

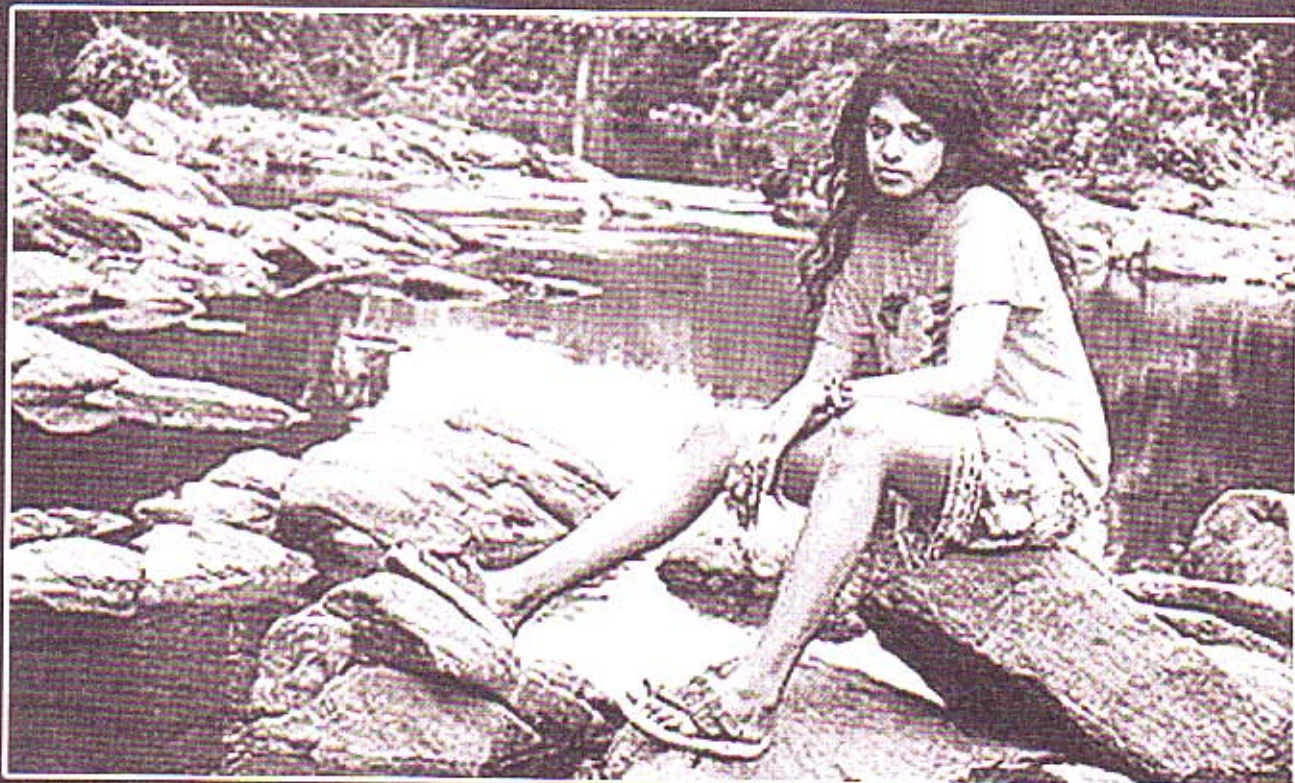
Tamil TIMES

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a Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year

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Mathangi Arulpiragasam - see 'Missing in Action' on page 30;
LTTE leader V Prabhakaran reading out his 2005 Heroes Day speech on 27 Nov. (top left);
Japanese peace envoy Akashi Yasuichi (top right).



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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it"*

- Voltaire

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Ominous drift towards war

ONE cannot but be alarmed by the recent escalation of violence in the North and East of Sri Lanka and the ominous prospect of the breakdown of the Ceasefire leading to a resumption of total war in Sri Lanka.

The peace process has reached an impasse. The Ceasefire Agreement signed between the Government and the LTTE which has lasted nearly is facing its severest test at present.

Following the presidential election of November 17, a new President has assumed office with a different perspective and policy approach to the peace process. During his recent election campaign, he committed to the maintenance of the "unitary state", a commitment prevailed upon by his JVP allies. He has emphasized his Government's continued commitment to the maintenance of the Ceasefire, and its desire for a review of its operations, so that its implementation can be made more effective. While extending an invitation to the LTTE for negotiations to discuss a political solution, President Rajapaksa views 'the greatest possible degree of openness, transparency and inclusivity in the peace process as being essential for its acceptance and eventual success'. With a view to arriving at 'a broad national consensus', the President has initiated a series of consultations with other political parties.

Though during the recent election campaign Norway was at the receiving end at the hands of the President's allies, the JVP, in what is seen as a 'spectacular U-turn, he has now requested Norway to renew its facilitation in Sri Lanka's peace process which has been in a state of 'no progress mode' for some time now. Stung by the severe criticism it was subjected to, Norway is reported to be insisting that both parties, the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE should agree to certain "conditions" before it resuming its facilitatory role.

The LTTE leader, Mr V Prabhakaran, in his recent Heroes' Day speech has rehearsed the organisation's basic demand of "self determination, national liberation and the establishment of self-government in our homeland". He did "not believe that we can gain a reasonable solution from the Sinhala nation. We have to fight and win our rights." Then why did the LTTE agree to participate in peace talks? The LTTE leader said that "most importantly, we wanted to demonstrate beyond doubt that the Sinhala racist ruling elites would not accept the fundamental demands of the Tamils and offer a reasonable political solution." Nevertheless, considering that President Rajapakse "a realist committed to pragmatic politics" the LTTE had "decided to wait and observe, for sometime, his political maneuvers and actions." But he gave Rajapakse only a short time. In unmistakable terms Mr. Prabhakaran declared, "The new government should come forward soon with a reasonable political framework that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people,,,,, If the new government rejects our urgent appeal, opts for a hard-line position and adopts delaying tactics, we will, next year, in solidarity with our people, intensify our struggle for self-determination, our struggle for national liberation to establish self-government in our own homeland." This declaration has been interpreted by many analysts as an ultimatum by the LTTE leader of his intention to resume war at any time in the coming weeks or months.

The frequency, scale and intensity of the grenade and land mine attacks in recent weeks in which scores of police and military personnel and civilians have been killed, and the escalation of internecine killings and counter-killings between LTTE cadres on the one hand and Karuna and other anti-LTTE Tamil groups on the other accompanied by allegations of a complicit role by government forces in these killings raise the question whether an "undeclared war" has already commenced before the "mother of all battles" is formally pronounced. In the meantime attacks on members of the Muslim community and retaliatory attacks on Tamils in eastern Sri Lanka have increased and there are fears of a recrudescence of communal clashes between the Tamil and Muslim communities resulting in further estrangement between the two communities.

It is the ordinary people who were displaced numerous times during several years of war in which towns and villages across northern and eastern Sri Lanka suffered damage and destruction. Countless number of people was killed. And natural disasters have also taken a heavy toll more recently.

If there is a return to war, homes, business houses, public buildings including schools and hospitals and other infra structure rebuilt and rehabilitated at vast expense during the last four years of ceasefire will be put at grave risk of being damaged or destroyed. Death and displacement will become the order of the day.

The people have suffered the ravages of war for too long. The ceasefire gave the people a well deserved respite and an opportunity and space to return to a degree of normality. Now it is they who fear the worst if the current wave of violent incidents inexorably leads to an outbreak of full scale war.

'Struggle for self-determination will be intensified' says LTTE leader

THE leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in his annual Heroes' Day statement made an urgent appeal to the new Sri Lanka Government of Mr Mahinda Rajapakse to offer a reasonable political solution to the ethnic conflict without further delay. In his annual statement on 27 November, the Tamil Tiger leader cautioned the government that his liberation organisation would intensify the struggle for self-determination and political independence if the new regime adopts a hard-line position and fails to resolve the problems of his people.

