBC Nightly News on an average weeknight—that's about two-thirds of the U.S. public that claims to follow current events regularly. It serves the country poorly when, as these findings show, broadcast news functions more as a venue for the claims and opinions of the powerful than as a democratic forum for public discussion and education.

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Muslim rights should be guaranteed

The Muslim people of Sri Lanka should be guaranteed all their legitimate rights in any solution to the ethnic problem. The United National Front (UNF) and the People's Alliance (PA) should recognise the distinct cultural and religious identity of the Muslims in this country.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) too should honour the aspirations of the Muslim people, their political rights and security. The meeting between the leaders of the LTTE and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) was a significant step in the right direction. The dialogue should be further developed to explore a concrete political framework that would accommodate the rights and aspirations of the Muslim people.

It is the bounden duty of the SLMC and other Muslim leaders to start a parallel dialogue with the UNF and the PA to translate the demands of their people into tangible constitutional arrangements. The SLMC has, in the past, formulated and put forward several proposals which it said reflected the will of the Muslims masses it represented.

The SLMC proposed a Muslim majority unit of devolution carved out of the Ampara district. The party's late leader, M. H. M Ashraff, made several significant and progressive proposals to the national plan formulated by the Democratic People's Alliance in 1988. The SLMC has also reached an understanding with the TULF about a Muslim majority council and the future of the Muslims in the other parts of the Northeast.

The formation of the National Unity Alliance (NUA) by Ashraff was seen as a measure calculated for eventually abandoning the Muslim demand for cultural and regional autonomy in favour of becoming kingmaker in Colombo. The NUA came to nought.

This is the right moment for the SLMC to put forward specific proposals to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Muslims in Sri Lanka. The Muslim people cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

They should not lose sight of their larger interests by unwittingly allowing anyone among them to fall prey to forces that are bent on sabotaging the peace process and plunging the country into war and chaos again for personal, partisan gains.

They should be vigilant against forces that seek to exploit their status as a minority in Sri Lanka to divide and rule, forces that are trying hard to mire them in a futile blame game. The sole aim of these elements cannot be anything but to confound the larger vision the Muslims should pursue at this juncture to achieve their rights.

Devolution in Britain, no model for Sri Lanka

By J. S. Tissainayagam

Minister of Constitutional Affairs Professor G.L. Peiris was in the United Kingdom a few weeks ago for talks with senior British officials that included exploring ways of using the British system as a model for reforming Sri Lanka's constitution.

The press in Sri Lanka announced that one of the features in the British system that Sri Lanka found attractive was the establishment of parliaments for Scotland and Wales.

While there should be no hindrance in anybody exploring different constitutional models before arriving at a solution that is tailored to suit local requirements and genius, it should be understood that despite the alluring nomenclature - parliament - there is very little that is attractive in the British system of devolution as an answer to the aspirations of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

Britain is a unitary state and it is essential to realise that whatever devolution offered to the Scottish and Welsh people is within the parameters of the unitary system. Under Britain's unitary character, power is indeed granted by the central government to elected assemblies, but the government continues to retain overall control over these bodies.

Will the Tamils be satisfied if Sri Lanka was to adopt the British model of devolution?

Tamils in the post-independence era first sought to exercise their right to self-determination through a system based on federal principles. This has been seen consistently in the resolutions of the Federal Party.

When it became obvious it was futile to demand power sharing through a federal constitution, the Vaddukodai Resolution (1976) was passed declaring the Tamils wished exercise their right to self-determination through the establishment of a separate state.

It was in Thimphu however that Tamil aspirations were articulated best in the form of principles without defining whether they were to be exercised through a federal constitution within a united Sri Lanka, or in a separate state. The principles are too well known to bear repetition, but it should be noted that they flow from the fact that Tamils saw themselves as a nation, or a people, and not as a minority.

Under the scheme of devolution to Scotland, the Scotland Office, established by an Act of Parliament in 1998 and headed by the Secretary for Scotland,

ensures that subjects reserved with the UK parliament are represented in Westminster. Moreover, the Advocate General for Scotland who is a minister and responsible to the British parliament, can refer bills of the Scottish parliament to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to see whether they are within parliament's competence.

What is more, the British legislature can also take back powers granted to the Scottish parliament, which nullifies the possibility of meaningful devolution of power to Scotland that is not acceptable to London.

Britain's unwritten and unitary constitution does not include safeguards such as judicial review of legislation, entrenched clauses that cannot be overturned at the whims and fancies of the central legislature. Judicial review is a vital ingredient in a

rests with one body, the central legislature. All other bodies are subordinate and subject to control by parliament. In other words, parliament is supreme.

The political system that came into existence in Sri Lanka after independence was, in theory, based on the sovereignty of the people. But Tamil protests have recorded they have not been given the opportunity to exercise that sovereignty effectively and meaningfully.

That is because Sri Lanka, like Britain, remains a unitary state, with parliament exercising supreme control. The structure of parliament has created imbalances between the majority community and the minorities, leading to Sinhala majorities in parliament steamrolling over Tamil aspirations and demands. Legislation from the time of the Citizenship Act

(1948) to the Official Languages Act (1956) and the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution (1983) reflect this sorry trend.

In a true multicultural democracy, sovereignty of the people also means recognising the sovereignty of the groups (community, nation, people) that constitute its citizenry. But this is not the case in Sri Lanka. The campaign of the Tamils has been to establish that they should be given the right to exercise their sovereignty with the other communities in this country in a spirit

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in Sri Lanka.*

federal constitution as are entrenched clauses, which define the basic structures of a multiethnic, multilingual polity where different ethnic groups live.

