

# NGOs slam govt., donors for no interest in Jaffna

By A Staff Correspondent

Even as the Sri Lanka Government and the LTTE agreed during talks in Sattahip on a joint committee to implement rehabilitation and resettlement programmes in the northeast, NGOs working in Jaffna protested that no significant rehabilitation work has taken place in the seven months the Ceasefire Agreement has been in operation.

Rehabilitation work that includes executing the Jaffna Master Plan, in which the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority of the North (RRAN) was expected to play the lead role is yet to be implemented, NGO circles in Jaffna said.

The funding for the project is from the Treasury and the Northeast Provincial Council (NEPC) is to be the implementing agency.

"The Jaffna Master Plan is drawn up based on a survey done in 1988, which is inadequate because it is out of date," said Subramaniam Paramanathan, president, Council of NGOs, which is a member of the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (CHA), Jaffna.

The delay in implementation is partly due to RRAN being absorbed by the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Relief. The project will now be implemented under the Three-R programme.

Paramanathan said he had discussed the shortcomings of the plan with officials from Colombo including Minis-

ter Milinda Moragoda and Ambassador Bernard Goonatilleke from the Peace Secretariat, when they visited Jaffna. He said he had impressed upon them the necessity to transform the plan so that it is 'bottom up' and reflecting the needs of the people rather than a bureaucratic white elephant designed by the RRAN.

The plan envisages the use of the divisional secretariats for data gathering and as a database for the creation of the master plan. He said there had to be a body like the UDA to direct and supervise the local authorities in the process of implementing the plan.

Expertise was needed to ensure that the plan conformed to environmental and safety regulations. This required experts to zone Jaffna into

## Complaint against Seva Lanka

The Council of NGOs has complained to the World Bank, the funding agency for the Northeast Irrigated Agriculture Project (NEIAP) against what feels is the arbitrary selection of Seva Lanka as the sole implementing agency for the project. The funding for the project is Rs.400 million.

"We do not know how Seva Lanka was given the project when the mandate of the World Bank clearly states that only local NGOs

will be selected for the implementation of the project," said Subramaniam Paramanathan, president Council of NGOs.

He said the mandate for the project read, "Select suitable local NGOs who are in operation in the district and form an umbrella agency" and "To select a suitable international NGO operational in the district as an intermediary and link the local NGOs..."

industrial, commercial and residential areas. "We need technocrats to manage this, but they are sadly lacking today," he said.

Paramanathan said the rehabilitation programme in Jaffna had to be phased out and broken into

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**Bridge on the River Kwai:** This bridge, now a tourist spot 130 km from Bangkok, was built as part of the railroad connecting Thailand and Burma by the Japanese at the cost of thousands of Allied POWs in the Second World War. The film *Bridge on the River Kwai* was shot in Sri Lanka near Kitulgala. Starring Sir Alec Guinness, William Holden and Jack Hawkins, it was directed by David Lean. The film won a cache of Oscars including Best Picture, Best Actor (Guinness) and Best Director. The sound track *Colonel Bogey March* is today part of popular culture. Pic. by Buddhika Weerasinghe



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## NGOs slam... *Cont. from page 1*

three: short, medium and long term. In the short-term, de-mining was of paramount importance. There were estimates the de-mining programme might take 10 years to complete. "I think we can expedite this by providing technical training to soldiers from the army and the LTTE fighters," he said.

This had to be followed by resettlement of IDPs and empowering farmers and fishermen to earn their living rather than depend on the refugee relief that amounted to a maximum of Rs1250/- per family per month and that too for a family of five or more. The rehabilitation of tanks would also fall into this category.

The medium-term will involve the rehabilitation of infrastructure - roads, waterways and electricity. Long-term rehabilitation needed sound planning for the reconstruction of the physical and natural environment. The rebuilt Jaffna city had to be in conformity with the dominant architectural design of the environment, for which competent architects and town planners were necessary.

"Therefore the Jaffna Master Plan cannot be ad hoc. It should be under a permanent body like the Southern Development Authority," Paramanathan stressed.

Meanwhile, Jaffna NGOs bemoaned the lack of interest displayed by the government, international NGOs, diplomatic missions and World Bank fundraisers to begin reconstruction and rehabilitation in Jaffna.

"The MoU has not brought any significant change in the peninsula. Except that military operations have stopped, the urgently needed rehabilitation work in areas such as Weligamam North, Columbuturai, Eluthumadduval and in the high security zone are yet to begin," complained Arunasalam K. Sivasubramaniam, secretary, CHA.

He said there were a confluence of foreign NGO representatives and government officers travelling

to the north, but no work was taking place. All the schemes were on paper, but not on the ground. Foreign NGOs were running training programmes for the Jaffna youth, but no other investment appeared forthcoming.

"We need programmes that generate money in the peninsula, which is reinvested here, not repatriated outside as these training programmes and marketing of consumer products are doing," agreed Paramanathan.

Sivasubramaniam said Northeast Irrigated Agriculture Project (NEIAP) for which Rs.400 million had been allocated was yet to be implemented. He said work done by the project in the past too did not satisfy the funding that had gone into it.

The slow progress of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the north has also created deep-seated resentment among the members of parliament representing the area. UNF Minister T. Maheswaran crossed swords with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on the dearth of actual aid going into Jaffna despite the government's promises.

Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, TNA MP for Jaffna said, "Nothing seems to have been done to rehabilitate and reconstruct the north. The government allocated 1400 million rupees for the rehabilitation of the north last year. This year it has been pruned down to just 400 million rupees. This is one of the reasons why the TNA did not vote on third reading of the last budget. Even out of the 400 million allocated for this year we do not know how much is being actually spent, or on what it is being spent. We do not see anything being done in the north."

There is support for the reconstruction programme to be tied up with the establishment of the Interim Administrative Council (IAC). Paramanathan said the IAC would help people's participation in the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in the northeast and funds for the exercise should be routed through a reconstruction bank.

# JMO report reveals horrible torture on eastern woman

The medical report to the Eastern High Court in a Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) case revealed that twelve police personnel had raped Sathasivam Rathykala, aged 28, on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2000 at the Polonaruwa police station. The report was submitted by the Batticaloa Judicial Medical Officer (JMO) to the Eastern High Court on 18<sup>th</sup> September. The JMO in his report has recommended that counselling and rehabilitation should be provided to the suspect in consultation with a psychiatrist as the victim has suffered acute mental trauma.

Rathykala was arrested under PTA by four police officers from the Medigiriya police station on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2000 around 12 noon at the Polonaruwa general hospital where she worked as an attendant. The police suspected that she was a member of the LTTE.

She was later detained at Anuradhapura and Welikada prisons. Finally she was transferred to Batticaloa prison on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2002. At the time of arrest she lived with her parents.

When the defense pointed out the suspect was subjected to severe torture by the police while in custody, the Eastern High Court ordered the JMO to examine the suspect woman and submit report.

"The suspect Ms Rathykala was produced before me for medico-legal examination around 3.00 p.m. on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2002 in the JMO's office acting on the order of the Eastern High Court Judge. Her father is a farmer and she is the eldest child. She joined as a hospital attendant in the Polonaruwa general hospital on 24<sup>th</sup> August," said the medical report signed by Dr. S. Chandrapalan, JMO, Batticaloa district.

The medico-legal report of the JMO, Batticaloa district states, "She was arrested by four male police officers from the Medigiriya police station on 24.11.2000 around 12 noon when she was on duty. She was then taken to CID office in Polonaruwa in a police jeep. While in jeep she was scolded by policemen in filth and was threatened that she would be killed. One policeman stamped on her right foot forcefully with shod foot.

"At about 12.30 p.m. she was handed over to the Polonaruwa CID office. There she was detained for two days. Thereafter she was produced before a doctor in Polonaruwa hospital. At that time they did not assault her. Later she was detained in the hallway till about midnight and was interrogated whether she was a member of the LTTE.

"She was accused of being involved in the attack of military camps in the past and was ordered to show rest of the LTTE members in her area. They also told her that she printed some names of the LTTE members in her body. She denied all these accusations.

"Thereafter the Police officials ordered her to take off all the clothes except her panty and bra. She begged them not to force her

to remove her clothes. Subsequently she was subjected to body search by police officials touching her whole body including her genital area and breast. She was not given lunch. Police officers from Medigiriya Police arrived and with CID officials started interrogating her. She was given a gun to operate.

"Around midnight the police detained her in a cell alone. She asked the police to provide a matron for her security. But the police refused to do so. She asked the Police to inform her parents about her arrest. The police did not accede to that request. Later she was threatened and assaulted by the police inside the cell. She then fainted. When she regained consciousness she found herself lying on the bed in another room.

"The police officers forced her to remove her bra and panty. She begged and pleaded with them not to harm her. The police officials then threatened her that she would be killed and her body would be disposed after cutting her neck. Subsequently one by one twelve police officers had sexual intercourse with her until next morning 5.00 o'clock. As a result she had many scratch marks on her breasts. She also had severe abdominal pain. She was given two tablets to swallow, which she identified as contraceptive pills.

"The next day morning she was taken to her village in a police jeep and was asked her to show the members of the LTTE. She was blindfolded and the arms tied on the back. She denied having contacts with the LTTE. She was then handed over to the Kaduruwela Police on 26.11.2000. There she was detained for about a month. For the first ten days she was not allowed to take bath. Police officials there did not assault her but continuously questioned her.

"She was taken to the magistrate on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2000. She was later handed over to the Anuradhapura prison and remanded there for about a month. She was then transferred to Welikada prison on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2002. Finally she was transferred to Batticaloa prison on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2002 and up to now she is detained at Batticaloa prison."

The suspect Rathykala was referred and examined by Psychiatrist Dr. M. Ganeshan on 11<sup>th</sup> Septem-

ber 2002 in the psychiatric unit in the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital.

Ganeshan reported that she had sleep-disturbances with nightmares. "She has depression with suicidal ideation. Her appetite is poor. She has intrusive memories and avoidance stimuli, which bring back memories of torture," he states in his report. Finally Ganeshan concluded that she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He recommended counseling and treatment.

Chandrapalan in his report said, "She appeared depressed and has intrusive thoughts. In addition she has suicidal ideation. She has revealed in her history the manner she was tortured and sexually assaulted by the Police officers in the CID office while under their custody.

"There is medical evidence of scars resulting from physical abuse. There is medical evidence of forced physical intercourse. She is suffering from mental trauma. Male policemen performed throughout interrogation and bodily examination on her. She was not provided a matron while she was in the police custody.

"In my opinion, the age of the scars as described are could be more than six months from the time of infliction, which is consistent with the history given by the suspect. Some scars are consistent with injuries caused by the live cigarette butts. Scars on the breasts are consistent with nail scratches from violent handling of the breast during sexual assault. Some of the scars in the breast are consistent with the injuries resulted from lighted cigarettes. Penile penetration by the erect adult penis was possible as it is consistent with the history of sexual assault given by her. It was possible that she was unclothed before the perpetrators sexually, physically assaulted her.

"Since she has mental trauma and has a suicidal ideation the counselling and rehabilitation are necessary with the consultation of psychiatrist, and for the treatment too. Her menstrual regularizes and lower abdominal pain could be due to the chronic stress that resulted from cumulative effects of the torture she underwent," said Chandrapalan in his medico-legal report to the High Court.