The LTTE leader said that a critical elucidation of President Rajapakse's policy statement revealed that he has failed to grasp the fundamentals, or rather, the basic concepts underlying the Tamil national question. "In terms of policy, the distance between him and us is vast. Since President Rajapakse is considered to be a realist, committed to pragmatic politics we wish to find out, first of all, how he is going to handle the peace process and whether he will offer justice to our people. Therefore we have decided to wait and observe, for sometime, his political manoeuvres and actions", the Tiger leader commented.

"Our people have lost patience, hope and reached the brink of utter frustration. They are not prepared to tolerate and wait any longer. The new government should come forward soon with a reasonable political framework that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people", the LTTE leader declared. "If the new government rejects our urgent appeal, opts for a hard-line position and adopts delaying tactics, we will, next year, in solidarity with our people, intensify our struggle for self-deter-

mination, our struggle for national liberation to establish self-government in our own homeland", Mr Pirapaharan asserted.

The following is the translated version of the full text of Mr Pirapaharan's statement:

The Sinhala nation continues to be entrapped in the Mahavamsa mindset, in that mythical ideology. The Sinhalese people are still caught up in the legendary fiction that the island of Sri Lanka is a divine gift to Theravada Buddhism, a holy land entitled to the Sinhala race. The Sinhala nation has not redeemed itself from this mythological idea that is buried deep and has become fossilised in their collective unconscious. It is because of this ideological blindness the Sinhalese people and their political and religious leaders are unable to grasp the authentic history of the island and the social realities prevailing here. They are unable to comprehend and accept the very existence of a historically constituted nation of Tamil people living in their traditional homeland in north-eastern Sri Lanka, entitled to fundamental political rights and freedoms. It is because of the refusal by the Sinhala nation to perceive the existential reality of the Tamils and their political aspirations the Tamil national question persists as an unresolved complex issue.

We do not expect a radical transformation in the social consciousness, in the political ideology, in the Mahavamsa mental structure of the Sinhalese people. The scope and power of Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony has not receded, rather, it has revived and taken new forms, exerting a powerful dominance on the southern political arena. In these ob-

jective conditions we do not believe that we can gain a reasonable solution from the Sinhala nation. We have to fight and win our rights. We have never entertained the idea that we could obtain justice from the compassion of the Sinhala politicians. This has always been the view of our liberation organisation.

Even though we are deeply convinced that we cannot obtain justice from the Sinhala political leadership, but rather have to fight and win our rights, we were compelled by unprecedented historical circumstances to participate in peace talks with the Sinhala state. We were compelled to engage in the negotiating process by the intervention of the Indian regional superpower at a particular historical period and by the pressure of the international community at a later period. There were other reasons also that encouraged us to engage in the peace process. Constructive engagement in the peace process is a viable means to secure legitimacy for our liberation organisation as the representative organ of our people. We also wanted to internationalise our struggle and win the support and sympathy of the international community. Furthermore, there is a need to convince the world community that we are not war-mongers addicted to armed violence, but rather, firmly and sincerely committed to non-violent peace process. Finally and most importantly, we wanted to demonstrate beyond doubt that the Sinhala racist ruling elites would not accept the fundamental demands of the Tamils and offer a reasonable political solution. It was with these objectives we participated in the peace process.

Over the last three decades of our national liberation struggle we have observed ceasefires and participated in peace talks at different periods of time in different historical circumstances. We knew that our enemy was dishonest and devious. We knew that these peace talks would not produce any positive results. We knew that there would be peace traps. Yet we participated in the peace talks with sincere commitment and dedica-

tion. In the course of our engagement we encountered pressures and complex challenges. There were traps to undermine our liberation struggle. We acted prudently and avoided pitfalls. We vehemently opposed all subversive strategies that were detrimental to the interests of our people. The Tamil people are fully aware of the fact that during the time of Indian intervention, when we encountered a serious threat to our freedom struggle and to the interests of our people, our liberation organisation was bold enough to oppose the Indian superpower and fight its military machine.

From the Thimpu talks, we have participated in several peace negotiations, at different times, at different places. Unprecedented in the history of our struggle, it is only now, we have devoted a lengthy period of four years for the peace effort. However, despite this protracted period of time our sincere and persistent efforts to reach a settlement to the problems of our people have become futile.

The recent peace talks have been significant and essentially different. They have been held with the facilitation of a third country, with the supervision of the international community. There were sessions of negotiations with Mr Ranil Wickremasinghe's administration and later with Chandrika Kumaratunga's government. The decisions, resolutions and Agreements reached during these negotiations were never fulfilled. During this process of negotiations we were extremely tolerant and even compromised on several issues. Nevertheless, the Sinhala political leadership refused to offer justice to our people.

On the 24 December 2001 we unilaterally declared cessation of hostilities and opened the doors for peace. At that time, when we extended our hand of friendship to the Sinhala nation, we stood on a strong foundation. Having liberated the Vanni region and over run the Elephant Pass military complex, we had firmly established the balance of military power in our favour. I need not

go into the details of the peace negotiations we had with Mr Ranil Wickremasinghe's government in various world capitals under Norwegian facilitation. It is suffice to say that Mr Wickremasinghe's administration was unable to resolve even the basic existential hardships and urgent humanitarian needs of our people. Adopting delaying tactics, Ranil's government was primarily focusing on setting up an international safety net aiming at decommissioning our weapons. An international aid conference was organised in Tokyo in June 2003 as an essential element of this subversive scheme. Having realised the implications of the international safety net we decided to boycott the Tokyo conference and eventually to suspend the peace talks. Having failed to achieve anything, Ranil's regime came to an end. In the meantime President Kumaratunga formed a new government with the alliance of racist forces opposed to peace. Chandrika refused to initiate the peace talks even though our organisation was willing to negotiate on the basis of our proposal for an interim self-government authority. Time began to elapse in a political vacuum without an interim settlement or a permanent solution. We realised that the aim of the Sinhala chauvinistic political leadership was to misdirect and undermine our liberation struggle by entrapping us in the uncertainty of a political vacuum. Faced with the meaningless absurdity of living in the illusion of peace we decided to resume our national liberation struggle. It was at that conjuncture, during the latter part of last year, when we were charting our action plan, that the horrendous natural disaster struck.

Suddenly, unexpectedly the tsunami waves struck at the villages and settlements along the eastern coastal belt of our homeland causing an unprecedented catastrophe. In this cataclysmic disaster unleashed by nature, twenty thousand Tamil and Muslim people perished and about three hundred thousand people lost their homes, properties and were reduced to conditions of refugees. As nature

inflicted further calamity on the Tamil nation, which had already suffered monumental destruction by war, our people were burdened with unbearable suffering. In these circumstances, our liberation movement was geared to confront the crisis. Our fighting formations, as well as our cadres belonging to various social and administrative services, were immediately engaged in the tasks of relief and rehabilitation.

As the tsunami catastrophe shook the conscience of the world, the international governments volunteered to provide huge sums of money in aid for relief and rehabilitation of the affected people. In the meantime President Kumaratunga expressed her willingness to form a joint administrative mechanism in cooperation with the LTTE to implement the tasks of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction for the affected Tamil speaking people. We decided to talk to the Kumaratunga government since we had to give primacy to the extraordinary humanitarian tragedy faced by our people. Talks were conducted at the level of peace secretariats. Since we wanted to avoid delays in the negotiating process we adopted a flexible attitude, even compromised on crucial matters, and finally an agreement was reached to establish a joint administrative mechanism. The Accord was also signed by both parties.

The international community expressed full support for the joint administrative structure worked out by both the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE. The international governments also expressed hope that a congenial environment for joint effort by warring parties had been created. But the Sinhala-Buddhist racist forces could not tolerate the emergence of a congenial environment of goodwill. Having registered their vehement protest to the joint administrative mechanism, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Jathika Hela Urumaja withdrew their support to the government. These parties also filed a case in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the joint administrative mechanism. The

determination of the Supreme Court made the joint mechanism inoperative.