To repeat: will such a constitutional model satisfy the aspirations of the Tamils?

The demand of a federal constitution by the Tamils is based on the question of sovereignty. In a federal government, sovereignty is shared between the units (regions / provinces) that constitute the union, and the federal government at the centre. The state is an amalgam of different sovereign units.

In the case of the British system however, sovereignty

of equality.

It is therefore disconcerting that Peiris should be suggesting devolution within a unitary state with attractive labels rather than substantive devolution within a federal system such as in Switzerland or Canada.

Tamil aspirations have centred on asymmetrical devolution with strong safeguards to preserve ethnic identities of the type in Belgium for instance. If Peiris and the UNF feel these aspirations could be satisfied by granting devolution within a unitary state, which will hardly be better than the present provincial councils, they will have to think again.

Can the LTTE be contained through talks?

By D. Sivaram (Taraki)

There are two generally known methods of dealing with armed opposition to a state and its military. One is to raise the level of terror and destroy the armed movement; and the other is to reduce it to manageable levels and diminish it progressively in the long term.

Scores of insurgencies around the world have become militarily stagnant in face of sustained counter insurgency measures. Therefore they are unable to critically destabilise the states they oppose and capture power.

There are, however, some insurgencies that not only survived very effective and sustained counter insurgency operations but also have grown into conventional military formations. Currently the LTTE in Sri Lanka and the FARC in Colombia are the only anti-state movements that have developed conventional war fighting capabilities.

According to standard western military wisdom, such movements can be effectively dealt with in the medium term by the 'strategy of containment'.

'Containing', in the specific context we are discussing here, means the ability to stop at least in the eleventh hour an anti-state conventional military formation such as the FARC or the LTTE from achieving its strategic objective; and then to deter it politically and militarily until a stalemate that favours the state is brought about. Whether the SLA itself sees its current and medium term plans and actions in the 'containment' perspective or not is irrelevant here. In principle all the military planning and actions of the Sri Lankan security forces currently boil down to 'containment' in the final analysis.

First let's first briefly recapitulate the evolution of the SLA's strategic objectives since 1990.

When Eelam War II began in 1990 the SLA's strategic objective was to deal a mortally crushing blow to the LTTE as it had done to the JVP the year before.

Very soon this changed to the strategic goal of classic counter insurgency operations - containing the insurgency at manageable levels over a period of time with a view to inducing war weariness in the Tamil population and the consequent decrease in recruitment and popular support for the armed movement.

Then in 1995 and again in 1997 the strategic objective of the Sri Lankan government changed to neutralising the conventional war fighting capability of the LTTE. Conventional military power is the ability to field battalion sized or larger fighting formations with supplies flowing from the rear.

An armed anti-state movement needs the following to develop and sustain conventional fighting capability:

1. A revenue base large enough to support a standing army, comprising at least four brigade groups, to run a civil administration and to maintain law and order.
2. A population large enough to draw volunteer recruits from.
3. An absolute area of control to safely station and train large fighting formations.
4. Medical facilities capable of absorbing more than a battalion of war wounded from high intensity engagements.
5. A logistics system compatible with the standing force and capable of backing a total engagement by it.

Operation Riviresa (September 1995 - February 1996) and Operation Jaya Sikurui were, from a purely strategic perspective, expected to negate the LTTE's conventional fighting capability by denying it these five requisites and thereby reducing it ultimately to a guerrilla organisation.

This strategic objective had to be abandoned inevitably, at least in the short term, following LTTE victories in the Vanni in November 1999 and in Jaffna in April-May 2000.

Hence the strategic objective of the SLA had to inexorably turn into one of containing the LTTE's conventional capability inasmuch as the Tigers could be prevented from achieving their goal (The SLA, apparently, did not understand the totality of its aims and endeavours at the time in this strategic perspective)

All the other aims of the SLA, including the ultimate annihilation of the LTTE, became essentially predicated on 'sustaining a successful containment of LTTE's conventional military power'.

The 'containment' of the FARC since 1996 by the Colombian state with critical backing from the US illustrates the strategy we are discussing here.

A U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) report issued in November 1997 "concluded that the Colombian Armed Forces could be defeated within five years unless the country's government regains political legitimacy and its armed forces are drastically restructured." However, in less than five years the Colombian state backed in no small measure by the US has reduced the FARC to the guerrilla mode. Latin American critics of the FARC's politico-military strategy blame, among other things, the 'peace trap'. The Colombian government struck a peace deal with the FARC last year, recognising the rebels' de facto control of 40% of the country's land



mass.

However, the collapse of the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian state earlier this year, saw the Colombian army weakening the rebels' grip on their heartland.

'Containment' here is understood

Hence the strategic objective of the SLA had to inexorably turn into one of containing the LTTE's conventional capability inasmuch as the Tigers could be prevented from achieving their goal (The SLA, apparently, did not understand the totality of its aims and endeavours at the time in this strategic perspective)

in terms of the paradigm evolved by the US army after Vietnam. In this paradigm, sheer military force is just one among the means of precluding a rebellion from achieving its objective. India adopted this approach to counter rebellions in its North-eastern sector and in Kashmir.

Containment therefore incorporates a number of external and internal deterrents to arrest or wear the edge off the critical military momentum achieved by an armed anti-state movement with a conventional war fighting capability.

1. Infusing substantial military aid and advice to the beleaguered army, the sheer quantum of which would

be adequate to stall the rebel movement from winning- at least in the eleventh hour. An analyst of the Colombian situation calls this 'Salvadorizing', in view of the massive military assistance that the US gave El Salvador to prevent the armed left wing movement that was on the verge of crippling the country's army from capturing state power in November 1989.