## Amnesty on custodial rape in SL

"Rape and other serious sexual assault have also long been recognized as breaches of international humanitarian law. They are now recognized as a war crime and, when committed on a systematic basis or large scale, a crime against humanity. As such, it is subject to universal jurisdiction..." said Amnesty International in a report on rape in Sri Lanka published in January 2002. "The most important reason for the lack of successful prosecutions of those allegedly responsible for rape in custody is that

those responsible for the investigation (i.e. the police) are colleagues of the alleged perpetrators," the report said.

In June 1999, Amnesty said, "In order to eradicate torture... there remains a need to establish a simple procedure which allows torture by the police or other law enforcement personnel to be investigated by an independent authority with the necessary powers and expertise required to ensure prosecutions for torture can be successfully brought."



# Sri Lanka compromised but not yet saved

By Rajpal Abeynayake

There is no party in the conflict today in Sri Lanka that can give a warranty against the severance of the Sri Lankan state.

The Sri Lankan government has more than in any campaign to reign-in the Tigers, sought for a warrantee from the international community that there shall be no bifurcation of the Sri Lankan territory, without international sanction. It has been hoped such international sanction would never be forthcoming.

But, the United States has not been willing to go the whole hog, which is not surprising since Sri Lanka was not of any real strategic importance to the U.S. But the fact is that the Sri Lankan political elite think that there is still an implied warranty against the bifurcation of the Sri Lankan state.

There is no such thing as an implied warranty in international law. But in the law of tort, an implied warranty is a concept that is quite common and quite acceptable in the common application of many legal systems.

Does a country that belongs to the international community of nations have such an implied warranty – and if it does, under what circumstances does such country enjoy this indemnity from being threatened by division?

Bernard Tillekeratne, in a paper on the Indo-Lanka Accord, states that India agreed to underwrite the agreement which was signed under the style of the 'Indo Lanka accord' but also took the opportunity to secure the foreign policy interests over the Trincomalee oil farm while keeping out foreign intelligence personnel and also reviewing the V.O.A agreement.

It means that J.R. Jayewardene

then the president did not have any major apprehensions about the fact that Sri Lanka's sovereignty was being partially compromised, as long as there as a warranty given by a regional power – a powerful regional power – that Sri Lanka's territorial integrity was to remain intact.

When Bernard Tillekeratne writes that India was willing to underwrite the agreement, he means that India was underwriting the agreement in a literal sense. Which means that there was some internationally accountable power that was willing to offer a warranty on Sri Lanka's territorial integrity at that time.

But what sets international law apart from the common law or the law of torts that applies within a civil law jurisdiction is the fact that neither implied law or written law is justiciable within the meaning of what is defined as international law.

No matter that an agreement is written or whether it is implied, no state is bound by its clauses or by the common tenor of the agreement.

But in spite of all of this it is a fact that the Sri Lankan government has been perusing a policy of seeking a warranty from the international community that that there shall be no bifurcation of the Sri Lankan territory. An implied warranty 'needs a record that there was implied consent,' and to a great extent the Sri Lankan government has recently been attempting to get it on the record that the U.S. for instance will not ignore a threat to Sri Lanka's territorial integrity.

It is only the Indian government that has in fact attempted to grant Sri Lanka a written (as opposed to an implied) warranty on its territorial integrity – and this is by the name of the Indo-Lanka Accord, which Sri Lanka seeks now probably to repudiate, while India says that it is still in force.

*It is arguable therefore that might is right not just in intervention but sometimes in the context of non-intervention as well. At least the Sri Lankans will know very well at the present time that international law is skewed that any implied or written warranty against the bifurcation of the country cannot be relied upon – even if it that warranty has been secured after considerable compromise of the country's own sovereignty.*

But Sri Lanka does not seem to like this written warrantee, which comes with its own price tag. The Indo-Lanka Accord for instance outlaws any defense treaties on Sri Lanka's part with any other country without India's concurrence.

Either implied or otherwise, Sri Lanka is in desperate need of a warranty from an international power – or from a body of international guarantors that the country will be secured from threat of disintegration.

But to secure this warrantee Sri Lanka necessarily needs to barter part of its sovereignty to any country or entity that offers that warranty, or offers that amount of security that the country needs. It is a very interesting case study in international law that the country's political elite has been effectively willing to do so – but there has not been

an overwhelming guarantee nevertheless, which Sri Lanka sees as an affront.

Writers in Sri Lanka have often argued in hurt tones that the international community has been willing to intervene against a sovereign state for 'humanitarian reasons.' Often, they have argued that this humanitarian norm of intervention has been misused when powerful nations have wanted to impinge on the sovereignty of lesser nations. "The Kosovo campaign was a very good illustration of how different norms came into conflict, and the lack of institutional mechanisms for resolving such tension in the existing world order," writes Rameh Thakur the vice rector of the United Nations University in Tokyo.

The Indian intervention in Sri Lanka was just such a 'humanitar-

ian' intervention, which did not consider totally Sri Lanka's sovereign right to handle its own internal affairs.

But Sri Lanka sought and was granted a warranty that if certain conditions were adhered to by the Sri Lankan government, that India would provide a warranty against Sri Lanka's disintegration. The agreement may not have been worded to reflect this reality – but as Bernard Tillekeratne writes, certainly there was the element of underwriting that was inherent in the document.

But inasmuch as there is no law of enforcement without the sanction of the UN Security Council, and that there have yet been interventions in sovereign states without UN sanction, there has also been no means of compelling any guarantor of a country's territorial integrity to actually make good on such a guarantee.

Even if a country's sovereignty is terribly compromised as a result of an arrangement, which amounts to a warranty by one state against the disintegration of another, it is still impossible in international law to compel the enforcement of such agreements. Reviewing recent developments in international law Thakur writes that, "the overriding message is not that force has been put to the service of the law, but that might is right."

It is arguable therefore that might is right not just in intervention but sometimes in the context of non-intervention as well. At least the Sri Lankans will know very well at the present time that international law is skewed that any implied or written warranty against the bifurcation of the country cannot be relied upon – even if it that warranty has been secured after considerable compromise of the country's own sovereignty.

## Sri Lankan Mullainathan, 29, is McArthur fellow

By Arthur J Pais in New York

**Do People Mean What They Say?  
Do CEOs Set Their Own Pay?**

These are not the headlines from a psychology or a business magazine. They are the titles of the scholarly papers Sendhil Mullainathan and his colleagues have published in the past seven years.

For over two years Mullainathan has received wide coverage in scholarly journals and reputed publications such as *The New York Times* for his contributions in various branches of economics, especially in the relatively new branch of behavioral

economics.

On Wednesday, the 29-year-old associate professor of economics at MIT was named a MacArthur fellow.

He is the youngest of the 24 fellows named this year by the John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, which started the fellowships in 1981. Each will receive \$500,000 'genius grant' with 'no strings attached' support over the next five years.

Only a handful of people of South Asian origin including the late poet A S Ramanujan and sarod exponent Ustad Ali Akbar Khan have received the MacArthur genius grants.

Mullainathan's family

emigrated from Sri Lanka nearly three decades ago.

The Foundation hailed Mullainathan, who has also presented a paper on media bias, for pushing the boundaries of economics.

"In studies ranging from executive compensation, the economic role of social networking, resource allocation within extended families in developing countries, racial discrimination in the American marketplace, and the limited use of checking accounts by the poor," the citation said,

"Mullainathan's empirical methodology and theoretical inquiries consistently reveal new perspectives from which to

consider traditional questions in economics."

Winners this year include Brian Tucker, 56, a seismologist applying structural engineering principles to public buildings in some of the world's poorest, most earthquake-prone regions; Pulitzer Prize winner Kathrine Boo, 37, a *Washington Post* journalist who has reported on the poor and destitute in Washington DC and Dartmouth College Professor Daniela Rus, 39, expert in designing self-reconfigurable robots

The MacArthur Fellows Program awards unrestricted fellowships to talented individuals from a wide spectrum of fields in America who have

shown extraordinary creativity and hold a promise for important advances.

"They may use their fellowship to advance their expertise, engage in interdisciplinary work, or, if they wish, to change fields or alter the direction of their careers," according to the Foundation.

Mullainathan, who has a doctorate from Harvard, draws from concepts of biology and psychology to interpret empirical economic research. "Still at the outset of his career, he invigorates the discipline with fresh and unconventional inquiries into important issues," the citation added.



# Rumor as war weapon

By D. Sivaram (Taraki)

Rumour has had its many uses for the managers of state affairs from ancient times. The British believed that agents of the deposed Mogul rulers of Delhi had spread the rumour among their native troops that bullets were laced with pigs' fat and belts were made of calf's leather to instigate The Mutiny (or the Sepoy rebellion) in the mid 19th century.

Rumour was so powerful and spread so fast among the Hindu and Muslim troops of the British army throughout the vast subcontinent that the rebellion it sparked off almost brought the empire to its knees. And mind you this was long before the communications revolution, long before telephones and the telegraph.

Rumour has often been deployed tactically by rulers to spread confusion in enemy country.

In modern times official and unofficial counter insurgency manuals of the British and the Americans promote the specific use of rumour and the means of spreading stories that played on the target population's beliefs and fears.

Secret US counter-insurgency manuals such as the one that was distributed to the contras in Nicaragua describe the specific use of rumour in psychological operations against a target population to spread terror and induce submission or to confound enemy troops.

Psychological operations promote the dissemination of certain stories designed to achieve specific effects in a theatre of operation. Psyops assume the gullibility of a population or and identify the correct grounds for spreading rumour.

Lt. Col. Edward Geary Lansdale who helped build the Philippine military's unconventional counter-insurgency programs when the pro-US President Raymond Magsaysay was repressing the Huk rebellion in the 50s, notes in a discussion of psy-war tactics outlines in a two volume US Army Psychological Operations manual published in 1976:

*Other rumours which the SLA psyops attempted to disseminate were that Karikalan was put under house arrest when he went to the Vanni in February this year; that Karuna's marriage was on the rocks; that the LTTE in Batticaloa is planning to operate on its own; that the RAW, India's external intelligence organisation, had set up local operatives to ambush and kill Pottu Amman when he was in Batticaloa recently.*

"When I introduced the practical joke aspect of psywar to the Philippine army, it stimulated some imaginative operations that were remarkably effective. One psywar operation played upon the popular dread of an asuang, or vampire... When a Huk patrol came along the trail, the (Philippine army) ambushers silently snatched the last man of the patrol...

"They puncture his neck with two holes, vampire fashion, held the body up by the heels, drained it of blood, and put the corpse back on the trail. When the Huks returned to look for the missing man and found their bloodless comrade, every member of the patrol believed that the asuang had got him and that one of them would be next. When daylight came, the whole Huk squadron moved out of the vicinity". (US Army pamphlet 525-7-1).

In another discussion on psyops in the Philippines he says: "The army unit captured a Huk courier descending from the mountain stronghold to the village. After questioning, the courier, who was a native of the village, woefully confessed his errors in helping the Huks. His testimony was tape recorded and made to sound as if his voice emanated from a tomb. The courier was then killed. His body was left on the Huk village line of communications. Soldiers in civilian clothes then dropped rumours in the village

to the effect that the Huks had killed the courier. The villagers recovered his body and buried him.