With the demise of the tsunami mechanism the Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism killed the last hope of the Tamil people. Even the all-powerful President Kumaratunga could not provide a simple humanitarian project for the Tamils against the wishes of the Sinhala racist forces. The tsunami mechanism was not devolved with any political power nor was it to have any administrative authority. If there was so much opposition in southern Sri Lanka to a simple provisional arrangement then it is a daydream to expect to secure a regional self-governing authority in the Tamil homeland by negotiating with the Sinhala political leadership. This is the political truth that we have been able to learn from the four year period of the peace process. We hope that the international community, which has been intensively observing this political drama, similarly understands this truth.

I wish to explain here a matter of crucial importance, which betrays the politics of duplicity of the Sinhala ruling elites. You would have heard about a secret shadow war being waged against our organisation behind the screen of peace. This subversive war has been unleashed with the aim of weakening our liberation organisation and to undermine our struggle. A large number of people consisting of our senior cadres, important members, supporters, Tamil politicians, journalists and educationists who were sympathetic to our cause, have been cowardly murdered. We know the real masterminds behind this shadow war. Though these violent acts were committed under the guidance and direction of the Sri Lankan military intelligence, we are aware that mysterious hands of some racist Sinhala politicians are behind these nefarious activities. This subversive war is being conducted in the government controlled territories, with the backing of the armed forces, utilising Tamil para-military elements as instruments. We expressed vehement protest to the Sri

Lanka government when our unarmed political cadres were murdered and our political offices were bombed in the government controlled areas. Since the government ignored our protests we were compelled to withdraw our cadres to our controlled areas.

A strange low intensity war has been unleashed against us taking advantage of the conditions of peace effected by the ceasefire. Disarming the Tamil para-military groups is an obligation of the state under terms of the Ceasefire Agreement. Having failed to fulfil this crucial obligation the Sri Lanka state has been utilising the Tamil para-militaries as instruments of this subversive war against our liberation organisation. This is a serious war offence. This is similar to a treacherous act in which one stabs you in the back with one hand while pretending to embrace you with the other. This behaviour clearly demonstrates that the Sinhala ruling elites have no genuine interest in peace and ethnic reconciliation. The Sri Lanka state has not given up the military option but rather transformed the war into a new mode of state terror under conditions of peace. We hope that the international community will discern the real mode of this shadow war and perceive its ugly face and ulterior motives.

As far as the Tamil people are concerned, the concepts of peace, ceasefire and negotiations have become meaningless; concepts that do not correspond to or reflect reality. A shadow war conducted under conditions of peace, military occupation perpetrated in violation of the terms of ceasefire, an international subversive network woven during political negotiations, are the distorted ways the peace process has been abused. Because of these factors our people have lost faith in everything.

Our people have lost faith in a peace process that has failed to secure them a real, peaceful life; they have lost faith in a ceasefire that has failed to remove the occupation army from their homes; they have lost faith in the talks that have failed to resolve their long standing problems.

Our people can no longer tolerate

an unstable life and an uncertain future. The waves of popular upsurge erupting in the Tamil homeland are manifestations of the discontent and despair of our people; they are fierce demonstrations of their political aspirations. The multitude of Tamil masses, who converged at recent Tamil resurgence conventions, have publicly proclaimed their demands. The international community cannot ignore these proclamations of a unified nation calling for the recognition of their right to self-determination, of their right to rule themselves. Our people aspire to determine their own political status. Having been subjected to decades of systematic state repression, they call upon the international community to recognise their political aspirations.

We have now reached a significant historic turning point in our struggle for self-determination. The ruling elites of southern Sri Lanka will never recognise our people's right to self-determination. The Tamil right to self-determination will never find space in the entrenched majoritarian constitution and in the political system built on that constitutional structure. Our people have, therefore, realised that they have no alternative other than to fight and win their right to self-determination. Self-determination entails the right to freely choose, without external interference, our political life. The Sinhala nation has been refusing to embrace our people, to recognise their national identity and to share political power. This political alienation has continued since the independence of the island 57 years ago. Frustrated by years of alienation, oppression and ill-treatment as an unwanted people, the Tamils have finally decided to exclude and boycott the Sri Lankan polity and its power system. The boycott of the presidential elections by the vast majority of Tamil people was a concrete expression of this perspective. Our people did not participate in the election even though they had the voting power to determine the election of a new president. The non-participation of the Tamils should not be construed as a judgement of the

personalities or policies of the presidential candidates. Rather, this political boycott was an expression of deep distrust and disillusionment of the Tamil people with the Sinhala political system. This event symbolises a serious turning point in the political history of the Tamils. It signifies that the Tamil people may choose their own path and freely determine their own political destiny.

The Sinhala nation has chosen a new national leader. A new administration has assumed power under his leadership. This new government has been elected by the Sinhala majority specifically with their voting power. The national minorities are not represented in this government. It is essentially a Sinhala-Buddhist regime. Therefore Mahinda Rajapakse does not represent all the social formations of this country. He has assumed power as a president to protect and promote the interests of the Sinhala-Buddhist community. We are all aware of Mahinda Rajapakse's thoughts and policies. We are also aware of the incompatible gaps and the irreconcilable contradictions that exist between Mr Rajapakse's political vision and the Tamils' struggle for self-determination. I do not wish to engage myself in a comparative analysis of this issue.

The recent presidential elections and the change in governance effected by the Tamil boycott have created a wide rift, politically, between the Tamil and Sinhala nations. While Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony has assumed predominance in the south, Tamil nationalism has emerged as a powerful force and consolidating itself in the Tamil homeland. While a new government under Mahinda Rajapakse has assumed power in the Sinhala nation, LTTE's administration is expanding and gaining strength as a concrete embodiment of Tamil nationalism.

The international community is fully aware of the fact that we are running an efficient, self-governing administrative structure in the majority areas of the Tamil homeland, which were liberated from Sinhala military occupation by our organisation. Our administrative structure is formidable, consisting of our controlled territories with huge civilian populations, protected by a powerful military force. We have a police force and a judicial system to maintain law and order. We have also developed a complex administrative infra-structure of a shadow government. Though a large number of Tamils are still living in the military occupied Tamil region, their allegiance is with our liberation movement. The Sinhalese ruling class refuses to accept this ground reality, this political truth and attempts to belittle our liberation organisation as a 'terrorist group'. We are disappointed and sad to note that some international governments, having been influenced by this false propaganda, continue to retain our organisation on their terrorist list. Biased positions taken by powerful nations acting as guardians of the peace process, in excluding and alienating our liberation organisation as a 'terrorist outfit' and supporting the interests of the Sri Lankan state, severely affected the balance of power relations between the parties in conflict at the peace negotiations. This pro-state bias constrained our liberty to choose our own political status. This partiality finally became one of the causes for the collapse of the peace talks. There is no clear, coherent, globally acceptable definition of the concept of terrorism. As such, just and reasonable political struggles fought for righteous causes are also branded as terrorism. Even authentic liberation movements struggling against racist oppression are

denounced as terrorist outfits. In the current global campaign against terror, state terrorism always finds its escape route and those who fight against state terror are condemned as terrorists. Our liberation organisation is also facing a similar plight.

We have now reached the critical time to decide on our approach to achieve the objective of our struggle. At this crucial historical turning point a new government under a new leader has assumed power in the Sinhala nation. This new government is extending its hand of friendship towards us and is calling our organisation for peace talks. It claims that it is going to adopt a new approach towards the peace process. Having carefully examined his policy statement in depth, we have come to a conclusion that President Rajapakse has not grasped the fundamentals, the basic concepts underlying the Tamil national question. In terms of policy, the distance between him and us is vast. However, President Rajapakse is considered a realist committed to pragmatic politics, we wish to find out, first of all, how he is going to handle the peace process and whether he will offer justice to our people. We have, therefore, decided to wait and observe, for sometime, his political manoeuvres and actions.