In this respect, Sri Lanka has been uniquely more fortunate than Colombia and all other states which were and are threatened by large scale insurgencies.

All major countries across the world's political spectrum, regardless of political differences and even strategic opposition, have contributed to arming Sri Lanka since May 2000. No other insurgency that ever opposed a state has had to face such a wide array of external deter-

rents as what the LTTE had to face. 2. Financially and hence politically stabilise the state threatened by the armed movement.

3. Isolating the armed anti-state movement internationally, to clearly impress upon it that its international isolation is such that even a hard won victory would be Pyrrhic unless it reaches some accommodation with the state it is opposing.

4. Locking the armed anti state movement into negotiations with the state while promoting or creating space for 'civil society action' to leaven the political climate in which the armed anti state move-

ment was able to achieve and sustain its conventional military momentum. In other words confidence building measures by the state are expected to build grass roots influence and pressure among an ideally war weary population to make the anti-state movement 'dialogue prone.'

Western defence analysts say that it is very difficult for a rebel movement to counter the 'containment strategy' basically because time, once a politico-military containment plan is in place, it would necessarily favour the state, while external and internal factors, according to them, should - in theory - in the long term to undermine the conventional war fighting capability of the anti-state movement and also erode the political environment necessary for sustaining that capability.

The military stagnation and attrition of the armed anti-state movements in El Salvador, the Philippines, Turkey and now in Colombia shows the effectiveness of the containment strategy in the medium term.

But in an analysis of the 'containment' in the Eelamatham, the Vanni's sole newspaper, Mr. Balakumar, the ex-leader of the EROS, argues that the strategy will not affect the LTTE. He was answering critics who said last year that the LTTE, in agreeing for talks, was unwittingly letting itself be cornered into the 'containment trap'. Balakumar does not elaborate on how the LTTE views the talks as containment. But the fact that he discussed the question in public tells us that the LTTE has studied it and has an answer.

If war breaks out again.....

Human rights violations will be unprecedented -Ingrid Massage

T. Sittampalam

There has been a barrage of criticism against the LTTE after the MOU was signed on 22nd February for its alleged recruitment of child soldiers, for taking Muslims as hostages for ransom and demanding the rich pay taxes. These were compounded by the Iranateevu incident on Saturday 13th July that involved the LTTE, the Sri Lanka Navy and members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM).

The government of Sri Lanka on the other hand, has got off comparatively lightly with viola-

tions such as the military's refusal to vacate places of worship, schools and public places not drawing much censure. Nor has the arrest of unarmed members of the LTTE, an act expressly forbidden in the MOU, provoked the guardians of human rights to chastise the state in any considerable measure. As far as the naval engagement on 2nd May in the Vakarai sea is concerned, deliberate untruths heaped such confusion on the public mind that the facts remain contested.

Human rights violations in the northeast remain as bad as they were before. But to sections of the media and certain NGOs the only culprit is the LTTE," said Francis Xavier, director, Home for Human Rights (HHR), an NGO.



Ingrid Massage

To Xavier the immunity enjoyed by the security forces both in peacetime, and while waging war against the LTTE, is an issue that needs urgent attention. He blames security related legislation in this country as its primary cause. "The PTA has not prevented terrorism, it is there only to help the perpetrators of human rights violations," Xavier said.

The head of HHR believes that

the PTA should be totally repealed. If that is not possible, at least the more offensive clauses in the Act should be removed. Emergency regulations that are not in force right now but can be evoked under the Public Security Ordinance should also be removed, Xavier said.

Ingrid Massage, human rights activist working with Amnesty International who was part of a three-member delegation that visited Sri Lanka recently and met government leaders, said the PTA was an issue raised in the discussions. Incidents of custodial rape had also been taken up, as had been

of government police and security forces personnel punished compared to the volume and frequency of their occurrence. In other words, law enforcement authorities enjoy virtual immunity from punishment due, ironically, to the law and of course vested interests.

Under the MOU police and security forces personnel are expected to exercise maximum restraint. But needless to say it has not happened. Checkpoints, which under the MOU should have been removed, remain while the presence of military personnel in private homes they have taken over, schools, public buildings and places of religious worship compels the public to intermingle with the forces.

"The very presence of army frightens the public. Though there is no curfew the public remains indoors at night, largely due to fear of the army," said Xavier.

Another matter that needs to be taken up urgently is the high security zone (HSZ) in Palaly. There are over 30 villages where civilians have been deprived of their homes and land. It is estimated the establishment of the HSZ has displaced 21,365 families comprising 83,618 persons and thousands of hectares of fertile land are forced to remain uncultivated.

Addressing issues such as displacement is an important part of Amnesty's project in Sri Lanka. With fighting suspended after the MOU was signed, the organisation is using human rights instruments to promote truth and reconciliation between the communities. In fact, this was part of Amnesty's agenda in the delegation's discussions with both the government and the LTTE.

"We have been monitoring the progress made on investigating disappearances. Among them are the presidential commissions appointed to probe such disappearances. There has been a lack of follow up on these commissions," Massage said.

She said that setting up institutions that probed human rights violations were important for the process of truth and reconciliation. "But they should not be punitive and politically motivated as the Special Presidential Commission appointed for Batalanda and the

Athulathmudali (assassination) case," Massage added.

document has to be interpreted properly," claimed Xavier.



Francis Xavier

Amnesty has stressed that both sides to the conflict should make gestures that strengthen the truth and reconciliation process. From the government side, Massage said the Ministry of Defence's board that reviewed dis-

He said there were certain NGO activists who wanted to 'destroy' the MOU by citing inadequacies in it. It was important that the MOU remains, while improvements could be made within the existing framework.