"That night army patrols infiltrated the village cemetery and set up audio equipment which began broadcasting the dead courier's confession. By dawn, the entire village of terror stricken peasantry had evacuated! In a few days the Huks were forced to descend the mountain in search of food. They were quickly captured and/or killed by the army unit" (The Lansdale Papers in the Hoover Archives, quoted in 'Instruments of Statecraft' by Michael Mc Clintock)

During the war, the Sri Lanka army intelligence in Batticaloa was able to plant many rumours through their local recruits which created confusion in the minds of LTTE supporters there. The common rumours were about splits in the organisation.

Other rumours which the SLA psyops attempted to disseminate were that Karikalan was put under house arrest when he went to the Vanni in February this year; that Karuna's marriage was on the rocks; that the LTTE in Batticaloa is planning to operate on its own; that the RAW, India's external intelligence organisation, had set up local operatives to ambush and kill Pottu Amman when he was in Batticaloa recently.

However, one must say that the boldest attempt at this ever made was by the Indian military intelligence in

1989. It effectively spread the rumour that Prabhakaran was dead. It was so effective that the rumour became a reliable story with due assistance from sections of the media.

However, bizarre psyops tactics such as those described by Col. Lansdale which were successful in counter-insurgency operations against armed communist movements in Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines could not be applied effectively in the northeast because the Tamil militants were generally no believers in religion and myths, having emerged out of the very powerful rationalist tradition of Tamil nationalism.

But it generally believed that the army's psyops in the east have been most successful in fanning suspicions between the Muslims and the Tamils.

According to those who hold this view, the army psyops units had a fertile ground of old suspicions and fears between the two communities to work on.

The Tamils were made to believe that the most feared military officer in the east at the time, held responsible for many gory massacres of civilians, was a Muslim named Captain

Munaz.

The army was never known to have operated with *nom de guerre* like the militants. Hence the people of Batticaloa assumed that Munaz was Muslim.

It transpired the man was a Sinhalese named Richard Dias when in 1993 Justice Souza investigated the massacre of refugees in the eastern university in September 1990.

The damage however was done. Recently, Tamil politicians have been expressing concern that rumour weapon is being taken up again to destabilise the peace process.

In this context it is extremely important that the SLMC be alert to any attempt to co-opt disgruntled sections within its fold into insidious psy-war projects based on the eagerness to secure leverage for the government in the negotiations vis a vis the LTTE.

The United Front government and the Sri Lanka army have to seriously weigh, clarify and investigate the provenance of every such rumour to determine whether any psyops hand is behind it or not.

*Relevant excerpts of the AP story on Elalan force letter in Mannar (the AP says it is Eelam force)*

Associated Press, Sun September 22, 2002 04:33 EDT. DILIP GANGULY - Associated Press Writer - COLOMBO, Sri Lanka - (AP)

Sri Lanka's top Muslim party accused the Tamil Tiger rebels Sunday of ordering minority Muslims out of their homes in a northern town. The allegation which has not been independently confirmed comes just days after the Liberation Tigers of Tamileelam said at landmark peace talks that they would allow displaced Muslims to return to their homes.

"A pamphlet published in the name of Eelam Force threatened the Muslims to get out of Mannar (town) before the end of this month," said the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress in a statement,

signed by its national organizer, A.M.I. Sathique. Mannar district is a Tamil-majority area but controlled by the government. A February cease-fire agreement allows the rebels to travel in Tamil-majority areas. The party said the alleged incident cast doubt on the rebels' intentions. "This threat has come out while peace talks are on, and matters relating to the rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced people are being discussed," the statement said. The rebels said in recent talks that they would be willing to allow the Muslims to return to Jaffna when the cease-fire is stabilized and normalcy is restored.

However, Muslims, who account for about 7 percent of Sri Lankans, say they continue to face extortion threats and intimidation even after February's cease-fire. The rebels could not immediately be reached for comment.

## 'Ellalan Force' letter causes havoc in Mannar

A computer-typed letter was sent to the principal of Al Azhar College in Mannar S. H. Hinayathullah on 17<sup>th</sup> September. The letter was also received the same day by the presidents of the trustee boards of Moor Street Mosque and the Uppukulam Mosque. They were purportedly sent by the Ellalan Force.

In the past, the Sri Lankan intelligence claimed that this was a front of the Liberation Tigers. The LTTE however, denies the claim, asserting that it never operated through front organisations.

The letter was addressed to the Muslims of Mannar. It states: "We know the crimes you have committed as Jihad. We will abduct and

slaughter your children the way you slaughter cattle. Is there a branch for Osama in Mannar? You should run away from Mannar the way you would run away from pigs before 30th of September. Rivers of blood will flow if all your schools are not closed before end of this month."

The letter was signed by Ellalan Force.

About 20 Xerox copies of the Ellalan Force letter were taken by the students of the Al Azhar College and shown to friends and relatives later in the day.

The twenty copies were enough to spark of the rumour that the LTTE had ordered Muslims to leave the Mannar district.

Panic prevailed in the Muslim

quarters of Mannar town, and as word began spreading to places like Erukkalampiddy and Tharapuram about the ultimatum by the Ellalan Force (which rumour had transformed into LTTE in the course of a few hours).

However, the Mosque trustee boards in Mannar quickly contacted the LTTE office in Mannar town and arranged a meeting at Periyakadai Jumma Masjid the day after on 18<sup>th</sup> September.

Six mosque trustee boards from Tharapuram, Erukkalampiddy, Puthukudiyiruppu, Uppukulam and Moor Street spoke to the LTTE about the Ellalan Force letter at the meeting and got an assurance that the Tigers had no hand in the mat-

ter. The mosque officials asked the LTTE to immediately issue a public statement on the matter.

The Tigers put out a statement the condemning 'disruptive forces' behind the letter and urged the Muslims to be vigilant about such mischief in the future. They also reiterated their stand that the northeast is the homeland of the Muslims and the Tamils.

The LTTE statement was broadcast on the Voice of Tigers on Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> September.

However, the Peace Secretariat of the Sri Lanka Muslims Congress issued an alarmist statement on Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September saying that the LTTE had ordered Muslims to leave Mannar.

The statement was signed by the national organiser of the SLMC peace secretariat A. M. I. Sathique. AP picked up the story the same day.

The AP headline for the story, played up by the Lanka Academic website, said, "Sri Lanka's Muslim party says Tamil rebels ordering Muslims to leave northern town".

Asked about the SLMC statement, an official of the Mannar, Moor Street Mosque told Northeastern Herald: "The SLMC was very well aware of everything that transpired here since the Ellalan Force letter caused problems. We are perplexed as to why they should issue such a statement days after we had settled the matter."



## Communicating to the Sinhala -Buddhists

# What Sri Lankan Tamils should not fail to see

By Professor Karthigesu Sivathamby

Last Saturday morning on the Subaarathi call-in program of the Sinhala service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, a listener made a very significant remark. "In our Sinhala society, we hear about political terminologies through the media and politicians. We really do not have much understanding of their implications," the caller said. In a way his statement is true because the chief communicators in the contemporary world are the media and politicians.

But to give a truer picture of Sinhala society, particularly of the countryside, the listener should have added the Sangha – the community of Bikkhus.

The Sangha is a very important institution in any Buddhist society. And in the Sinhala Buddhist society it is considered the moral guardian of the people. If the Tamil people want to know the actual position an ideal Bikkhu occupies in that society he or she should read the section on asceticism/renunciation in Thirukkural for as we know, these concepts speak about a person within a society but completely devoid of worldly pressures and ambitions. An ideal Bikkhu or for that matter a Jain monk draw his social power and eminence through renunciation. And this is something that is not met with in the Sanyasa concept of Hinduism.

The Bikkhu performs his role in society chiefly through the Dhamma desena (lectures on the Buddha Dhamma). Through the desenas he shapes public opinion at the village level. It is not left at that point. He oversees the application of his preaching in the day-to-day life of the people. And the more articulate a Bikkhu is, the more respected he would be. Even today audio tapes of leading Bikkhus are very much in demand among the Sinhalese.

The desena tradition enables the Bikkhu to inform, to persuade, to motivate to act according to the five fold path (right way of thinking, of speaking, listening etc.) But in this could mean that the Bikkhu was able to persuade people on certain political lines. And being also the institution that legitimises royal authority in traditional Sinhala society he virtually become either a consolidator of state authority or one who repudiates it.

Thus the Buddhist monk is the axial factor of culture and communication in Sinhala Buddhist society. Therefore in Sri Lanka, the role of the Sangha became all-important since the late 19th century in that its moral guardianship of

This column wishes to highlight those omissions and inadequacies, which have led to neglect and an alienation of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The writer is not for creating further divisions, but earnestly hopes to heal those already there

*The history of the 'true' Sinhala press starts on the heels of Sinhala Buddhist resurgence.*

*The Sinhala Jaathiya (started in 1903) and the Sinhala Bouddhaya (started in 1906) were the first truly Sinhala journals (the Gnanartha Pradeepaya, a Catholic journal, started in 1866 was of course the first).*

society inevitably merged with the politicisation of the country given the position of the Bikkhus as the chief communicator in Sinhala society.

As all scholars agree, resurgent Buddhism became a political force and was the motivating factor behind the rise of Sinhala nationalism. It is quite interesting to note here that in the history of the resurgence of Buddhism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Kandyan Sinhalese did not play as much an active role as the Karawas, Durawas and the Salagamas of the low country. The Buddhist identity gave a social power which they could not get from their traditional position in society. Thus their emphasis on Buddhism was more emphatic.

From this resurgence comes Anagarika Dharmapala. Again it is important to understand the concept of Anagarika which means a non-householder. Buddhism and Jainism divide society into two well defined sections – the Gihhi (Householder) and Pavithi (non-householder). This is the well-known Illaram Thuravaram division in Tamil.

Dharmapala gave up household life for the sake of the community. (In later years he became a Bikkhu) Sinhala Buddhism was very much opposed to the foreign influence of the day. It had challenged the Christians and was very intolerant of interventions in the economic life of the Sinhala community. The Bikkhu was the chief communicator of these sentiments at the grass roots.

As the Mahavamsa became the text of Sinhala Buddhist resurgence, the sentiments expressed by its author against the "Damilas" as William Geiger put it, crept into Sinhala nationalism. There was no necessity in the early stages of Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism to articulate these sentiments as interpreted by Sinhala nationalist later.

Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan supported their demand for the Vesak holiday and later their position against the Muslims in 1915.

Nonetheless, with Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam coming into the picture and the Sinhala Mahajana Sabha elements beginning to dominate the thinking, especially in territorializing communal politics, the rift with the Tamils was increasingly felt and began to be openly voiced. The politics of the '20s and '30s amply demonstrate this.

The resurgence of Buddhism with its nationalist fervour saw Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhala Jathiya (race) and Sinhala Buddhism. The realities of pre-colonial history were forgotten and the island was taken as a single indivisible unit haloed by places of Buddhist pilgrimage in the north, east and the west – Nagadipa, Seruwila and Kelaniya. It was a worldview that emerged from and fitted well into the desena tradition. In fact the provenance of the political idiom of the Sinhala press could be in a way traced to the influence of the desena tradition on Sinhala resurgence in the late 19th century.

The history of the 'true' Sinhala press starts on the heels of Sinhala Buddhist resurgence. The Sinhala Jaathiya (started in 1903) and the Sinhala Bouddhaya (started in 1906) were the first truly Sinhala journals (the Gnanartha Pradeepaya, a Catholic journal, started in 1866 was of course the first).