Our people have lost patience, hope and reached the brink of utter frustration. They are not prepared to be tolerant any longer. The new government should come forward soon with a reasonable political framework that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people. This is our urgent and final appeal. If the new government rejects our urgent appeal, we will, next year, in solidarity with our people, intensify our struggle for self-determination, our struggle for national liberation to establish self-government in our homeland. □



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Norway invited again to be facilitator

In a move described as a sudden "U-Turn" on his part, the Sri Lankan President Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse has invited the Royal Norwegian Government to continue its role as facilitator to the Peace Process in Sri Lanka. Mr. Rajapakse met with the representatives of the four Co-chairs, US, UK (EU Presidency), Japan and Norway on Wednesday (Dec 7) to brief them on his on-going consultations and the preparatory work required for the continuation of the peace process, according to a media release issued by the Information Department in Colombo.

The media release said, "H.E. Hans Brattskar, Ambassador of the Royal Norwegian Embassy called on H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka today. At this meeting H.E. President Rajapaksa invited the Royal Norwegian Government to continue its role as facilitator to the Peace Process in Sri Lanka."

Commenting on the President's invitation to Norway to resume its role as facilitator, Erik Solheim is quoted as telling the media, "Our initial reaction is that it is positive that we have been asked to continue our work. This is a vote of confidence. But we want to make sure we agree with the government as well as with the LTTE (Tamil Tigers) on the conditions before we accept to take on that role again."

Meanwhile Solheim's reference to the Government and the LTTE agreeing to "certain conditions" before Norway "accept the role again" has raised the question whether Norway has decided to set certain terms before it resumes its role as facilitator. Adding to the confusion as to Norway's position is its Colombo embassy's statement, "Messages will not be taken between the two parties in the peace process, until consultations on the future Norwegian role have taken place." The question that is being raised in this context is whether Norway as of now has uni-

laterally terminated its present role as facilitator, and will resume that role only after certain conditions are agreed by the Government and the LTTE.

Norway's monitoring role?

President Mahinda Rajapakse, only two days after inviting Norway to resume its facilitation role, has now raised the issue of Norway giving up its primary role in monitoring the ceasefire.

Rajapakse reportedly told visiting Japanese peace envoy Yasushi Akashi that "the facilitators and the monitors cannot be from the same country and there should be two separate entities to facilitate the peace process and to monitor the Ceasefire." He had also told the visiting Japanese envoy that he would welcome monitors from Japan, South Asia and other Scandinavian countries to monitor the Norwegian-brokered Ceasefire Agreement. Reportedly Mr Akashi has accepted the position taken by President Rajapakse.

At present, Norway heads the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), which has been monitoring truce between the government and the Tamil Tigers for the past three and a half years. The SLMM currently consists of members from the five Nordic countries - Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland and according to the CFA, the government and LTTE must be in agreement through a mutually accepted process before any amendments to the CFA can be made.

SLMM has established headquarters in Colombo, six district offices, and a liaison office in Kilinochchi, in addition to the points of contact at various locations for its day-to-day operation.

Japan ready to host talks

Japan has said it was "ready to host" direct negotiations between the Sri Lankan Government and the Lib-

eration Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to review the ceasefire agreement (CFA), which has been in force since 2002.

Tokyo's offer follows a change in the Government's previous position that the CFA review talks should be held in Sri Lanka,

"The Government told me that it is willing to have negotiations outside the country, preferably in Asia," the visiting Japanese special representative, Yasushi Akashi told a press conference on Sunday (Dec 11) in Colombo.

The Sri Lankan Government's call for a review of the operational aspects of CFA over the past few months, ran into a deadlock as Colombo and the Tigers differed on the venue. While the Government wanted the talks to be held in Sri Lanka, the LTTE had insisted that the talks be held either in rebel-held territory or abroad. A compromise solution proposed by Norway to hold the talks at the international airport was rejected by the Tigers.

Akashi, who is Japan's Representative for Peace-building, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Sri Lanka, described the situation for peace and stability in Sri Lanka as "deteriorating" and said it was "cause for considerable concern." The new Government under the Mahinda Rajapakse Presidency was giving "highest priority" to the peace process and Colombo was "formulating a comprehensive approach" for a solution to the ethnic conflict, he said.

"I have a distinct feeling that we're entering a new phase in the (peace) process," Akashi said, appearing to suggest the new Sri Lanka government is not looking merely at transitional arrangements but at a comprehensive settlement.

If international diplomatic efforts to get the two sides talking face-to-face succeed, the immediate subject of discussion would be a review of the operation of the cease-fire agreement rather than a revision of the agreement itself, Akashi said.

During his five-day visit, Akashi had talks with Sri Lanka's new president, Mahinda Rajapakse, his predecessor Chandrika Kumaratunga,

Somawansa Amarasinghe, the leader of the People's Liberation Front or JVP, and NGO representatives. However, he did not meet the LTTE. "I have decided to comply with the wishes of the [Sri Lankan] Government which is engaged in a very comprehensive review of the situation of peace," Akashi said.

Diplomats attached significance to Akashi's talks with the JVP leader as it was this party that helped substantially to secure the new President's narrow election victory. The JVP retains a hard-line stance on dealings with the Tamil Tigers.

Indian support for President's peace moves

India would support the new President and his government's efforts seeking a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka that is acceptable to all sections of Sri Lanka society within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights. It also continues to maintain an abiding interest in the security of Sri Lanka and remains committed to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. That is the message that Sri Lanka's new Foreign Minister, Mangala Samaraweera, received from New Delhi during his two-day recent visit where he has discussions with the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. E Ahamed and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The joint statement issued by both countries on the occasion of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister's visit (30 November to 1 December) to Delhi said, "Minister Samaraweera apprised the Indian side of the policy the Government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa seeks to follow with regard to the peace process in Sri Lanka. He emphasized the continued commitment of the government to the maintenance of the Ceasefire, and the desire for a review of its operations, so that the implementation of the Agreement can be made more effective. The Government also extends a firm invitation to the LTTE to negotiations to discuss a political solution. President Rajapaksa views the greatest possible degree of openness,

transparency and inclusivity in the peace process, as being essential for its acceptance and eventual success. Minister Samaraweera spelt out the approaches that President Rajapaksa and his administration would adopt towards this end of arriving at a broad national consensus. Parallel to this endeavour, reconstruction and development in the North and East would be accorded the highest priority.

"Minister Samaraweera affirmed that the Government of Sri Lanka would, in the tradition of close dialogue between the two countries, continue to apprise the Government of India in regard to the ways and means by which the peace process could be made more effective.

"Indian side thanked the Sri Lanka Foreign Minister for outlining the approach of President Rajapaksa and his administration towards the peace process. India believes that an enduring solution can only emerge essentially through internal political processes. India supports the process of seeking a negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lanka society within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights. India continues to maintain an abiding interest in the security of Sri Lanka and remains committed to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"Several other matters of mutual interest, including the further strengthening of economic and commercial cooperation, were addressed during the visit of Minister Samaraweera. Both sides emphasized the need to conclude, as early as possible, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

"Government of India reiterated to Minister Samaraweera the invitation already extended by it to President Rajapaksa to pay a State Visit to India at the earliest opportunity."

Solheim in New Delhi

Norwegian Minister and Peace Facilitator Eric Solheim met Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran during his recent visit to New Delhi and exchanged notes on the evolving situation in Sri Lanka as regards the

peace process after President Mahinda Rajapakse assumed office on November 19.

Solheim was in town on a bilateral visit in his capacity as Minister for International Development to meet Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram. He utilized the opportunity to exchange views with the Indian Foreign Secretary on the peace process in Sri Lanka. He has since returned to Oslo.