"The MOU was drafted based on international law. The human rights component in it is adequate. But the document has to be interpreted properly," claimed Xavier.

Xavier said if there were to be institutions and individuals to monitor human rights aspects of the MOU, it was essential for them to have an international component, meaning foreign observers. Massage, while agreeing with this said, "The LTTE is reluctant to have civil society representatives from the south as monitors."

What remains a vital concern though few human rights activists seem to be interested in articulating the matter at present, is the possible fallout in the event war resumes.

appearances in the north and east, including those persons allegedly buried at Chemmani, should publicise a report of its findings.

"The Tigers too should reciprocate by showing the gravesites of those killed in action. That would help the reconciliation process," Massage said.

The MOU itself has become a matter of dispute. Certain organisations in civil society want the human rights aspects in MOU strengthened and external human rights monitors present on the ground to oversee their implementation.

"The MOU was drafted based on international law. The human rights component in it is adequate. But the

No safeguards in terms of international humanitarian law or human rights law are in place to look after civilians. What is more, the apparatus of terror that both sides have used against noncombatants remain.

"With the sophisticated weapons both sides have, I feel that if war breaks out again human rights violations will be worse than ever before. Protection of civilians is absolutely important so that it will not be easy to repeat what happened before," Massage warned. A chilling thought isn't it?

"With the sophisticated weapons both sides have, I feel that if war breaks out again human rights violations will be worse than ever before. Protection of civilians is absolutely important so that it will not be easy to repeat what happened before," Massage warned.

these from our agenda," Massage stressed. Crimes such as custodial rape and torture have only seen a handful

Tamil fears segregate V'chenai

By S. Jeyanandamoorthy

The Valaichenai town is segregating. Tamil shops and businesses in the town's bazaar have moved to Valaichenai's Tamil neighbourhood. The local market has been shifted to a place by the Kalkudah Road, along which most Tamils of the area live. The Eastern Bus Company too opened a new depot here last week. A new road intended to skirt the Muslim sector of Valaichenai and to directly link the new Tamil bazaar with the Batticaloa road has been laid.

"This is the best way to ensure our security. Neither the LTTE nor the army was able to protect our lives and property. We have paid a heavy price for not moving the bazaar to our side in 1985 or after the massacres of 1990," says a leading wholesaler of fish and prawns in the northern parts of Batticaloa. Fishing gear worth millions was destroyed when a Muslim mob set fire to his business near the army's fisheries harbour camp in Valaichenai on 27th June. The segregation is changing the face of the Valaichenai bazaar again. Tamils and Muslims have mingled here freely for generations. Many Muslim shopkeepers and traders who had no truck with the violence that left the once bustling town in ruins say the segregation will hit them under the belt as it were.

"In Valaichenai, most of our customers were Tamils. This is the main town centre for Tamils living in the northern parts of the Batticaloa district such as Vaakarai and Kalkudah," said Siddeeq, whose popular eatery was burnt by Tamils. But few people on either side of the town are ready to stop the segregation and make yet another attempt to make the bazaar what it was before the calamities of 27th June for memories can die hard in this eastern town.

The gutted remains of a cinema hall, a row of shops and houses still stand testimony to the havoc wreaked by Muslims mobs backed by the army in 1985. The army continues to occupy the Tamil cemetery and the fisheries harbour near the bazaar.

The town centre and main bus stand shifted from the east end to its present location when the police and the army occupied the Valaichenai junction, along with its shops and petrol station



SLMC's Bashir Scgu Dawood and LTTE's N. Karikalan

following the conflagration of 1985. The Tamils say they are yet to regain their traditional economic dominance in Valaichenai. Most businesses continued in the hands of the Muslims despite attempts to start a 'Tamils only' market in the mid nineties. Tamil traders say local Muslim politicians who held influential positions in the UNP and PA governments created ideal conditions for Muslim businesses to flourish while the police and army activities persistently disrupted and destroyed the economy in the Tamil sectors of Valaichenai.

"Things started improving after LTTE signed the MoU with the UNF government. More people were coming out to shop. We could keep our businesses open until late as in the Muslim town. We were slowly getting back on

were attacking us with these weapons. Who gave them these weapons?" asked Ethirmannasingham Kamalranjith, a spokesman for the Tamil community leaders and traders, during a discussion with Milinda Moragoda and army commander Lt. Gen. Lionel Balagalle. Tamil traders told the government delegation that the army and police had, during the curfew, prevented them from removing their belongings from their shops and stores, saying that they would provide necessary protection. However, all the Tamil shops and buildings in the bazaar were burnt on the night of 27th June while the army and police who promised to safeguard the area just stood by.

Bitter memories of 1990 July-August when the army moved into Valaichenai, assisted by Muslims home guards, allegedly abducting and killing scores of Tamil youth remain, keeping the old fears alive beneath the veneer of normalcy that the outsider may presume, visiting the bazaar on any week day.

Over the years, Tamil suspicions and apprehensions were regularly exacerbated by the activities of Muslim policemen and home guards and the Muslim soldiers in the army's National Guard Battalion camp at Navalady Junction. Hemmed in by 10 army and police camps since 1990, Tamils in Valaichenai have, until 1999, endured shelling, shooting, deaths, maiming and destruction of property.