They were the fount of indigenous Sinhala journalism. Their idiom was derived from the Desena tradition. It is because of this provenance, even under the centralised editorial control of the great Esmond Wickremesinghe at the Lake House the Daily News and the Dinamina could not speak the same political language.

(This was in sharp contrast to

what was happening in the north at the time. The upsurge in Jaffna was limited to Saivism and Tamil; but there was definitely no trace of Tamil nationalism even within the Saivite fold).

The inherent 'originary' compulsions of the idiom of the Sinhala press were such that demands put forward by the Tamils for any constitutional position were considered attempts to divide the country. It can be gleaned from the Tamil side that at no time was an effort made to tell the Sinhalese the Tamil position in their own language. It must be said however that since independence until 1956 there was an earnest attempt to teach and learn Sinhala in all major schools in the north.

The 1956 Sinhala only was the death knell to this effort. The Tamil politicians of the day, perhaps drawing their inspiration from the Dravidian movement in South India depicted the Sinhala only as a conflict between two languages. The Tamils felt the great indigenous tradition they had developed was nullified by the act. The Tamil clerical servant was asked not to learn Sinhala and the Sinhala masses were exhorted to erase Tamil street names, shop boards, signposts etc., in Colombo.

Thus a great divide was created between the two languages. To add to this as commented upon earlier, a democratic decision to bring in vernacular education led to the exclusion of Tamil and Sinhala in schools. Therefore communicating to the Sinhalese became almost impossible. Historically the role of the Sangha within resurgent Sinhala Buddhism is at the basis of this communication block.

Given the socio-political background of Sinhala-Buddhism since the 1930s the preservation of Buddhism meant the preservation of the Sinhalese and vice versa. The political demand for the retrieval of the Buddhist tradition was reflected in the Sinhala Commission Report – the title of which was 'Betrayal of Buddhism'. Thus the Bikkhu was placed right at the centre of Sinhala politics.

Therefore the Buddhist monk communicator inevitably interpreted Tamil demands for regional autonomy in terms of his own worldview. And the Sinhala press which shared that worldview and his idiom was openly antagonistic to Tamil demands.

Having said all this about the sangha as the a socio political institution it should be added that there have been Bikkhus who did not follow the same path. Scholars like the Ven. S.L.A Dharmaratna Thero who also reflected the Buddhist tradition of openness in/to discussion brought

to the knowledge of the Sinhalese the treasures of Buddhism in Tamil. He presented the story of Manimekalai (the medieval Tamil Buddhist epic) in Sinhalese.

He wrote extensively on intellectual and literary contribution of Tamils to Buddhism. It is very refreshing to hear when Prof. H. L. Seneviratna in his book 'The work of Kings' (Chicago Univ. Press. 1999) says there are some Buddhist who call for a sympathetic understanding of the Tamil position.

It is also heartening to see the winds of change are blowing even in the Sinhala press. The 'Yukthiya' was carried this message of unity (It is also symptomatic that it could not continue publication) With the emergence of Tamil militancy there were efforts to tell the Sinhala people the aims and activities of the of the movement. The PLOTE ran a popular Sinhala radio service in 1984-5.

However, it should be admitted that neither Tamil grievances nor the motivations of the Tamil militants were properly made known to the Sinhalese in their own language. Worse still all the reports on losses of life, property, mass displacements and traumas were reported mainly in English. The bulk of the Sinhala press judiciously avoided translating these.

This gap is very well seen in remarks by many leading Bikkhus. "What are the problems of the Tamils? Aren't they coming to Colombo and living safely here?" they ask. And one could say this is often said in earnest for the Tamils here also failed to reach out to Sinhala society's chief communicators. The need for such attempted communication has been brought out in very clear open terms with the decision by the Tigers to go for negotiations.

Any negotiation with the Sinhala-Buddhist community should be with the knowledge of its important channels of communication. Any negotiation with the Sinhala polity should touch/deal with at one or many points the persons who are virtually the real managers of Sinhala public opinion.

In this context the recent decision of the Tigers to publish a periodical in Sinhala, 'Dedunna,' is very important.

One could be tempted to argue that rainbows occur only when there are pregnant clouds. We also hope that the MOU is pregnant enough to deliver the baby Sri Lanka needs so urgently and so fondly.



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## Playing cat and mouse with the Tamils

The only attempt by the government delegation at Sattahip to climb down from its entrenched position that a solution to the ethnic conflict would have to be within the confines of the unity and integrity of the Sri Lankan state, was its acceptance to consider substantial devolution of power.

However, the way whereby substantial devolution will be granted in the light of recent and current events is perplexing. It is well known that when powers were devolved under the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, what was given abutted on the frontiers of what could be conceded under a unitary Constitution. Anything more would have meant having to amend the entrenched clauses of the Constitution requiring a two-thirds majority in parliament and a referendum of the people.

Chief among the entrenched clauses that will have to be amended for meaningful devolution is that which presently guarantees the sovereignty of parliament. No constitution that even approaches federalism can function when parliament is the repository of such powers.

Second, the Tamil parties have been uncompromising on anything short of a totally secular Constitution. The present Constitution however protects Buddhism and amending it will require a two-thirds majority in the legislature and a referendum.

If a secular Constitution and a minimum of federal type power sharing are among the fundamentals demands of the Tamils, any new constitutional arrangement has to reflect them. But if such a constitutional arrangement requires the laborious process of amending an entrenched clause, the question is whether this is practically achievable under the present circumstances.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, which allows for cross-party voting for a two-thirds majority in parliament, is being challenged in court. There is no certainty that even if it is pronounced to be consistent with the Constitution there will be sufficient MPs supporting the Bill with the number of opposition MPs willing to vote for it in the face of a hostile president, fluctuating dangerously.

Amending any part of the Constitution dealing with federalism or secularism with the President, JVP and the ultra-Sinhala parties displaying total opposition to it will present the same difficulties. In fact it will be worse because it will be seen as challenging the fundamental self-identity of the Sinhala nation.

The political configuration in the south is turning worrisome to the Tamils. The Sinhala leadership has stated over and over again the aspirations of the Tamils can be met through a political settlement. But what is absent is any tangible proof that this could be achieved.

The UNF should refrain from making vacuous promises and playing for time. If it wants to see the Tamils backing the negotiating process to achieve a political solution, it should tell them how it is planning to accomplish the task of satisfying their aspirations, rather than mouthing empty promises that appear to lose their lustre in the face of unfolding events. History will show the folly in such a course of action.

## Negotiating self-determination

VT. Thamilmaran

*Violence is essentially wordless and it can begin only where thought and rational communication have broken down (Thomas Merton)*

The views expressed by Dr. Anton Balasingham, head of the LTTE delegation, at the press conference in Sattahip and later in some of his interviews, have raised many eyebrows over their real meaning. Particularly, his statement that the LTTE doesn't operate according to the concept of a separate state but according to concepts and categories that are entirely different has created some confusion with some people arguing that the LTTE would never give up its demand for a separate state. This confusion has been further compounded by Balasingham's explanation that the LTTE operates in accordance with the concept of homeland and self-determination and that homeland doesn't mean separate state as such.

As far back as 1985, beginning with Thimpu Talks, the ideas of homeland and self-determination have been on the agenda for a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict in this country. In fact, not only the LTTE but also almost all the Tamil parties had consistently espoused the idea of self-determination for the Tamil-speaking people of this country. I mean in this context self-determination of the Tamil-speaking people of the Northeast.

When I say this, one must be reminded of the different interpretations given to the concept of self-determination in the political science and legal discourses. However, it is the LTTE that has been continuously engaged in an armed struggle for achieving this right. The LTTE has never concealed the fact that its fight is for the right of self-determination. In this regard, it has even made reference to the Vaddukkodai Resolution of 1976.

As such, the demand for the right to self-determination for the Tamil-speaking people of the northeast is nothing new and it was not the LTTE that originally propounded this idea as a solution for the ethnic conflict in this country.

But it is the LTTE that came forward to successfully carry the mantle throughout these years.

It has been a curse in the political arena of this country that whenever one speaks of equal rights, self-determination or autonomy, it is interpreted as a demand for a separate state or those who advocate these rights are branded as separatists. Even in those days when the leader of the Federal Party (FP) late S.J.V. Chelvanayakam was speaking of federal state he was accused of trying to divide the country.

It is very unfortunate that the political wisdom of the people of this country, particularly of those who were in the saddle of power, either failed to understand what Chelvanayakam speaking about, or deliberately twisted the meaning of the demand of the federal party in a cheap way in order to score petty political benefits.

It is very much relevant to quote here what was adopted as Resolu-

tion I at the First National Convention of the FP held on 13,14, and 15<sup>th</sup> April 1951 in Trincomalee.

*"Inasmuch as it is the inalienable right of every nation to enjoy full political freedom without which its spiritual, cultural and moral stature must degenerate, and inasmuch as the Tamil-speaking people in Ceylon constitute a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood, — by reason of their territorial habitation of definite areas which constitute over one-third of this Island, this First National Convention of the Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchy (ITAK) demands for the Tamil-speaking nation in Ceylon their inalienable right to political autonomy and calls for a plebiscite to determine the boundaries of the linguistic states in consonance with the fundamental and unchallengeable principle of self-determination."*

The above resolution was clear enough to explain the nature of the demand of the FP at that time.

The underlined portions of the resolution are more than enough to prove what the party was demanding was not a separate sovereign state but an autonomous state within the sovereign state of Ceylon. By this Resolution the FP was clear in its thinking that the right to self-determination of the Tamil-speaking people was inalienable and as such it was not negotiable. What was to be negotiated and called for was a plebiscite to determine the boundaries of the autonomous nation.

I don't want to think even for a moment that the FP was advocating secession. The fact that the name of the party contains the Tamil word **Arasu** didn't mean that the party wanted to establish a separate state within Ceylon. The word **Arasu**, in addition meaning a sovereign state, can mean an autonomous state as well. As it is used in the United States of America and in India the units of the federal state are called states.

According to international law (and even in political science), the word state can hold both meanings — a sovereign state as well as a unit of a federal state. It is not surprising for a party that was dominated by a good number of lawyers at that time to naturally think of using the word **Arasu** to show their commitment towards the principle of federalism.

It is only the cynical or mediocre, who would argue that Chelvanayakam was demanding a separate state and the word **Arasu** had misled people as to the nature of the demand.

But if someone is determined to twist meanings for his/her benefit to score cheap political advantage then there can be no way of stopping him/her from indulging in such semantic gimmicks.

I do not agree with the view that Chelvanayakam was misunderstood. The people of this country were not prepared to digest power sharing or to understand what sovereignty really meant.

Any talk of power sharing and co-existence cannot afford to stray from the basic norms of the principle of self-determination as it is under-

stood and recognized under international law.

I don't want to elaborate on the legal implications of the principle. However, it must be remembered that the only way in which this principle can be realised meaningfully is to recognize the nationhood of a people. Everything else for negotiations would follow from this recognition.

What I would like to reiterate at this juncture is that if Chelvanayakam was of the opinion that the nationhood of the Tamil-speaking people was not negotiable (it was demanded by him as an inalienable right) and that only the boundaries of the linguistic region were to be determined by plebiscite, then what is there to negotiate today in the name of self-determination of the Tamil speaking people?

A plain reading of what Balasingham said at the press conference makes the picture very clear in that the armed struggle of the LTTE is not for anything else but for the right to self-determination of the Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka (Balasingham has cleared some doubts over this). By referring to the traditional homeland and self-determination he has given the correct picture of what the fight is going to achieve.