Norway's present thinking is that it is willing to continue with its role as peace facilitator in Sri Lanka, if invited by the Government as well as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

But Oslo is not happy being made a scapegoat for setbacks or slow progress in the peace process due to no fault of its own. Norway cannot play a worthwhile role to help achieve peace in Sri Lanka if it gets blamed for the failure of the peace process to move forward.

Solheim has made it clear to India that Norway has no position of its own on the type of federalism Sri Lanka wishes to choose for a solution to the ethnic conflict. Oslo will be comfortable with whatever is acceptable to President Rajapakse and LTTE Chief Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Norway understood the Indian position that supports the process of seeking a negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lanka society within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights. India continues to maintain an abiding interest in the security of Sri Lanka and remains committed to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. India will not countenance a separate state or a virtual separate state as advocated in the LTTE's Self Governing Authority proposal.

Norway should not be seen as a midwife in establishing a dictatorship in the island's northern and eastern parts. The Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) will succeed only if and when both parties - the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE - implement it with sincerity, Solheim pointed out.

Oslo concedes that the ceasefire

monitoring mission needs to be strengthened. However, if the Government and the LTTE do not implement the CFA faithfully, both parties should be blamed.

In Norway's assessment, neither the Government nor the Tamil Tigers can win the war. There can be no peace in Sri Lanka without India's support. Peace cannot be achieved without an Indian guarantee. Which is why Norway has been consulting India at every stage in the faltering peace process.

Both India and Norway believe that Sri Lanka is at the crossroads, and that there is need for a carefully considered strategy to put the wayward peace process back on track.

While the Tigers must stop political assassinations, the Government should end support to Tamil paramilitaries led by 'Col.' Karuna. Colombo should not use the Karuna group in a shadow war against the LTTE, Oslo and New Delhi feel.

Norway and India are worried that the new Sri Lanka leadership appears to be playing Sinhala politics, and seems to have very little understanding of Tamil politics in that country.

The collective assessment of both India and Norway is that, if the present situation is allowed to continue, the Tigers may become more of a terrorist group and may verily turn Sri Lanka into an ungovernable nation.

Norway PM in Delhi

Following Colombo's request to resume its facilitation role, Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg arrived in New Delhi on a three-day visit ostensibly to discuss energy, free trade and bilateral relations which also would include India's position concerning Norway's role in the Sri Lanka peace process.

Noting that the issue of Sri Lankan peace process will figure in his talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, he told a select group of reporters, "My visit gives me the opportunity to have direct dialogue with the Indian leadership to consolidate

India's support before facilitating the initiation of the next round of talks."

Speaking to reporters, Stoltenberg, "It is important that we agree on all matters before we proceed, and it is more important for India and Norway to continue their close dialogue as far as the peace process is concerned."

During the recently held presidential election campaign the principal allies of President subjected Norway to severe criticism for its alleged partiality, and there were calls even for the removal of its role as facilitator. Obviously stung by such criticism and still uncertain about the position of the new President and his government, Stoltenberg told journalists, "If they don't want us, we have other things to do. We are interested in facilitating talks only if both parties are serious about reaching a resolution. If they're not willing, there is no role for Norway."

"We have been asked by the Sri Lankan President to continue facilitating the dialogue process (with LTTE)... We are prepared to continue negotiation but there has to be real will on both sides," he said.

He said the main challenge now was to get the peace process back on track and emphasised that the ceasefire must be respected by all parties. He also made it clear that the effort would be fruitful only if both the parties have the "real will".

"We will sit with both parties to see how to continue the process... We can play a role and proceed when there is willingness of both sides," Stoltenberg said.

Noting that the peace process had got stalled due to disagreement between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE, the Norwegian Prime Minister said he was not sure when the peace process in the island nation would restart. He, however, expressed optimism on restarting the process.

Asserting that Norway did not take sides between the government and LTTE as was alleged, Stoltenberg said, "we are not achieving anything.

Rather, the parties involved are achieving peace. We are just facilitators."

25 million Kroner to LTTE

The LTTE is continuing to receive direct Norwegian financial aid. According to a Norwegian newspaper 'New Times', the group has received 25 million Kroner since the Oslo-led peace process began in early 2002. The newspaper revealed that the assistance has continued despite the group suspending its participation in the peace process in April 2003 during the previous UNP administration.

Norway has acknowledged that it could not give details of how the money has been used by the LTTE. The report revealed that the LTTE received 950,000 kroner in 2002, 7.5 million Kroner in 2003, 9 million Kroner last year and a further 7.5 million Kroner this year.

'New Times' said, "According to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, this support was given directly or indirectly to LTTE's peace secretariat. The Foreign Ministry defends its support to the LTTE by saying that it was given to build the peace process. After the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in February 2002 both parties needed funds to build their peace secretariat. Sri Lankan government requested that aid be given to the LTTE's peace secretariat and all aid given to the LTTE was with the agreement of the Sri Lankan government, writes Odd Naustdal, the information counsellor of the Foreign Ministry."

"According to Norwegian Foreign Ministry, Norway will continue to give assistance to the LTTE this year too."

"According to Foreign Ministry, the Norwegian support to LTTE's peace secretariat was for 'establishing and developing peace secretariat, travel expenses to LTTE's political leaders in connection with the peace process, capacity building and gathering expertise related to peace process and information work on the peace process.' □

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Violent incidents escalate in north-east

Dec 8 - In the ongoing escalation of violent incidents in the Northeast of the island, seven soldiers were killed allegedly by the LTTE which used two powerful claymore mines on Sunday 4 December at Kondavil on the Jaffna-Palaly main road. Three civilians were also injured in the blasts.

Military spokesman Nalin Witharanage said the soldiers belonging to the 6th Gajaba Regiment were transporting meals from 511 Brigade to 51 Division in a tractor and moving towards the Jaffna town when suspected Tigers exploded two claymore mines using a remote control device.

He said following the incident there had been tension in the area and additional army personnel had been deployed to assist the police to conduct a search operation to track down the attackers.

Confirming the incident, SLMM said their representatives in the peninsula visited the scene of the blast and conducted inquiries.

In another incident a soldier was killed allegedly by the LTTE near a Army post in Neerveli in Jaffna on the same day, 4 December. The latest incident followed a day after the LTTE in an attack on an army truck killed a soldier and injured seven others in Chavakachcheri, Jaffna. Lance Corporal Jayewardene was killed in the incident. Jaffna police said the attack had been carried out using T 56 guns. Fourteen spent cartridges were found at the scene.

In another major incident, six soldiers and an SLA officer belonging to the SLA Division 51-2 were killed in a Claymore mine attack by suspected Tamil Tigers on a SLA tractor in Irupalai, 5 km North east of Jaffna town on Tuesday (6). The mine blast took place 200 meters west of Irupalai junction on Jaffna-Point Pedro road. The soldiers were returning after supplying morning meals to the soldiers stationed along the streets in Kalviyankadu, military sources said.

A car carrying three Swiss nationals was also caught in another landmine attack on 6 December. Two of the three Swiss nationals work for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which is engaged in post-tsunami work in Jaffna Peninsula. The other occupant was the wife of one of the men, said Martin Sturzing, a spokesman for the Swiss Embassy in Colombo.

The Government in a statement condemned in the strongest possible terms the killing of six Army personnel in a claymore mine attack at Kondavil, in Jaffna. At the time of the attack, the Army personnel were distributing food rations and mail to Army detachments and sentry points in Jaffna. It is clear that this a pre-planned terrorist attack carried out on Army personnel engaged in non-offensive routine activities, Government Information Department issuing a media release said.

The attack has been carried out in blatant violation of the provisions of the ceasefire agreement. At a time when the new President has extended an invitation for the resumption of peace talks, such provocative acts by the LTTE demonstrate a lack of sincerity towards negotiations and a political settlement. The government calls on the international community to condemn such terrorist acts which place obstacles in the way of furthering the peace process.