The area had the highest civilian casualty rate in the war ravaged northeast for many years. Tamils continued to attribute many of the woes, including forced labour, to insidious conspiracies

The segregation is changing the face of the Valaichenai bazaar again. Tamils and Muslims have mingled here freely for generations. Many Muslim shopkeepers and traders who had no truck with the violence that left the once bustling town in ruins say the segregation will hit them under the belt as it were.

by Muslims in the security forces. Hence the rumours of an attack by Muslims on 27th June fanned, in a trice as it were, the embers of fears and suspicions that had taken root among the Valaichenai Tamils since 1985, into mob anger. A Tamil mob found two innocent Muslims who had been hired to cook at the wedding of a local NGO notable. Both were abducted and killed. As the night approached on Thursday, Tamils living behind the bazaar fled their homes, fearing a major attack by the Muslims. The LTTE refused to help Tamil youth from the area who approached them for weapons and grenades. But 'Siva', the leader of the EPRLF (Varathar faction) that

works with the army in Valaichenai came to their aid, promising to beat back the Muslim mobs which were expected to attack the Tamil neighbourhood after dark. Siva's men and local youth formed patrols to guard the area at night. They claimed that they counter attacked with grenades a Muslims mob that had set fire to some houses in the Tamil neighbourhood on Thursday night.

About twenty Muslims injured in the attack were admitted to the Maancholai hospital and were then transferred to the Polannaruwa Hospital. Meanwhile, a 'theoretician' for the Muslim militants in Oddamavadi, spread alarm by claiming that the victims were injured in a mortar attack by the LTTE. (Maj. Gen. Sunil Tennekoon, GOC of the army's 23 Division cleared the matter during a discussion with the LTTE earlier this week in Batticaloa town).

The three Tamil National Alliance MPs of Batticaloa who visited the troubled area on the day after the troubles started were waylaid by an angry mob of drunken men at Morakkoddanchenai, demanding the immediate release of an imaginary bus that has been hijacked with its Tamil passengers at Oddmavadi. The MPs charged in a letter to the Prime Minister that Muslim policemen in the area were involved in the attacks on Tamils in Valaichenai. The Tamils say that the EPRLF

(Varathar faction) allegedly helped them save their neighbourhoods by counter attacking Muslim mobs with grenades and providing them armed protection. But the question still hangs over the source of the guns and grenades in the hands of the Muslim militants who ignited the Valaichenai conflagration on 27th June.

"The Muslims here certainly need physical protection. The LTTE and we are discussing practical means of ensuring it. But it is not a good idea for Muslim youth to fall prey to the designs of elements that give them weapons with a view to creating havoc and destabilising the peace process," said an army officer in the east.

Russia-China-India: Emerging strategic triangle for a new Cold War?

The UNF government is cementing strategic and economic ties with the US, China and India. We feel the following excerpts from an analysis by Julie M. Rahm in the latest issue of the US War College journal, 'Parameters', offers a perspective on the emerging global strategic environment in which we should consider Sri Lanka's future.

Russia's inability to impede the eastward expansion of NATO and its frustration over NATO's unilateral military action in Kosovo have forced Moscow to seek closer strategic understanding with China and India. While Yevgeny Primakov's controversial reference to a "strategic triangle" among Russia, China, and India might not materialize, it is a fact that each of these states is involved in a somewhat similar dynamic. Each is consolidating its relationship with the others, while also expanding its relations with the United States. In terms of strategic payoffs, this partnership will yield them, at a minimum, enhanced benefits of bilateral cooperation with each other and, at a maximum, it can serve to circumscribe US influence. This potential partnership is a blueprint for the next Cold War and poses a threat that could affect the lives of everyone in the United States in a significant way.

Russia turns east for new allies

Joint opposition to Western dominance is one motivation for a Russia-China-India strategic partnership. NATO enlargement, as well as the West's renewed strategic interest in the southern republics of the former USSR, became a new powerful catalyst for Russia's move eastward. In November 1995, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev warned that in response to NATO's planned eastward expansion, Russia would also turn to its east to seek new allies. It was conceived in Moscow that the strengthening of ties with China would lead to the formation of a new balance of power in Asia that could be advantageous to Russia. Plans were made for a strategic partnership not only with China, but also with India and Iran. One of the goals of such an alliance would be to prevent the West from gaining a foothold in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The progress reached in Russian-Chinese-Indian relations in recent years cannot be attributed purely to their joint opposition to a unipolar, US-dominated world. Such an approach would be simplistic and would underestimate the great potential for complementary ties -- military, economic, political, and cultural among the three neighbours sharing more than 4,000 kilometres of common

border.

Operation Allied Force (against Yugoslavia) spurred Russia and India to consolidate their friendship further, with the two countries signing a Declaration of Strategic Partnership and other agreements of importance during the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India in the first week of October 2000. Military technical cooperation, joint research and development, and training constitute the main aspects of the strategic partnership. This partnership brings Russia and India another step closer to a triangular strategic alliance with China. India and Russia pledged to work together for the establishment of a multipolar world based on the sovereign equality of all states. The two sides expressed their "determined opposition to the unilateral use, or threat of use, of force in violation of the UN Charter, and to intervention in the internal affairs of other states, including under the guise of humanitarian intervention." This reflected the general unease in the international community about NATO's war on Yugoslavia and the economic blockade against Iraq.

Sixty percent Indian military hardware Russian-made

Military sales play a prominent role in the relationship. During 1990-1996, India's arms purchases from Russia totalled \$3.5 billion (US); the average annual arms trade approximates \$800 million. Russia has recently committed itself to supplying India with 50 Su-30 multifunction fighters and has agreed that a modified version of the plane would be produced by an Indian enterprise. India also will be receiving advanced T-90 tanks, three frigates, a submarine, the S-300 antimissile air-defense system, as well as a heavy aircraft carrier. Moscow seems to be more relaxed about offering military technologies to India than to China. An idea of the staggering Russian influence on Indian defense procurement is provided by the following statistics: About 60 percent of the Indian army's military hardware is Russian-made, while 70 percent of naval hardware and 80 percent of air force hardware is Russian-made or of Russian origin.