For self-respect and to get all the opportunities to realise one's own potentialities one does not need a separate state. But, the denial of these would definitely lead to separation, as there wouldn't be any other alternative to pursue.

The right to self-determination can be realised in many ways.

There are a number of mechanisms available, which can be made use of in devising and ensuring effective enjoyment of this right. However, the Tamil-speaking people of the northeast of Sri Lanka cannot afford to forego their right to decide their political destiny.

At the same time, we should also be mindful of the fact that there have been instances in which a state accepted the principle of secession and entered into negotiations.

In 1962 for instance, Britain recognized the right of Nyasaland (later Malawi) to secede from the Central African Federation. In Malaysia-Singapore, the normal situation was reversed and the terms of secession were presented to Lee Kuan Yew by the Malaysian government. When it happened in Sweden by 1905, despite some ministers' advocacy of war, the Swedish cabinet decided to proceed with peace talks allowing Norway to depart following the Storting vote.

It is for the delegations that go to Thailand to explore what option would be ideal for Sri Lanka in the present politico-military scenario. All of us and the international community are well aware that Prabhakaran is not Chelvanayakam. The latter, unfortunately could not turn to any other option as he was ill-equipped to do so. But, you cannot deal with Prabhakaran on the Galle Face green. It is not his theatre of operation.



# Muslim nationhood in the northeast

By V.I.S. Jeyapalan

The important social and political phenomena in 20<sup>th</sup> century Sri Lanka were the development of Sinhala national consciousness through the assimilation of low country and Kandyan Sinhalese and the growth of the Tamil national consciousness in the northeast.

During the deliberations of the Donoughmore Commission, the Kandyan elites saw their assimilation into a unitary Sinhala nationhood as subjugation by Low Country Sinhalese. They wanted the Kandyans, the Low Country Sinhalese and the Tamils of the northeast divided into three federated states.

The evolution of Sinhala nationhood since the time of the Donoughmore reforms was largely based on the appropriation of state power and infrastructure by Sinhala leaders. Hence, Sinhala nation building was guided by negative political impulses, beginning with the anti-Muslims riots of 1915 and the limited disenfranchisement of Upcountry Tamils in the Kandy Municipal elections in the late '20s.

Until independence, the Sinhala nationalist revivalists such as Anagarika Dharmapala and political leaders like D. S. Senanayake and S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, saw the Muslims and the Upcountry Tamils as their main threat. They were partly successful in politically subsuming the Muslims and subjugating the Up Country Tamils by stripping them of their civil and political rights.

Resistance among the Muslims and the Up Country Tamils to this Sinhala nationalist project was minimal at that historical juncture because the Sri Lankan Muslims as a whole did not have the necessary geographic contiguity to support the development of a national consciousness at this stage.

The so-called 'statelessness' of the upcountry Tamils, the extreme oppression of their economic, social and political life and India's apathy denied all avenues for the development of a national consciousness among that community. Sinhala nationalists were able to overcome regional and sub-national differences such as the Kandyan — Low Country dichotomy at the expense of the Muslims and especially, the Up Country Tamils.

The benefits of disenfranchisement and stripping off of civil rights of the upcountry Tamils were given to the Kandyan Sinhalese to win them over for forging a common Sinhala nation. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike emerged as the main social engineer of this project.



The late M.H.M. Ashraff

The only region proposed by the Kandyan elites as one of the three federated states of Ceylon that was not either assimilated or subjugated by the Sinhala nationalist project was the northeast.

The reasons for this are:

a) Tamils and the Tamil speaking Muslims had ethnic contiguity in the region.

b) Despite regional and ethnic differences in the northeast, Tamil was the unifying language throughout the region.

c) All the main Tamil-speaking population centres of the region were far removed from the theatre of Sinhala nationalism, separated by dense forests and no man's lands.

d) The encounter with the developing Sinhala national consciousness was mostly limited to the Tamil elites that had migrated to Colombo and which were generally in alliance with the Sinhala nationalist project.

Therefore the Tamils and Muslims of the northeast did not directly come into the crosshairs of the Sinhala nationalist until after independence.

In the 50's the activities of the Federal Party made them realise that the northeast was the main challenge to unitary Sinhala nationalism, which wanted make other ethnic groups accept that the project of developing the Sri Lankan nation as a Sinhala nation.

The Tamils of the northeast and their political development were seen as the main obstacle to the appropriation of state power and infrastructure by the architects of the 'Sinhala Only' project.

Therefore, dismantling the basis of Tamil federalism by denying the parity of the Tamil language and the geographic contiguity of the northeast became the main Sinhala strategy to subjugate Tamils.

The Tamils of the northeast are the only ethnic group that was able to project itself as a nation parallel to the Sinhalese and refused to sacrifice their rights in return for ministerial posts and development

*This is the reason why I argue that the search for nationhood by the Tamils and Muslims is a linked project. Any denial of this reality will be detrimental to Muslim nationhood.*

perks.

Their relentless struggle and sacrifices to defend their nationhood also created the political space for the upcountry Tamils and the Muslims of the northeast to review their ethnic subjugation.

The only group that failed to utilise this space to win its rights and enlarge its political scope was the Muslims of the south.

In my 1983 book 'The Muslim people and the National Question' I identified the Muslims of the northeast as a distinct group, which can develop further towards nationhood by coordinating with the Tamil struggle based on the common concept of Tamil speaking people.

I argued against the following aspects which discouraged the development of a distinct national psyche among Muslims of the northeast:

a) Accepting the leadership of southern Muslims that had subjugated Muslim interests to Sinhala nationalism for mere ministerial posts, leaders who did not raise even finger against violent attacks on Muslims, which dramatically increased in the '70s (such as the attack on the Puttalam mosque)

b) Not developing a northeast Muslim leadership to fight against state-aided Sinhala land grabbing in the east. Muslims were affected as much as the Tamils by Sinhala colonisation in the east.

I therefore argued that to develop as a distinct nation the Muslims should join hands with the Tamils to fight Sinhala colonisation in the east. Muslims not only share a common language but also share a common cause with the Tamils in defending their traditional homelands against the Sinhala nationalist project. Hence the northeast Muslims could jointly develop into nationhood as part of the Tamil speaking people.

At that stage I expected Muslims not only to win their rights and the lands they lost to Sinhala colonization, but to also overcome the non-contiguity of their enclaves which were scattered among the Tamils through friendship with the Tamils.

I still believe that the friendship of the Tamils is the only way for them to overcome their political and social difficulties caused by the geographic disconnectedness that hindered their development towards nationhood.

Unfortunately, some Muslim theoreticians and politicians believed that they could develop an alternative strategy to overcome this geographic problem by collaborating with the Sri Lanka army.

They believed that if the Sri Lankan army controlled the main eastern coastal road linking almost all the Muslim enclaves in the region it would help them overcome the discontinuity and that ministerial power in Colombo would help them develop the enclaves.

According to them, economic development of the enclaves and control of the main road by the Sri Lanka army taken together, were adequate to develop their distinct nationhood independent of the Tamils in the northeast. In personal discussions with Muslim leaders such as the late SLMC leader M. H. M. Ashraff, I argued that this strategy, instead of leading the Muslims of the northeast towards nationhood would, Actually, dismantle its very basis.

I pointed out that it is very fundamental to nationhood that it never compromises its territorial foundation.

I also drew their attention to the implications of their alternative strategy that negates their quest for nationhood.

1. The basic premise of their nationhood stands on the Muslim units of the northeast province. Therefore the geographical unity of the northeast is the non-negotiable basis of their nationhood. My late friend Ashraff gave up part of his people's traditional homeland for Digavapi colonisation.

2. Even Ashraff who developed the theory of the northeast Muslims as a nation, negated it by vacillating on the question of de-merging the northeast. Dividing the unified northeast province would split the Muslims of that region.

3. The bankruptcy of the alternative theory was exposed not only when the SLMC gave up the northern Muslims by opposing the merger, but also when it abandoned the Muslims of Trincomalee and Batticaloa by shrinking Muslim nationhood within the southeastern region it demanded and upheld.

The southeastern region comprises the three electorates of Pottuvil, Kalmunai and Sammanthurai minus

the traditional Muslim homelands encroached by Sinhala colonisation. In this proposed region, there are 161,481 Muslims and 78,315 Tamils living together. These Tamils consider themselves as an inalienable part of the northeast homeland.

This mistake took place because the SLMC rejected the reality that the concept of Muslim nationhood developed in the space created by the struggle of the Tamils for their nationhood. This is the reason why I argue that the search for nationhood by the Tamils and Muslims is a linked project. Any denial of this reality will be detrimental to Muslim nationhood.

Unfortunately one mistake led to another and both Muslims and Tamils have committed crimes against each other in the past.

Both have to leave the past behind and understand without defending the northeast together they cannot achieve their nationhood.

I also want to stress the following to the eastern Tamils: Transcending their identity as Tamils and rising to the plane of a broader Eelam consciousness by accepting the equality and commonness not only of the Muslims, but also by accepting the Sinhalese who have become the natural citizens of Eelam.

Only by living to the full meaning that the northeast is homeland of Tamils, Muslims, and the northeastern Sinhalese we can win the peace.

I understand the frustration of Muslim youth in northeast. Some of them still believe the futile alternative theory. They think that peace is the cause of their current problems. They also believe that only by disrupting peace they can create a situation conducive to the alternative theory.

Ashraff's collaborationist attitude led him to surrender the politics of northeastern Muslim nation. He began to believe that the SLMC could extend its leadership over the southern Muslims as well. He cut his tent into two as SLMC and NUA. He thereby allowed camels to enter both tents. This is how the older Ashraff destroyed the dreams the young Ashraff had of forging a northeastern Muslim nationhood. He not only destroyed the dreams of his younger days but also the dreams of an emerging nation.

Do the Muslims believe that the Sinhalese fight Tamils on their behalf? Will Sinhalese break the peace and fight again for the sake of Muslims? In what sense would the Muslims of the northeast be better off than the Muslims of Mawanella?

Without immediate self-criticism and reorganisation, the northeastern Muslims cannot come out of their current political bankruptcy.



# Why the media hype about LTTE 'renouncing' Eelam?

By J. S. Tissainayagam

The first round of peace negotiations between the government and the LTTE concluded on an amusing note last week with the international media going into paroxysms of excitement and announcing to the world the Tigers had agreed to give up their call for a separate state. The fact of the matter however was much more prosaic with the LTTE's chief negotiator, Dr. Anton Balasingham merely saying, "The LTTE doesn't operate according to the concept of a separate state... We operate according to the concept of a homeland and self-determination. Homeland doesn't mean a separate state as such..."

It should be obvious to anyone who has basic common sense that meaningful negotiations necessarily mean protagonists of the conflict exploring alternatives to their original demands. Such a spirit should inform negotiations because if neither party is willing to descend from entrenched positions, there is no opportunity for dialogue. But on the other hand, if the negotiating party is willing to abandon its core demand at the very first round of talks it will find itself retreating from position to position till the initiative is wrested out of its hands.

Therefore, either the LTTE consists of a bunch of imbeciles who do not know how to negotiate, or the core of its demand lies elsewhere from blind, unreasoned insistence on a separate state. What Balasingham was trying to prove was the latter. He was pointing out that the right of 'self-determination' - autonomy for a group of people who answer the criteria of nationhood to freely determine their political destiny - and 'homeland' - a well-defined territory of historic settlement/habitation and shared memory - were the concepts that defined the parameters within which the LTTE functioned. The political structure that would reflect these concepts was of secondary importance.