Sunday's claymore mine attack came in the wake of over a series of incidents of shooting at Army checkpoints, and grenade throwing at army posts within the past twenty four hours. There is a clear increase in the continuing attacks on army positions, in violation of the Ceasefire Agreement, the statement said.

Though the Tamil Tigers have been blamed for these attacks on the security forces, they have denied responsibility.

Referring to the second mine attack on 6 December, the Government accused the LTTE of carrying out a "stealth war". "It is regrettable that in less than 48 hours the government has been called upon once again to condemn in the strongest possible term a Claymore mine attack on army personnel carried out by the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)," the Government Information Department said. Claymore mine known to be used by the Tamil Tigers is a deadly weapon that spits out hundreds of steel balls propelled by plastic explosives.

"The LTTE is engaged in a stealth war...using the cover of the cease-fire agreement," the statement said in reference to the 2002 cease-fire, which new President Mahinda Rajapakse says is flawed and should be amended before peace talks can start.

"It is clear that the LTTE, which participated in peace talks with successive governments ... has not transformed from its terrorist tendencies," said the statement, the strongest since Rajapakse won the Nov. 17 election.

Army spokesman, Brigadier Nalin Witharanage, said that the LTTE was totally responsible for the mine attack in Kodavil. Brigadier Witharanage said that the LTTE appears to have resorted to their usual tactics of denying the attack with the Scandinavian Ceasefire monitors, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). "This is not a surprising situation for the military, because this was not the first occasion that they have denied an attack," he said, adding that the attack was a clear violation of the Ceasefire Agreement. He further said that LTTE was in the habit of denying their attacks on the military whenever Sri Lankan Army lodges a complaint against them with the SLMM.

The army spokesman was responding to a statement by the Head of SLMM, Hargrup Haukland who said the LTTE was denying any hand in the Claymore mine attack.

"When we asked the LTTE about the attacks, they said that other armed elements were responsible for the Sunday's incident. However the Army said that the LTTE was responsible for the attack," Haukland said.

Intelligence Service sources said in the meantime that the LTTE had started placing mines in the North and East again although an intensive campaign of de-mining in these areas commenced after the ceasefire agreement of February 2002.

The main opposition UNP has condemned killing of seven soldiers in Jaffna and the killing of Kattankudy AGA who was carrying out his normal duties. UNP Deputy leader Karu Jayasuriya in a statement urged the government to take action against those responsible for the attacks and strengthen security in the area. "We also express our deepest sympathies to the bereaved families of the victims. It is our firm belief that in a civilized world violence is not the means to settle disputes. We call upon all parties to act with restraint, desist from violence and respect human lives," he said.

In the aftermath of the killing of seven soldiers in Jaffna and the resultant tense situation more troops were rushed to the peninsula in anticipation of further attacks and to maintain law and order. A senior Defence Ministry official said a major

search operation was also under way to track down suspects and weapons. He said the decision to send more troops was taken at a special meeting President Mahinda Rajapakse had with the Chief of Defence Staff, the Commanders of the security forces and Defence Ministry officials. At the meeting it was disclosed that there were not enough military personnel in Jaffna to carry out major search operations or to be deployed soon after such attacks against the military or civilians. The official said considering these developments the security forces and the police would now intensify security duties to ensure law and order prevailed.

Meanwhile, in Point Pedro, Police used tear gas to disperse some three hundred people backed by suspected LTTE cadres when they threw petrol bombs at the military barrier near Hartley College.

Security Alert

Dec 6 - The police and armed forces have been placed on

high alert in and around Colombo city, in the face of escalating violence in the Northeast of the island.

DIG Colombo Pujitha Jayasundara said the city and its surroundings had been placed on alert after an LTTE cadre, amongst a number of suspects arrested, was found to be in possession of two passports bearing two different names and addresses. The Tiger suspect had arrived in Colombo from Muttur, but the addresses and names in the passports were fictitious, DIG Jayasundara said. He also said there was information of the presence of LTTE cadres, in and around Colombo, who might commit acts of sabotage or violence.

Under the security alert, surveillance by the police and the armed forces has been increased at Orugodawatte, Bloemendhal Road and in the vicinity of the Kolonnawa oil storage tank complex. Special checkpoints manned by the police and armed forces personnel have been set up at important points of the city, he said.

SLMM Condemns 'cowardly attacks'

Dec 7 - Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in statement said that the "attacks that have taken place over the last few days must stop immediately if the peace process is to move forward." It also "urged the international community to use their influence in order to arrest the situation and make way for renewed peace talks."

"The SLMM will continue to do everything within its power to diffuse the tense situation that is prevailing, not only on Jaffna peninsula but in the whole of the North and East," the statement from the Headquarters of SLMM office in Colombo said on Tuesday (7).

"The recent escalation of violence in Jaffna peninsula is of great concern to everyone, and the SLMM strongly condemns the cowardly attacks that have resulted in the deaths of seven Sri Lankan soldiers and Tamil civilians. In addition, many people have been injured. However, the violence has not escalated out of control as of yet. In this respect, the SLMM commends the security forces for reacting with restraint in a very difficult security situation," the statement added.

"Needless to say, the escalating violence is jeopardising the ceasefire and also endangering the whole peace process at a time when there are signs that the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the LTTE are preparing for the resumption of peace talks."

"The SLMM is currently inquiring into these incidents, both parties hold the other party responsible for. The security forces have accused the LTTE involvement in the attacks against the Sri Lanka Army (SLA), while the LTTE has accused the Security forces for recent killings of Tamil civilians in the Jaffna area and other armed element for being involved in the attacks on the SLA."

"The SLMM has not been presented with any substantial information regarding the perpetrators of these attacks and urge those parties to come forward with any information they may have. The attackers must be apprehended immediately. The LTTE must also use their influence on the Tamil population to calm down the situation. The attacks that have taken place over last few days must stop immediately if the peace process is to move forward."

"Furthermore the SLMM urge both parties to do their utmost to reopen the channels for direct dialogue at the local level. Only then can practical problems on the ground be solved and the current situation calm down."

In an earlier statement the head of the SLMM warned that violence may lead to escalation and appealed to the Government, the LTTE and all community leaders to bring an end to the disorder.

"The SLMM has observed and witnessed a dangerous trend of violence in the north and the east in the last few days resulting in a number of deaths and injuries of both civilians and security forces personnel," SLMM Chief Hargrup Haukland said in a statement.

"In the Jaffna peninsula, Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts there have been countless attacks. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission warns that there is a real danger that these disturbances and hostilities can spread and result in irreparable deterioration of security and prevent any real restoration of normality in the affected communities.

"The SLMM therefore appeals to the Government, the LTTE and all community leaders to do their utmost to calm down the volatile situation before it escalates any further. It is important not to forget that behind every death there lies a real tragedy and families are left behind in despair. The Government and the LTTE have both underlined their commitment to peace in the passing week.

"We therefore urge them and all other community leaders to use their influence to ensure that violence and attacks come to an immediate end. The SLMM stands ready to assist all the parties and affected communities in bringing an end to these attacks. It is imperative that all stakeholders work together closely to achieve a secure environment and peace," the SLMM's statement said.

Muslims seek more protection

Dec 10 - As tension increased between the Tamil and Muslim communities in eastern Sri Lanka following a series of violent incidents recently, the National Alliance (MNA) has appealed to the Government to take immediate steps to provide adequate protection to the people in the North and the East

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and to avoid further escalation of violence, a media release issued by the MNA said.

While condemning the killings of Kaththankudy Divisional Secretary Faleel, UNP Chief Organiser M. Mohideen and two other civilians in Mutur along with three other innocent Muslims at Thoppur and three Muslim businessmen at Irralkuly, the MNA has requested the Government to hold an inquiry into the killing of five Muslims on November 18 at the Kathankudy Grand Mosque.