The importance of arms exports for the survival and operation of the Russian defense industry cannot be overstated. While domestic defense procurements comprise between 10 and 15 percent of all Russian defense production, India and China together receive 75 to 80 percent of all Russian arms exports. Russia not only gains commercially from ma-

major arms transfers, but also acquires leverage regarding future arms sales as well as greater political and strategic engagement with the recipient states.

Economic and trade cooperation between Russia and China has made headway, although it has not met the goals set by the two countries. Over the past five years the scale of Russian arms exports to China has more than tripled and now accounts for up to one third of the annual trade turnover and almost 70 percent of China's arms purchases in the foreign market. For Russia, China is the largest weapons market, with 30 to 40 percent of Russia's total arms sales going there. In 1991-1997, China purchased some \$6 billion worth of arms from Russia.

Russia and China have discussed the possibility of developing a joint missile defense system if the United States ignores their objection and goes ahead with a national antimissile shield. The related prospect of developing a joint regional missile shield was discussed during the January 2000 visit to Moscow of Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov's talks in Beijing in February 2000. Russia has offered to help China develop a manned space program and has allowed Beijing to use its Glonass global satellite navigation system for various purposes, including the pointing of precision weapons.

Russia and China also have sympathised, supported, and cooperated with each other on international and regional matters. Russia supports China on the issues of Taiwan and Tibet, refusing to back Western pressure on China with regard to human rights. China supports Russian efforts to contain domestic separatism, including Moscow's actions in Chechnya, and recognizes, for the time being at least, Russia's leading role in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

As multi-ethnic states, all three nations are concerned about the prospects of growing ethnic nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism in the region. For Russia, Central Asia has become a volatile southern perimeter and home to ten million ethnic Russians. For China, Central Asia is now an unpredictable zone from which Turkic nationalism and Islamic ideology could radiate into Xinjiang. Russia and China now see NATO and radical Islam as more of a threat than each other. At their meeting in Astana on 30 March 2000, the defense ministers of the Shanghai Five (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) addressed the issues of separatism and international terrorism in the context of develop-

ments in Chechnya, Xinjiang, and Afghanistan, which Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev called "a headache" for all five states.

South Asia, still perceived in Moscow primarily through the prism of India, continues to be part of Russia's broader Asian policies. Russia is interested in the development of cooperation between India and the Central Asian states, as a means of counterbalancing the influence in Central Asia of neighbouring Islamic countries, as well as that of the United States and other Western countries. India, for its part, is concerned to counter the influence of its arch-rival, Pakistan, in Central Asia, believing that Islamabad's close links with Central Asia would enable Pakistan to acquire strategic depth in any future war against India.

Anti-US sentiments fuel partnership

There have been signs that the Russo-Chinese partnership is acquiring stronger anti-US undertones. Prior to the terrorist strikes on the United States, China had become more vociferous in its opposition to NATO expansion, and Moscow had toughened its attitude to the US military presence in the region and the US-Japan security alliance. During Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev's visit to China in October 1998, Moscow and Beijing stressed their common approach to three international issues: they "categorically" objected to NATO expansion to the east, denounced the use of force in the Kosovo settlement, and disapproved the US-Japan plans of establishing an antimissile defense system.

China has been disturbed by the involvement of Central Asian countries in NATO's Partnership for Peace and their joint military exercises. Similarly, Russia has become more critical of US-Japan security plans. It has called their close-range anti-ballistic missile system project a destabilizing factor for the existing balance of forces that could impede the process of the reduction in strategic arms. Both China and Russia argue they have no choice but to draw closer to counterbalance US dominance. "NATO is being turned into a global organiza-



tion. So it is necessary to turn other countries into our allies," says senior Russian diplomat Yuli Vorontsov.

Russia, China, and India overcome friction in their relations

India's approach to the management of tensions with China offers important lessons for other regional actors in how to manage relations (especially on sensitive issues) with China. New Delhi has handled Beijing more successfully than Washington has during the corresponding period. India and China have established and maintained regular reciprocal high-level personal visits between political leaders. Both states have improved trade relations and take care to compartmentalise intractable issues that continue to irritate long-standing tensions.

The renewed Russian-Indian strategic partnership, fuelled by common concern regarding Islamic revivalism, has thwarted Moscow's initial intention to follow a more balanced policy in South Asia, improving in particular its relations with Pakistan. Instead, Moscow-Islamabad links have further deteriorated, especially because of the latter's pro-Taliban role in Afghanistan prior to recent events. Moscow's strategic interest in India motivates Moscow to promote India's inclusion into the leading forums and institutions of the Asia Pacific. Having become a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization, Moscow is now backing New Delhi's bid for membership in this regional body. During consultations with the Indian foreign ministry in November 1998, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin noted that "Russia will

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House, home, homeland

By J.S. Tissainayagam

Filling the blanks,' a play directed by Ruwanthi De Chickera was performed recently before an international audience at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England. It was staged in Colombo in the first week of July.

The play examines the lives of people seeking security and home in a society torn apart by conflict, terror and displacement. It speaks about the futility of hoping for a better tomorrow and harking back to a romantic past.

The play, at least attempts to skirt mentioning specific ethnic identities though they inevitably come out in the end due to the political line the script pushes. But war has thrown up refugees from all communities and Sumathi (Ravin Fernando) the protagonist, could be from any ethnic origin. This allows the audience to view the performance without ducking under simplistic stereotypes such as "This is against the Sinhalese," or "This is anti-Tamil."