All one has to do to get a sober perspective on the matter is to compare the Balasingham's statement with Velupillai Prabhakaran's words at the Great Hero's Day message in November 2001 and the Prabhakaran-Balasingham responses to questions at the Kilinochchi press conference in April 2002.

What is more, Balasingham spoke similar words after the first round of talks with the government in 1994. He told 'Frontline,' "The government is not going to negotiate for Eelam. We are prepared for a substantial alternative for Eelam. That does not mean we have given up our demand for self-determination... Even though it is a political principle, we are open and prepared



to examine a substantial alternative."

Official statements from foreign governments were however more circumspect on the issue of the LTTE giving up a separate state. They saw no reason to couch their responses to Balasingham's words without analysing them critically - something they have done with other pronouncements of the Tigers. But in the past, the more influential countries in the international system have said the LTTE's separatist agenda is unacceptable under any circumstances. Britain and the US have said categorically that Eelam is completely out, thereby almost rejecting the concept of the birth of new state. So has India.

Were the international media's responses a spontaneous celebration of the LTTE's retreat from the demand for a separate state, or were they contrived as a move with a strategy in mind? Because by deliberately making an issue of the LTTE's so-called renunciation of Eelam, the international media has succeeded in tying down a liberation movement into the straitjacket of making its demands within the confines of a united Sri Lanka. In other words, even without the LTTE saying it had shifted from its original position, the organisation has been painted to the outside world rejecting a separate state.

The response of the international media is identical to the Sri Lanka government's position at the talks. The government came to the negotiating table and at the very first round put down conditions. The government's chief negotiator, Professor G. L. Peiris, said categorically any form of devolution would be considered only within the unity and

territorial integrity of the Sri Lankan state. In other words, the government was tenaciously hanging on to positions that had been tried and tested failures in peace negotiations starting from Thimphu in 1985.

The hype about the Tigers giving up the demand for Eelam is an effective way of locking the LTTE into a position that its detractors hope will make it difficult for the organisation to demand a separate state in the future. When the Tigers attacked the ships at Trincomalee naval base in April 1995, signalling thereby the recommencement of hostilities, the government and the international community raised cries of indignation the LTTE had gone back on its obligations to give 72 hours notice. Now it is worse. The LTTE has been made to appear to have rejected separatism and to go back to it would be seen almost as breaking a pledge made before an international audience.

Locking the LTTE into a position from which it finds difficult to extricate itself could very well lead to catastrophic results. It was tried once before and, predictably, failed. In 1987, the government of India and Sri Lanka signed the Indo-Lanka Accord while Prabhakaran was confined to a hotel room in India. On that instance it emasculated the LTTE to a point it could not effectively participate in the negotiations that would determine the future of the organisation and the Tamils. In fact the destiny of the latter was being decided the political vassals of New Delhi. This incredibly stupid move was followed by war. This time, the attempt is to confine the LTTE in terms of its negotiating

space.

Now that the LTTE has been portrayed as having renounced Eelam, the Sri Lanka government is in a position to do its utmost to water down any proposal for autonomy when negotiations on the core issues come up, buoyed by the confidence that separation is a difficult option for the Tigers to resurrect. The past is instructive in this regard too and just two instances will suffice. What the H. W. Jayewardene delegation agreed to at Thimphu in 1985, the government repudiated once the government representatives returned home. Similarly, the versions of the G. L. Peiris drafted constitution, saw systematic dilution, till what was presented in parliament in 2000 was a rump of the original of 1995.

There has been scholarly work produced in certain quarters to dilute the Thimphu principles and make them more palatable to the south. By watering down the contents of the principles, but not their form, it is believed the demands of the Tamils could be accommodated within a united Sri Lanka and a federal form of government, ignoring other structures even within a united Sri Lanka that might better answer Tamil aspirations.

Political elites using the media to fight their battles is well known. Questions at the Kilinochchi press conference in April were wearisomely monotonous as the media tried to portray the LTTE as a bunch of terrorists recruiting children, extorting money and kidnapping for ransom. None among the international media teams seemed to care for Tamil children traumatised by war who could have been inter-

viewed if the journalists had but ventured little afield. It would have given the media and the public who watch, listen and read them, a different perspective as to why kids are part of the LTTE's war machine.

The bellicosity of the western and Indian media at Kilinochchi dovetailed well with the stance of the foreign governments who became 'concerned' about the human rights violations in the northeast in the immediate aftermath of the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in February and concerted efforts were made to undermine the LTTE by citing its human rights record.

Today, the British and American media are hell-bent on concocting the most fanciful stories to supplement the stunts their political leaderships perform to topple Saddam Hussein. There is ample evidence of the media contributing immensely to the agenda of the war machines of their respective countries, which is ultimately in the hands of the power elites of those governments.

It will indeed be a tragedy if the international community hoodwinks itself into thinking it can continue to apply such pressure on the LTTE by giving it limited space for political manoeuvre. There is plenty distorted thinking that the LTTE was compelled to negotiate due to the international political climate and therefore it could be cajoled and browbeaten into accepting anything in the name of peace the Sri Lanka government offers.

In the past, such impositions have only resulted on the LTTE returning to arms.



# Reincarnation of the Tiger: whose karma?

By Jude L. Fernando

Late President J.R. Jayewardene's attempt to 'Tigerize' the economy in the late 1970s resulted in economic and political disaster. It produced progressive erosion of democratic freedoms, accompanied by violence but not an economic miracle similar to what was experienced in the East Asian countries. On the contrary, the state lost its independence and fiscal capacity to govern.

Ethno-nationalist policies used in the next two decades by the mainstream political parties for economic development and governance imprisoned the country in further violence and conflict that went hand in hand with economic stagnation and low growth rates. Recently however, the government and the LTTE have agreed that political settlement of the war was an essential prerequisite for economic progress.

The current interest in taking advantage of peace and 'Tigerizing' Sri Lanka's economy is rooted in the belief that 1) the fundamental reason for the lack of economic development is the absence of 'good governance,' a notion popularized by the NGOs in their covert attempts to 'domesticate' and 'humanize' global capitalism and 2) that the global economic and political climate is still conducive to produce another East Asian miracle.

According to them, bad politics, defined as lack of transparency and accountability by politicians, is the explanation for slow economic growth, majority of the world population being deprived of basic subsistence, widening inequality between the rich and the poor etc. etc. The implication is that disciplined governments can still produce East Asian style economic miracles.

This might not be a problem for Sri Lanka because there is a real Tiger, with which the government can collaborate and learn in order to discipline and punish those who obstruct economic development. The LTTE and the government have more than enough intelligence, personnel and equipment for the job! Such repression will not be new to the south. How the LTTE deals with political dissent remains to be seen as they become increasingly dependent upon international aid for economic development and embark on political reform.

The unholy alliance, consisting of transnational companies (TNCs), the World Bank - IMF and developed western states, is unlikely to object to power increasingly acquired by the Sri Lanka government to suppress political dissent as long as suppression is

carried out in the name of 'war against terrorism' and against the 'unpatriotic' elements.

The environment in which East Asia experienced its economic boom such as the Cold War, rather flexible conditions attached to giving foreign aid, the peculiar nature of its experience with colonialism, its culture and work ethic and most importantly the international tolerance for East Asian style political practices, is absent today if Sri Lanka wants to test the model.

The East Asian economies did not function according to the prescriptions of the unholy alliance, but by ignoring its advice. Though there is much confusion among economists as to what really triggered the economic boom in the East Asian economies, the unholy alliance is yet trying desperately to use the East Asian economies as vindication of its market-driven, free trade doctrine and pushing the 'Tiger' model as the answer to all third world poverty.

East Asian governments played a major role in protecting domestic markets, subsidizing exports, controlling credit, running nationalized industries and regulating labor relations. At the same time, basic democratic freedoms in these countries were severely curtailed in the name of economic prosperity. The trade-off between democracy and development in East Asia became a human rights concern for the unholy alliance only when it lacked a convincing explanation for the East Asian crisis in the 1990s and needed a political instrument to discipline the governments.

The East Asian Tigers had a national plan backed by strong political will not to subordinate their economies to the dictates of the global economy. They maintained broad-based social welfare systems. Of course now critics argue that these programs are unsustainable indulgences by corrupt governments and do not reflect the 'true' economic achievement.

Sri Lanka does not have the freedom and flexibility to pilot its economic development the way East Asian Tigers guided theirs. Especially when it comes to developing countries, the international community does not tolerate state controls over the economy, heavy emphasis on social welfare, or trade-offs between democracy and development. The role of the state in relation to the global economy is far different to what it was during the East Asian economic boom.

The second attempt, after 25 years, at 'Tigerizing' the Sri Lankan economy is envisioned at a time when this model faces one of its worst crises and the prospects of recovery remain bleak and impervious to easy solutions. The boom is over and the miracle has ended. The myth of East Asian exceptionalism, as a

*The shortages and high prices are brought about by the economic system; monetary value of products is not given by the nature; the freedom to maximize profit in the midst of mass poverty and environmental catastrophe is not a fundamental human right.*

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model invulnerable to the normal vicissitudes of capitalism was punctured by the crisis. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad has reiterated his warning that unchecked market forces are having a damaging effect on developing countries and on the global economy as a whole. The billionaire financial capitalist George Soros says the biggest enemy of humanity is not communism, but capitalism.

Though the unholy alliance points the finger at governance, the cause of the crisis is internal to the very system that creates economic growth. It is a result of over-production and inability to find profitable markets. There is U.S. \$ 360 billion worth of unsold goods in East Asian countries and huge stocks of manufacturing potential that is likely to put pressure on prices and intensify already ferocious competition.

The drop in demand for East Asian exports is due to the rise of protectionism in the US and decline in purchasing power of the US consumer. "Be a patriot and boost your consumption," a popular slogan after 9/11 is simply not helping the recovery of the US economy. Simply put, not only are there 'natural' limits to the amount of goods and services people can consume, but also even if there is still a demand, people cannot afford to buy them. The most compelling reasons for the crisis are over capacity and increasing burden of personal debt used to get rid of it, which the economist calls clearing the markets.

Until 1996, the inflow of investment in East Asia accounted for U.S. \$ 93 billion, but six months later there was a massive turnaround producing a net outflow of U.S. \$ 12 billion and thereafter outflows increased progressively to bring not only East Asia, but also the rest of the world to a standstill. It was global institutions, not local ones, which orchestrated these movements. Over two million workers lost jobs and corporate bankruptcies averaged 150 a day. High debt decreased the ceiling on further credit and coupled with draconian laws, reduced the availability of credit, which in turn led to skyrocketing interest rates to

between 20 and 30 percent

According to the unholy alliance the remedy for the East Asian crisis is to open their economies to the global competition. As a result, cheap food imports from the U.S. have flooded South Korea, destroying a once-prosperous farming sector and driving 500,000 people off the land every year. In Malaysia and Thailand, which have majority rural populations, the urban bias of miracle economics has been most devastating. Low prices have combined with destructive mega-projects, driving people into factories of the export economy, resulting in multiple crises.