"Our people living in the area have informed of these incidents to us and this is very frightening. The Tamils and the Muslims have been living very cordially in this country for decades and they will not be separated under any circumstances," the media release added. "We call upon the Government and the leaders of all communities specially in the North and the East to do their utmost to de-escalate the volatile situation before it aggravates any further," the media release said.

Some Muslim leaders allege that the Tamil Tigers are targeting the Muslims of eastern Sri Lanka for having supporting Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party (UNP) at the November 17 presidential election and for voicing their political aspirations. They say that scores of Muslim civilians have been killed or subjected to violence since the election.

The Muslims, like many Tamils in the East, had voted for Wickremesinghe because he stood for peace, federalism and a negotiated settlement with the assistance of the international community. He had also promised the Muslims that they would get a separate self governing Council with devolved autonomy. What is worse from the LTTE's perspective is that some Mus-

lim leaders like Athaullah of Akkaraipattu had said that the Northern and Eastern provinces must be de-merged. Such a measure would undermine the demand by the Tigers for a separate "homeland" comprising the North and East for the Tamils.

The LTTE, on the other hand, had wanted Wickremesinghe defeated because it feared that the international community would become a millstone around its neck under his Presidency. The international community, the LTTE feared, would force it to accept a solution it might not want.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), the largest Muslim party in Sri Lanka and an ally of the UNP, has accused the LTTE of instigating the recent attacks against Muslims in the Eastern districts. A press release from the party said that the LTTE was attacking Muslims in order to create Muslim-Tamil tension and blame the Muslims for spoiling the peace process. "The local population in places where violence has been unleashed unambiguously points the finger at the LTTE as the perpetrators, and the LTTE has not done much to allay their involvement," the SLMC release said.

Giving a list of incidents in the past few days, it said that a grenade had been hurled into the Akkaraipattu mosque at prayer time. Two Muslims of Eravur had been killed and their bodies dumped in Valaichenai; a Muslim couple was killed in Meeravodai; and Mr Faleel, Divisional Secretary of Kathankudy was shot. Later, Faleel succumbed to his injuries. Four Muslims of Thoppur in Trincomalee district had been abducted and three of them were subsequently killed.

"These calculated attacks on the Muslims compel us to view with suspicion that orchestrated attempts are being made

to disrupt Tamil-Muslim relations in the East," the SLMC said. The LTTE was angry with the Muslims because they were voicing their own political aspirations. It was angry with the Tamils of the East also, because they too were for peace and a negotiated federal settlement, and had voted in the election defying the diktat against it. According to the SLMC, the LTTE wants to quash these tendencies among the Muslims and Tamils, wreck Tamil-Muslim unity, and blame Muslim antagonism for the failure of the peace process.

Meanwhile it is reported that Muslim youth in the Eastern province are being tempted to take up arms for their protection, following the recent spate of attacks allegedly by the LTTE. During a series of meetings held recently between Sri Lanka Muslim

Congress (SLMC) Parliamentarians and Muslim villagers from the East, the youth had reportedly requested the MPs to make representations to defence authorities and secure positions as even home guards, so that they can safeguard their

community in their respective areas. These Muslim youth had pointed out that, the Army, or the STF came to their areas only after an incident and depart no sooner tensions get defused.

The Muslim villagers reportedly noted that "there is no one to provide protection to them round the clock, thus their vulnerability also was increasing."

Meanwhile, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress hierarchy has sought a meeting with President Mahinda Rajapakse to discuss the volatile situation prevailing in the East. "The Muslims are not armed, and so we expect the Government and the security forces to provide us with maximum protection. It is the duty of the Government to see to the safety and security of the Muslims," Mr. Nizam Karriapper of the SLMC stressed. The Muslim Congress hoped to urge President Rajapakse to take necessary steps and ensure 'round the clock' security protection to the Muslim civilians who lived in the Eastern province, he reportedly said.

India seeks EU to ban LTTE

December 5: India has asked the European Union (EU) to ban the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by branding it as a terrorist organization.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sent to the EU, through the Ministry of External Affairs, a dossier on the LTTE and three Indian terrorist outfits to be considered for a ban, according to informed sources here.

India was the first country to ban the LTTE on 14 May 1992, an year after the outfit's woman suicide-bomber Dhanu assassinated former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at an election rally on the outskirts of Chennai on the night of 21 May 1991. It has since been banned by Malaysia, Canada, Australia, the United States (in 1997), and Britain (2001).

On September 26 this year, the EU barred Tamil Tigers from visiting its 25 Member States, and declared that it is actively considering listing the LTTE as a terrorist group. Condemning their "continuous use of violence and terrorism" the

EU asked the Tamil Tigers "to take immediate public steps to demonstrate their commitment to the peace process and their willingness to change."

The EU also decided that each of its Member States will, where necessary, take "additional national measures to check and curb illegal or undesirable activities (including issues of funding and propaganda) of the LTTE, its related organizations and known individual supporters."

Meanwhile, the Indian outfits which New Delhi wants the EU to ban include two Kashmiri militant groups and one Sikh extremist outfit. They are: Harkat-ul-Jehadi-I-Islami (Huji), Jamiat-ul Mujahideen, and Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF).

Huji is a splinter group of the Harkat-ul Ansar, whose Bangladeshi unit was formed in 1992 with Osama bin Laden's help. Of late, it has been active not only in Bangladesh but also in border districts of Indian states bordering that country, namely: West Bengal and Assam. The KLF, which was active during the militancy in Punjab in north India in the 1980s, claims to have several offices across Europe.

The sending of the dossier comes in the week of the EU recently including Kashmiri outfit Hizbul Mujahideen in its terror black list.

UNP to file election petition

The United National Party will file a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the results of the Presidential Election held on November 17, 2005 making two fundamental issues as the basis of its case.

The UNP Deputy Secretary General Tissa Attanayake told press that the two issues they intended to highlight in the election petition were (1) the inability of the Northern voters to exercise their 'right to vote' freely due to the threats of the LTTE and their instigated boycott, and (2) the deletion of names of over 400,000 voters from the electoral register which resulted in them losing their fundamental right to vote.

Attanayake said the Party was in the process of collecting names of persons whose names were deleted from the electoral register and said those denied the 'right to vote' could send-in their names to Party Headquarters at Sirikotha. They would also be encouraged to file 'Fundamental Rights' petitions.

According to the provisions in the Presidential Election Act No. 15 of 1981, an Election Petition has to be filed within 21 days after the gazetting of the elections results. Petitions on 'Fundamental Rights' have to be submitted to the Supreme Court within 30 days of the publication of the gazette with election results.

Attanayake said the party decided to file action against the outcome of the Presidential Election of November 17 as the Commissioner of Elections failed to act on their official complaint over the inability of Northern voters to cast their vote due to the LTTE's 'boycott order'. They wanted a re-poll in the North but the Commissioner did not accede to their official request.

UNP sources said the party would file the election petition to make the international community know that there had been no free and fair election given the situation that prevailed in the North which prevented voters from exercising their franchise and also the exclusion of thousands of voters in the South through their names being struck off the electoral register.

India funds Palaly airstrip reconstruction

Dec 9 - Sri Lanka's Air Force Commander, Air Vice Marshal, Donald Perera said the massive reconstruction and repair work of the strategically important Palaly airport runway in the Jaffna peninsula was being carried out with the financial assistance of the Government of India. "The reconstruction work is in progress with the financial assistance of the Indian government. It was initially planned to complete the work within six to eight months. Unfortunately, the weather is blocking us a little, but it is satisfactorily progressing. A team from India is expected shortly to sit with us and work together," the Air Force Chief told reporters.