Alienation, the horror that haunts all refugees, is the opening sequence where Sumathi sits pondering over his bleak fortunes, uncommunicative towards his more down to earth wife Anandi (Nadie Kammallaweera) and hating the shack, which displacement has forced him to call his home. His mind is full of two interrelated threads of thought. Memory of the idyllic village from which he was untimely ripped by violence, and yearning for the time he could return to its wholesome embrace.

Unable to endure the torture

any longer he decides to go back to see for himself. Here the plot integrates beautifully with contemporary realities. The Ceasefire Agreement has permitted refugees – be they Tamils from India, Muslims from Puttalam or Sinhalese from the south – to visit the place they once called home.

Sumathi's passionate desire to return to his village despite having been evicted from it by violence is an eloquent testimony of home being a synonymous with security. The village is, despite all the negative images associated with it, where Sumathi feels he will find emotional, psychological and in a way, even physical security.

Home as the repository of security is also at the core of the Tamils' struggle for a homeland. As much as Sumathi wants to return to his village for comfort and a sense of belonging, so do the Tamils want to return to a place where they feel safe and to which they have historical ties. It is love that brings refugees back from far away places despite the half-baked peace of the Ceasefire Agreement.

But time has dealt a nasty blow to the romantic picture Sumathi has painted for himself. The return of the native arouses no welcome because not a soul knows him there. Worse, his old home he finds infested with squatters who, eat, drink and sleep and know not him.

The sense of identity that a human being derives from his environment, which Sumathi had longed for from his village while living away, is not there for him to experience. He is unknown and rootless here as he is when living as a refugee.

Through Chumma (Ryan Holsigher), a precocious young boy who is disgusted with the

The underlying theme also questions the validity of a home or (homeland). Does an individual or family have inalienable rights over their property? Does a community have rights over a homeland, which cannot be taken over and 'colonised' by squatters? Or, can the army, as they had done to Chumma's family, tell strangers to occupy land or a building and then call it their own?

pettiness of life in the village and dreams about the lights of Colombo with the same ardour that Sumathi dreamt of his home in the village, he (Sumathi) is able to recreate what had happened between now and his eviction.

The conditions in the village had been so desperate that private property had become meaningless. The army had told Chumma's family they could squat in Sumathi's deserted house. What is more, the 'extended family' of squatters Sumathi had found there were simply accretions of other destitute folk who broke journey in the house and just stayed on.

His hopes dashed Sumathi confronts the family of squatters to

whom he asserts, "This is my house." But the howl of protest and anguish that goes up when all his 'tenants' chant with equal vehemence, "This is my house, this is my house, this is my house too..." puts paid to any claim he might have over it.

The squatters' protest states unequivocally that home is not only a house – something to be bought, possessed and disposed of. Rather, it ascends in meaning to something that offers refuge, comfort and safety. In other words, it sustains life. What is more, Sumathi, by claiming the house as his own becomes one with his former tormentors who had forced him to leave the village – they too had thrown him out of

the place that gave him security and sustenance.

The underlying theme also questions the validity of a home or (homeland). Does an individual or family have inalienable rights over their property? Does a community have rights over a homeland, which cannot be taken over and 'colonised' by squatters? Or, can the army, as they had done to Chumma's family, tell strangers to occupy land or a building and then call it their own?

What makes 'Filling the blanks' a satisfying cultural experience is also historical verisimilitude. There are today many traditional Tamil villages in the east taken over by Sinhalese colonists and whose 'right' to the property they are squatting on guaranteed by the army and unscrupulous public servants. Similarly, Tamil refugees returning to Jaffna's Thenmaratchi from displacement find their former neighbours occupying their homes.

The play is very modern in conceptualising 'home' as not something static in meaning. The meaning shifts from person to person. To Sumathi it is the place he owns – property to which he has historic and probably documented ties. But to Chumma's family who lived there because the army told them to, it is a place that became their own through habit and custom. In the end the latter ideal prevails.

When transposed to the political arena, the viewer cannot but see the parallel between 'home' in the play and the homeland theory that has informed much of Tamil political thinking from the time of the Federal Party. In a political sense 'Filling the blanks' does make an statement. But then that is a matter of interpretation.

Russia-China-India.... *Cont. from page 10*

try its best to help India develop ties with APEC and eventually to join the organisation."

Some US officials admit that closer ties between Moscow and Beijing are cause for concern. They say, at the very least, debates are more complicated now on the UN Security Council, where Russia and China frequently make common cause against interventionist initiatives favoured by the United States and Britain. Deadlock on the UN Security Council reminiscent of the Cold War era is becoming a regular occurrence. For instance, knowing that both Russia and China would probably veto military intervention in Kosovo, the Clinton administration decided to work through NATO. Both Moscow and Beijing were concerned about external intervention on humanitarian grounds, which would be relevant to conflicts within Russia such as Chechnya, and within China such as its claims over Taiwan. Further, NATO was again conspiring to force the US value system on a

Third World state.

Lessons learnt

Russia, China, and India watched the United States in conflicts throughout the 1990s and each learned the same lessons. Indian military and political sources were among the first to react to the Kosovo operation and to speculate on preliminary lessons to be learned. "We are studying what's going on there [in Kosovo] and drawing our lessons from it." A common theme in Indian, Russian, and Chinese thinking since Operation Desert Storm has been the importance of "force multipliers" provided by information technology, AWACs, midair refuelling, unmanned aerial vehicles and electronic warfare capabilities. Analysts in all three countries believe their armed forces can succeed against a high-technology foe if they use these force multipliers in combination with clever low-technology tactics, urban guerrilla warfare, financial terrorism, computer hacking, media warfare, diplomatic actions, and psychologi-

cal warfare.