Thailand has been a playground for the dam-builders, heavily bankrolled by the World Bank and logging companies who have together laid waste to vast tracts of land and displaced thousands of farming families. The value of Thai Baht fell by 50 percent and over 56 financial companies closed. In Indonesia, another 'success' story of global capitalism, the number of people living under poverty has increased by 22.5 percent to 118.8 million. Recently, the Indonesian Rupiah has fallen from 2,400 per U.S. Dollar to 10,000. Informal economic activities, black markets, prostitution, and crime rates are on the rise.

The 'Economist' noted, "The danger now in South Korea and elsewhere in the region, is that a vicious circle of slowing growth, failing banks and contracting credit causes not merely a brief and shallow recession, but a deep and prolonged slump." Even Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve of the U.S., said the East Asian crisis can "neither be measured nor rational" and "we do not fully understand the new system's dynamics." Even economic pundits are realizing that the post-war economy has exhausted its potential buffeted by contradictions and crises resulting from its own expansion, which it is unable to fathom or contain.

The IMF's injection of billions of dollars worth rescue packages are only worsening the crisis and taking away the few political freedoms East

Asia enjoyed to guide its destiny. The crisis is likely to worsen as the hegemony of the U.S. dollar is challenged by the European Union's single currency, a trade deficit of over U.S. \$ 30 billion and a debt of U.S. \$ 5 trillion abroad. This partly explains the reasons for an emerging consensus in the west regarding the use of force to discipline any country that appears to threaten the interests of the global energy industry and / or any nation attempting to develop a national economy by taking control of its own resources.

The political crises in East Asia indicate that their masses are no longer fooled by bellicose anti-imperialist appearances maintained by sterile cultural conformism, absolute obedience through draconian legal sanctions, or the widespread use of capital and corporal punishment - practices that masquerade as 'Asian values' propagated by rightwing Japanese think-tanks and echoed by people like Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore and Mahathir in Malaysia.

The lesson for Sri Lanka is there is no logical reason to think that economic progress can be achieved only if it is entirely determined by the global market. It is naive to believe that humans cannot interact with the natural environment to produce enough to satisfy their basic needs outside the context of the profit-maximizing global economic system.

What is so rational in an economic system that subsidies farmers not to produce when there are millions starving? How do we explain the poor in the third world cannot afford to buy products manufactured in their own localities, when the financial markets collapse due to speculative behavior of a stock market agent in New York? How do we explain 9/11 in New York or collapse of East Asian financial markets causing starvation among those who do not even have a bank account, but have enough land and water to produce their basic subsistence?

The shortages and high prices are brought about by the economic system; monetary value of products is not given by the nature; the freedom to maximize profit in the midst of mass poverty and environmental catastrophe is not a fundamental human right. Answers to these questions need to be first derived from our ethical and moral convictions about justice, happiness and freedom than from economic textbooks and the Enlightenment's notion of progress.

Sri Lanka needs a radically new normative framework for economic development with priority given for the satisfaction basic needs and the sustainability of the environment, even it means imposing serious limitations to economic growth.



# Maoist insurgency in Nepal: socio-economic and political implications

By Smruti S. Pattanaik, Research Officer, IDSA

The Maoist insurgency of Nepal should be seen in the context of the Communist movement there. The Communists in Nepal are divided on the basis of their ideology and divergent in their approach to the political system and belief. After the introduction of the Panchayat system in 1960, the Communists in Nepal were divided on the future course of political action. The Communist Party along with the Nepali Congress was to pressure the king to restore the suspended parliament.

Whereas one faction of the Communists was not averse to working with the King, the radicals among the Communists, wanted to end the Panchayat regime and constitute an elected constituent assembly to draw up the constitution for Nepal.

The Maoist rebels believe in the ideology of revolution to bring about political change through force and establish what they term as 'peoples government.' Apart from ideological underpinnings, what has contributed to the growth of Maoism in Nepal is poor governance, corruption, apathetic attitude of the government towards integrated socio-economic development and most importantly political instability. The political instability affected the economic development and the government of the day became more concerned with its survivability rather than governance. Coupled with this corruption and the bureaucratic hazards involved in policy implementation added to the growing grievances of the people. This is evident from the fact that since 1990 Nepal has seen 10 governments.

While misgovernance is an important factor, ethnic and linguistic alienation has played an important role in the marginalisation of the ethno-linguistic minorities. Cashing in on these grievances, the Maoists promised self-rule and autonomy to various ethnic groups. This can be understood in the context of formation of Nepali Janajati group demanding recognition of their language and culture. The pamphlet distributed on February 13, 1996 clearly established the political acumen of the Maoists in having exploited this dissatisfaction to strengthen their support base. The Maoists declared, "To maintain the hegemony of one religion (i.e. Hinduism), language (i.e. Nepali), and nationality (i.e. Khas), this state has for centuries exercised discrimination, exploitation and oppression against other religions, languages and nationalities and has comprised to fragment the forces of national unity that is vital for proper development and security of the country." The areas under the influence of the

Maoists are extremely backward areas of Nepal where the reach of the government is difficult. Since Nepal is an agrarian society, the peasants' dissatisfaction regarding land ownership has been exploited by the Maoist in these backward areas where even the agricultural land is comparatively less productive. This is more due to a lack of irrigation facilities and hilly terrain with less arable land.

Faith of the cadre on the ability of Maoists emanates from the 'efficient' parallel administration the rebels have established. Moreover, the areas under the Maoist influence have also witnessed feudalism and exploitation. The Maoists have redistributed land in most of the areas under their control after burning property ownership records. Kathmandu has intervened in the state of affairs only to repress the movement rather than to bring any change in the socio-economic structure of these marginal regions infested with the Maoist ideology.

Funding for their operations comes from various taxes that the Maoists have imposed on the area under their control, private donation and extortion. People's faith on the Maoists come from the fact that they have invested the taxes collected from land in the development of the village under their control. Their cadres are recruited from a committed group of young people that also includes women. Interestingly one third of the guerrilla squads are women and every village has a revolutionary women's organisation. The women are influenced by the guerrillas' propagated ideology of gender and class equality, which they never had under the traditional social system. There are reports of criminals who have joined on the promise that they would be protected from the Nepali police. Their cadre's strength is believed to be around 4,000-5,000 with a support base of several thousand more.

Lopsided development and concentration of wealth are some factors that have added to the grievance list of the people. Since in Nepal many people are dependent on land for their livelihood, agricultural has become critical to the economic development. Land reforms are as old as 1964 where the government took some steps in land redistribution. These failed because many families registered excessive land in the name of their relatives.

The areas under the Maoist stronghold hardly have the modern infrastructure such as roads, schools, medical facilities or electricity. The Koirala Government had launched a programme called 'basket fund' to the tune of US \$ 2.6 million for economic upliftment. It allocated double that amount or US \$ 4.72 million, to purchase weapons to deal with the Maoists. The government also created a 15,000 Armed Police Force

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to deal with the insurgency. This itself elucidates the fact that the government is more amenable to a military solution rather than tackling basic grievances.

Political parties in Nepal do not have a common strategy to deal with the problem. The opposition parties treat it as the problem of the government. The Nepali government initially considered the Maoist insurgency as a law and order problem. Action was initiated against the Maoists in 1995. It was code-named 'operation Romeo' in Rolpa and Rukum area and involved the torture and arrest of the many suspected Maoists. This, however, did not help the government other than in achieving short-term objectives of controlling the situation. This alienated large segments of the population and strengthened the Maoist resolve to fight for a 'class-less' society and their rights more convincingly. The political instability, especially after the 1994 mid-term elections, resulted in a hung parliament.

In 1997, the UML government tried to introduce a terrorism law to give the police wide-ranging powers to deal with the insurgency. The law was later withdrawn due to the lack of support from other political parties, intelligentsia and human rights groups. The government efforts to initiate talks also failed due to several preconditions set by the rebels. Some of the preconditions put forward by the Maoists are: insurgents killed in police action to be declared as martyrs, release of party cadres lodged in various jails, and withdrawal of police from the insurgency affected areas. With violence increasing and a political solution to the problem not within sight, the government adopted strong-arms measures.

The government in 1998 started operations against the Maoists in 18 districts considered to be the strongholds of the rebels, resulting in widespread killing and torture of the suspected rebels. This caused further alienation of the people. Employing police actions

without corresponding socio-economic measures to alleviate the grievances of the people failed to achieve the desired effect. At the same time due to violence and killing, the government officials found it difficult to operate from the region under the Maoist control.

Increasing attacks on police stations, on army units and government offices are not only a violent show of strength but are loaded with symbolism. An attack on the apparatus of the state is equivalent to the striking at the very foundation of a political system, which the cadres reject. Moreover, such daring attacks on the police station and government offices have reinforced faith of its cadre in the method.

The government action do not evoke trust of the Maoist. For instance, in November 2000, the government in a conciliatory approach towards the Maoists and in order to open talks, freed a central committee member of the organisation. However, he was made to denounce insurgency and this itself created suspicions about the government's motives behind the serious negotiations to solve the problem. The action of the government was interpreted by the Maoists as scoring a political point and was also perceived as a measure to discredit their movement. Thus, the effort to begin talks failed.

According to some estimates, till April 2001, 1900 people have been killed in the insurgency. Interestingly, the Maoists while adopting a political posture vis-à-vis the government have established their autonomous political entity - a state within the state. The Maoists announced the formation of People's Revolutionary Government in 17 districts of Nepal. In these districts the insurgents levy taxes, provide justice, solve common problems, manage agriculture and at the same time provide security to the villagers. Instead of dealing with the situation to bring peace, police actions have aggravated it. The Nepali Army is opposed to the upgrading

of the weaponry of the police force due to their institutional interests. As a result, the operations against the Maoists have been inadequate.

Maoists have exploited the prevailing 'anti-Indianism' of the elite. In Nepal the Nepali nationalism is often interpreted as synonymous with anti-Indianism. Misgovernance and economic backwardness is attributed to various policies adopted by India. Many people resent the geographical realities, which make Nepal dependent on India. In fact many Nepali political parties have played on this sentiment and have exploited this to establish domestic credibility. Even to the Maoists this has been an easy way to establish domestic credibility and reiterate their patriotism.

One of the demands of the Maoists is the abrogation of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of 1950 and annulment of the Mahakali Treaty. Though at present the Joint Working Group, constituting officials from both the countries has had several meetings regarding the revision of the 1950 Treaty, nothing concrete has been achieved so far. India has a porous border with Nepal. It is reported that the Maoists have linkages with the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) active in Bihar and the Peoples War Group (PWG) in Andhra Pradesh. Though both these groups have ideological linkages with the Maoists of Nepal and there is a possibility of sharing operational skills, it is less likely that the group active in India would be supplying weapons to the Maoists in Nepal.

The spillover effect of the Maoist insurgency would have implications for Indo-Nepal relations. Any close coordination of the Maoist groups functioning in both the countries could create more problems for the security forces since the open border can be used as a conduit for illegal arms. There is, so far, no evidence of the Chinese involvement in the problem in Nepal. India has to tread carefully because stability in neighbouring Nepal is of strategic importance. It would be prudent for India not to offer any suggestions on the issue unless asked for. If requested, India can help Nepal in gathering intelligence, training its police force and the army in counter-insurgency operations and supply necessary weapons.

At the same time India should be careful enough not to get directly involved in the counter insurgency efforts of the Nepalese government. There is a need for both the countries to cooperate closely and evolve a joint strategy to deal with the insurgents and their linkages with each other. Since the border is open it would be difficult to tackle the problem with a unilateral strategy.