In light of the new "interventionist-oriented NATO doctrine" and the new capabilities of long-range precision conventional weapons, Indian military thinkers recommend upgrading its nuclear arms to deter Western intimidation and attack. This is a prime example of the drive toward nuclear weapons and its cascading effects predicted by General Makmut Gareyev, president of the Russian Academy of Military Science. He believes that countries, including Russia, that are unable to match an opponent in high-technology conventional weapons, will resort to nuclear weapons in order to deter conventional strikes. Until 1998, India held the principled position that nuclear deterrence was abhorrent to human sentiment, since it implies that if required to defend its own existence, a state will act with pitiless disregard for the consequences of its own and its adversary's people. But in remarks made on 15 March 1999, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee asserted:

"The nuclear weapon is not an offensive weapon. It is a weapon of self-defense. It is also true that India has begun revamping its conventional forces to push the nuclear threshold upward, creating more options with those conventional forces before resorting to nuclear weapon use.

Preventing Another Cold War

A strategic partnership among China, Russia, and India is a blueprint for the next Cold War. What can we in the United States do to avert a return to the days of superpower tensions? This is a difficult question to answer, but the following concepts would seem to have promise:

* Build a multinational missile defense network that would protect everyone involved against attacks or accidental launches.

* Ensure that the US military is strong and that we have an effective national security posture in the Pacific.

* Explicitly and clearly support

our friends who are engaged in fostering democracy and free markets in foreign countries.

* Give depth to our relationships with other countries through diplomacy, foreign aid, and exchange programs, which in turn provides us early warning about developing situations.

* Use our university system to continue educating foreign students.

* Increase intelligence gathering with regard to China, Russia, and India.

* Continue to help Russia democratise, using US benefits as leverage to prevent a Russian alliance with Beijing.

Such measures will promote US interests, increase our awareness of developments in Asia, and help to ease tensions in what has suddenly become a more uncertain world. Even though our immediate focus may be on countering terrorism, other long-term aspects of international relations are also vital to US interests, and we must tend to them as well.



A UN de-miner relaxing in Sarasalai, Jaffna
Pix by Buddhika Weerasinghe

Mine clearing delays hamper Jaffna resettlers

By Our Jaffna Correspondent

With the Ceasefire Agreement allowing a semblance of peace to return to war ravaged Sri Lanka, many displaced persons want to go back to their villages in Jaffna. But landmines continue to deny them the peace dividend they deserve, and for which they have endured immense hardships since 1996.

Local residents displaced from this area have been clamouring since last year to return to their villages. Some who went to inspect their properties lost their limbs.

There have been teams of foreign de-miners working in the north for some time. A US sponsored de-mining team led by an ex-marines officer is currently working in southern Jaffna. British de-mining expertise too is present there. Most work is in Sarasalai and its environs. People of the area however complain that work of the foreign de-miners is slow.

Recently, a Mine Action Programme was established in Sri Lanka with its headquarters in Colombo staffed by two experts temporarily housed in the UN complex. They will have field offices in the Vanni and Jaffna that will cover the entire northeast, with district level mine action offices housed in the district secretariat.

The Liberation Tigers, meanwhile, say that they too want to take part in the mine clearing work in

Jaffna. Speaking to the press recently at his office in Kilinochchi, Yogan, the head of the Humanitarian De-mining Agency, said that his organisation removed more than hundred thousand landmines and unexploded ordnance of all types in Nedunkerni, Oddusuddan, Kilinochchi and Paranthan since late 2000.

Between January 1999 and April 2000, 14 people were killed, 77 lost their either or both legs, 13 lost their eyesight and 94 were wounded in other ways by landmine and booby trap explosions.

"Almost every part of Kilinochchi town and suburbs were sown with landmines. Unexploded ordnance was everywhere. Many of the booby traps were cleverly disguised. Eight months ago, Kilinochchi was a ghost town where resettling here was unthinkable," Yogan said.

The LTTE de-miners work with a basic three-pronged implement made of scrap metal from military vehicles destroyed in the war. Yet they have made Kilinochchi and suburbs and scores of other areas safe for habitation in less than a year. "So it is very reasonable for us to expect a role in clearing landmines in Jaffna," Yogan asserted.

In 1998, the UN sponsored a program to rid the southern and north-western parts of the Jaffna peninsula of landmines and explosive booby traps amid much publicity. The team of UN de-mining experts worked for two years in some parts of the peninsula where the army had agreed to allow in civilians.



A member of the Humanitarian De-mining Unit with his lethal harvest in a suburb of Kilinochchi

Critics of the program in Jaffna allege that the UN mine clearing group removed only 998 mines during their whole stay. They said that even a single minefield in the outer defence perimeter of a camp vacated by the army would contain more mines than what the UN team had managed to remove in 24 months.

The UN team's work was largely

cosmetic, aimed at impressing the world that normalcy was being restored in the Jaffna peninsula under Sri Lankan government control, the critics claimed. Public ire and criticism of the UN program were largely provoked in Jaffna by the discovery that a member of the de-mining team was HIV positive. Rumours that he may have been sexually active dur-

ing his stay in Jaffna exacerbated local apprehensions further, and inevitably eroded the public faith in the aims and benefits of the program.

It is reported that the newly-established National Mine Action Programme is yet to hold discussions with the LTTE on de-mining in the Vanni area.