(Strategic Analysis)



# Scepticism of Tigers' position reveals deep divisions in SL

By Feizal Samath

One week after Tamil rebel negotiator Anton Balasingham said the Tigers have scaled down their long-cherished goal of a separate state, many Sri Lankans and commentators on both sides of the ethnic conflict are far from convinced about his statement.

In fact, in a rare occurrence in the 19-year-old conflict, commentators sympathetic to the majority Sinhalese side and to the minority Tamils' views are for once united - in disbelief at the remarks Balasingham made at the peace talks in Thailand September 18.

Analysts who reflect a pro-Sinhalese point of view say Balasingham and the Tigers cannot be trusted, despite Balasingham's pronouncements that mark a scaling down of the Tamil Tigers' position on a separate state to be called Tamil Eelam.

Some Tamil commentators sympathetic to the Tigers also appear to have been surprised by the statement, saying they found it hard to believe the Tigers would publicly step back from one of their core goals.

For others however, "Eelam (separate state) or not", the peace process is more positive than before.

Still, "it's like old wine in a new bottle," one sceptical political analyst said of Balasingham's statement, although much of the world media may be in rapture over his remarks.

"I don't think the Tigers have renounced Eelam (separate state). They may not be fighting for it, but have not renounced it. They will get back to that struggle if they are not satisfied with the peace process," a senior Tamil journalist remarked. "I don't think they will ever give up the struggle for a separate state."

Balasingham told reporters in Sattahip, Thailand last week that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is not fighting for



an independent state but for "self determination" and a homeland for the Tamil minority community in Sri Lanka.

"The LTTE doesn't operate in the concept of separate state... We operate with the concept of homeland and self determination," he said.

But if regional autonomy is rejected, he added, then a fight for "political independence and statehood is only the last resort."

The remarks were flashed across the world by media covering the first peace talks in seven years - and the Tigers have not retracted or pulled back from Balasingham's statement.

But so divisive has the ethnic conflict been that sections of the Sri Lankan media - even a state-owned newspaper - remain sceptical of Balasingham's comments anyway.

The sense of disbelief that most commentators in the weekend newspapers conveyed about Balasingham's statement reveals how deep the entrenched positions are on either side of the political divide.

For instance, the 'Divaina' - an independent Sinhala-language weekly which has often taken a pro-Sinhalese line - says it is difficult to understand Balasingham's comment because Tamil Tiger guerrillas are already running their own affairs in the areas in the north and east that they control.

"The words sound sweet but if they are already running their own banks, courts and a police force what is it, if not an independent state?" it asked.

David Buell Jeyaraj, an Ottawa-based Sri Lankan Tamil journalist with close links to the LTTE leadership, also maintains that the Tigers have never declared that their demand for separation has been dropped.

Writing in the English-language 'Sunday Leader' newspaper, Jeyaraj said: "Moreover, it is not necessary for them to drop the demand as a pre-condition or prerequisite for entering talks. It is perfectly normal and even logical for an organisation to enter talks of such a nature without dropping the relevant demand."

Jeyaraj, whose comments are closely followed by the Sri Lankan establishment, says he found remarkable the publicity given to what he called a non-existent stance of the Tigers.

"Unless Tamil aspirations are accommodated, the demand for Tamil Eelam will not be abandoned. If a viable alternative to it is to evolve then the core principles of homeland, nationhood and self determination have to be recognised," he wrote.

"Only the ignorant, naive and incompetent will believe, let alone project, that the LTTE has entered talks after abandoning the Tamil Eelam demand," he argued.

Dayan Jayatilake, a columnist for the Sunday Island newspaper, called Balasingham's statement a "good, old fashioned conjuror's trick . . . smoke and mirrors."

But the debates in the media have also had room for more moderate voices.

For instance, 'Lankadeepa', the biggest selling independent Sinhala-language Sunday weekly, in an editorial comment this week,

praised Balasingham's comments and said it "boded well for peace talks".

Lakshman Gunasekera, editor of the state-owned 'Sunday Observer', says the LTTE position was basically no different from its general posture these past three to four years.

In his weekly commentary, he wrote that Tiger leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran has clearly stated in successive Heroes Day speeches that the LTTE is prepared to renounce cessation for a proper power-sharing arrangement for the government. But he has also said it would retain its separatist goal if the solution fails.

But Gunasekera says the difference this year lies in the rhetoric and nuances, and not the substance, of the LTTE posture. "The Tiger leadership, while not diluting its position, has gone further than ever before in praising a government in Colombo and in making public pronouncements that would ease the fears of the Sinhala majority community."

The rebels have been engaged in a bloody, separatist battle since 1983 in northern and eastern areas of the country, where most of Sri Lanka's Tamils live.

The LTTE has at times been at variance over its primary demand of an independent state, and political watchers over the years have eagerly awaiting any comments made by rebel leader Prabhakaran in public on this issue.

In November last year, Prabhakaran said the rebels were prepared to discuss any alternatives to Eelam. But asked about this at a press conference in April, Prabhakaran acknowledged that his cadres are likely to kill him if he renounced separation.

In the end, Savithri Wijesekera, a lawyer and activist, says she just hopes the peace talks succeed: "Both sides are talking of peace within a unitary state. I want to believe what they are saying because the war has to stop at some point." (IPS)

## ZDI to lose \$160m in Sri Lanka arms deal

THE Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI) could lose nearly \$160 million dollars because a middleman it engaged five years ago to run weapons to Sri Lanka on its behalf has refused to forward monies paid for the supplies.

The Sri Lankan army, which made a down payment of about \$99 million for the weapons, is said to have also refused to pay the outstanding debt, the Financial Gazette established this week.

Sources close to the deal said the ZDI in 1997 contracted a South Korean company, Kolon

International, to move thousands of rounds of mortar bombs and other contraband to the Sri Lankan army who urgently needed the bombs to repel an offensive by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The ZDI entered the deal with the Singapore branch of the Korean firm.

The Sri Lankans paid US\$1.8 million (about \$99 million at the current official exchange rate) as down payment for the consignment.

But Kolon did not transfer the money to ZDI, saying it had used the money to pay commissions to

Sri Lankan army officials who had facilitated the arms supply deal.

Efforts by the ZDI to recover its monies from Kolon have hit a brick wall after a Singapore law firm Katter Hwang & Partner, hired in 1999 by the Zimbabwean company to take the Koreans to the International Arbitration Centre, refused last year to handle the matter almost at the eleventh hour, according to the sources.

It could not be established why the Singaporean lawyers turned down the ZDI case. ZDI chief executive Tshinga Dube yesterday confirmed the botched-up arms

supply deal. A retired Zimbabwe army colonel, Dube said Sri Lankan army officers had recommended Kolon to the Zimbabweans and he suspected the Asians may have acted in collusion to rip off ZDI.

"Clearly the people we were dealing with are not honourable guys," Dube said. Besides the money lost to Kolon, the Sri Lankan government is also refusing to pay the outstanding debt for the bombs.

While another lot of bombs valued at about \$45 million and destined for Colombo was reportedly

intercepted at sea by the Tamil Tigers in 1997, Dube said ZDI had successfully sent other consignments to Sri Lanka.

But the Sri Lankans are refusing to pay even for the bombs they have received, according to Dube. Investigations by Interpol on the missing bombs, which an Israeli company known only as Bentso was shipping to Colombo on behalf of ZDI, have not yielded anything.

Dube said ZDI was now working on suing the Israeli firm for the lost weapons. (National Report)



*Talks at Sattahip naval base***US outpost in peace role**

Peace talks between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE at Sattahip, Thailand was a mixed experience to those Sri Lankans who visited that country to cover the event. Some witnessed the conviviality of Pattaya, famous for its nightlife; others who went further afield saw parts of an ancient civilisation and the serener aspects of the life of these, basically, agricultural people.

What has been surprising for many is how Thailand, which was known only as mega shopping mall for the upwardly mobile middle-class of Sri Lanka and those who wanted a fling at its nightspots without having to avoid the prying eyes of relatives and friends, has suddenly taken on the image of an important actor in resolving tensions in the Asian region.

Thailand is also an American outpost in the East Asia, coming within the United States' sphere of influence and a 'strategic partner' of Pax Americana. Sattahip naval base, where the talks were held, is therefore as important an American naval facility as Subic Bay in the Philippines was in the past.

What astonished those who were in Sattahip and Pattaya was the almost total ignorance of the general public about an event taking place, which was of momentous importance to Sri Lanka. The Thais ate, worked and shopped without care or knowledge about the government - LTTE negotiations. Except for certain traffic and security precautions, which had irked tourists in Pattaya, the conference had nothing to show as being of any significance in the day-to-day life of the average Thai.

A Sri Lankan journalist was un-



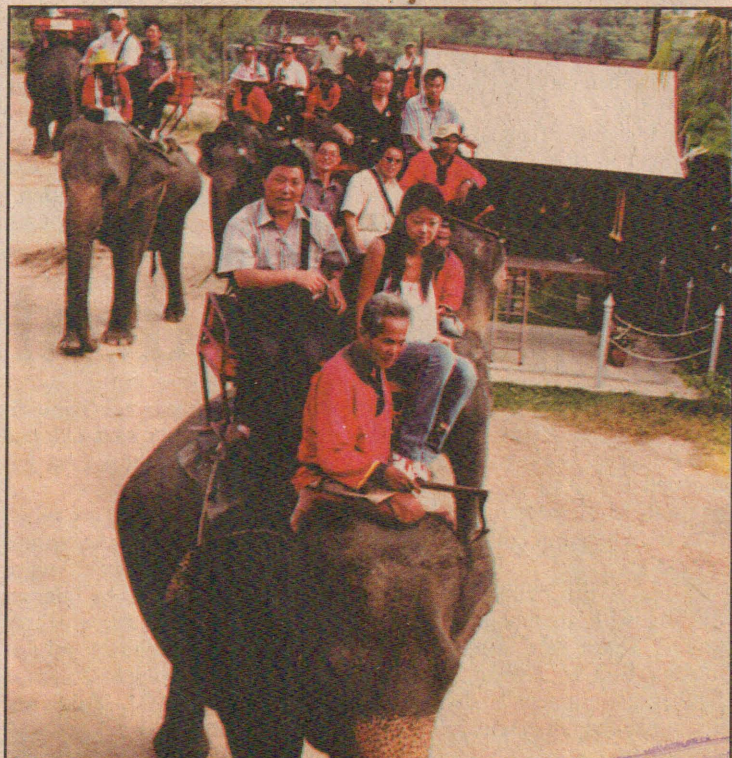
pleasantly surprised when the aircraft carrying him home from Thailand included certain Indian businessmen travelling from Bangkok to New Delhi through Colombo. He had fallen into conversation with them to find

out they too were ignorant of the first round of negotiations in Sattahip. "What are they talking about?" one had asked in perplexed politeness.

Therefore, the country from which Sri Lankan Buddhism re-

ceived upasampatha and which was never colonised plays a significant role in world politics by being a major pillar of the U.S.'s military and strategic power in Southeast Asia. Trying to emerge as the 'Switzerland of the East' as

some have called it might be a way of Thailand enhancing its importance in international politics as a peacemaker so that it goes hand in hand with its covert role of projecting American power in Asia.



The peace temple in Pattaya (on top); elephant rides are part of Thailand's tourist attraction (left); a child fishing near Sattahip, with the US naval facility in the background (right). Pic. by Buddhika Weerasinghe