Mr Perera said it took a fair amount of time for the contractors to take their machinery and manpower to the work site since the logistics had to be arranged up there in the North prior to the commencement of work. Refusing to spell out the exact amount of money that the Government of India is putting in for resurfacing the Palaly runway, the Air Force chief said it depended on the scope of work. Asked as to what the Government of India is gaining out of this multi-million rupee project, he said, "It is not the question that I could answer or an issue that the Sri Lankan Air force is worried about. It is an issue for the Governments of India and Sri Lanka to discuss and decide."

Responding to questions on reports of acquisition by the LTTE of aircraft, the Air Force chief, confirmed that the rebels were in the possession of at least two to three single-engine planes, but sought to play down their striking capability. "Yes, the LTTE has a couple of small flying machines. There are single-engine two-seater planes. There is no strike capability for the LTTE Air force. If you load up a car with a lot of explosives and explode, it can cause a lot of destruction. If that can be done in the same manner from the air, then it will have the same capability. For that one cannot say there is a strike capability as such. It can just be a bomb in the air," he said.

LTTE cadre abducted from Vavuniya Hospital

Dec 11 - In what can be described as an audacious rescue operation, gunmen suspected to be from the LTTE, having shot and killed an armed policeman, Mahes Ranasinghe, inside the Vavuniya Hospital premises, abducted one LTTE woman cadre Ms Gunaratnam Puvaneswari who was undergoing treatment at the hospital under police custody. The incident took place around 2:45 pm. Sunday (11) at Ward No 1 of the hospital.

Mr Ranasinghe was killed at the entrance to the ward while four unarmed policemen were guarding the patient inside the ward.

After firing at Mr Ranasinghe, the gunmen entered the ward through the backdoor, ordered the remaining policemen to leave the building, took physical control of the patient, Puvaneswari, lifted her over the walls of the hospital and fled in a van.

Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and Special Task Force (STF) soldiers were rushed to the site soon after the incident. The Vavuniya District Judge, Mr. M. Ilanchelian who visited the site ordered the police to conduct investigations into the incident.

Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) on Tuesday (6) evening around 4.30 pm arrested five LTTE cadres including two women travelling in fibre glass boat in Pallimunai sea area in Mannar district. One of those taken into custody, Miss Gunaratnam Puvaneswary alias Uthaya, (20), took cyanide and was immediately taken to Mannar hospital. She was later taken to Vavuniya hospital in critical condition. Other LTTE cadres arrested are Arumugam Jeyanthan, 23, Kanthasamy Paheerathan, 22, Antony Sahayanathan, 18, and Sivanathagnanam Sanjini alias Mathi, 18.

The SLN handed over the four LTTE cadres to Mannar Police around 5.30 pm. They were then detained in the Mannar Police Station under heavy security and reportedly being interrogated. Mannar Police said LTTE cadres were in possession of hand grenades at the time of their arrest.

Later the four suspects Arumugam Jeyanthan, Kanthasamy Paheerathan, Antony Sahayanathan and Sivagnanatham Sanjini alias Mathi were in remand in custody at the Anuradhapura prison.

On Thursday (8) the Mannar Magistrate had agreed to an application by Police to send the five LTTE cadres arrested by the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) to Colombo for further investigation by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Reportedly for security reasons, The suspects were not produced in the Mannar court on Thursday when the police application for transferring them to Colombo CID was taken up for inquiry. It is learnt that the LTTE carried out the rescue operation in abducting Miss Gunaratnam Puvaneswary from the Vavuniya hospital was to preempt her from being taken for medical treatment in Colombo followed by further interrogation by the CID.

Halt slide towards further confrontation

The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka in statement dated 9 December said, "The killing of several soldiers and also of civilians recently, and the ongoing hartals in the north east point to the unstable and potentially violent environment in the northeast. These are the tragic, yet inevitable, results of the stagnant peace process in which the Ceasefire Agreement itself is not being fully complied with. The National Peace Council condemns these killings and call for their immediate end.

The National Peace Council urges the government and LTTE to heed the public statements of their respective leaders in recent times. We welcome President Mahinda Rajapakse's invitation to the Norwegian Government to resume its facilitation of the peace process and also the JVP's decision not to obstruct this course of action. We also welcome the LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan's statement that he would give the new President time to work out his course of action and to provide a reasonable political framework to Tamil aspirations.

In this situation of tension, it is easy for the different parties and the larger civil society to get polarised into antagonistic camps in which further confrontation is seen as the only option. But this type of thinking should be avoided at all costs because in the highly militarised context of the north east, escalated confrontation will only be a prelude to war.

NPC believes that the leadership of the government and LTTE need to demonstrate the qualities of problem solving leadership and patience that are vitally necessary at this point

of time. Civil society needs to support the country's leadership in their efforts to revive the peace process, by highlighting the people's opposition to war, so that the slide towards violent confrontation and retaliation is speedily reversed. The celebration of Human Rights Day tomorrow in different parts of the country, including Kilinochchi, would provide an opportunity to take the people's message of peace to the different parties in whose hands lie the decision as to war or peace."

Bishop calls for joint action for peace

Dec 7 - Bishop of Colombo, the Rt. Revd. Duleep de Chickera, in condemning the escalating violence and killings in Sri Lanka, in a statement released on 7 December said,

"The escalation in wanton killings of military personnel and brutal murders of innocent civilians in the North and East deserves unreserved condemnation. These defiant violations of the CFA call for a redefinition of the Agreement with inbuilt sanctions. These violations of the basic human right to life could, if not arrested forthwith, spiral into a war that the majority of Sri Lankans simply do not want.

"I call upon the President and our political leaders to act immediately and with restraint to halt this dangerous development. For this the endless rhetoric and mutual recriminations must stop and our political energy directed towards a thoughtful and responsible peace culture instead. The tendency to spread suspicion and animosity and to separate, divide and isolate communities and groups must be transformed to facilitate social trust and stability. Our leaders have a mandate for

only this and nothing else.

"Civil society leaders, specially religious leaders, have a duty to defuse tensions and encourage mutual understanding and respect across the communities. The core values of our great religions leave us with no other option. To pursue any other agenda would amount to a violation of the leadership entrusted to us.

"The international community, and specially those who are interested in sustainable peace and economic justice for our vulnerable people, should persuade and even pressurise the parties to our conflict to adhere to the CFA and also help clarify the steps to peace that require urgent attention. Most Sri Lankans realise that our conflict cannot be resolved without international intervention. While such an external perspective and intervention is desirable and welcome in protracted conflicts such as ours, respect for our sovereignty must be clearly demonstrated in this process.

"Our people have suffered the ravages of war for too long. And more recently natural disasters have also taken a heavy toll. Our people deserve a respite and space to go about their daily lives without fear of intimidation and loss. It is only by concerted effort by all political parties and peace-loving men and women of all communities that can take us forward to establishing a new culture which will ensure peace, justice and dignity for all Sri Lankans.

"As we approach the festival of Christmas, the birth of the Prince of Peace, it is our prayer that we will come to our senses and offer the best within us and so work for peace. And we also approach the first anniversary of the tsunami that wrecked havoc amongst all our communities, it is our prayer that we will recognise the worst within us and reject violence, injustice, intimidation and war".

NGOs scramble wasting Sri Lanka tsunami relief

Dec 1 - International and local charities have wasted aid money meant for tsunami relief and slowed reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka, an independent think-tank said.

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) asked the Sri Lankan government to rein in the number of charities, many of which it says are in competition with each other and preoccupied with grabbing media attention.

Last year's tsunami killed more than 31,000 people here and displaced nearly a million. Some 250,000 people still live in cramped transitional homes, despite international aid pledges topping 3.2 billion dollars.

"Reluctance to co-operate with government institutions and competitive behaviour towards others continue to hamper coordination and implementation," said IPS economist Paul Steele.

Nearly 300 aid agencies capitalised on a huge international outpouring of sympathy for tsunami survivors and collected millions of dollars to rebuild and restore livelihoods along Sri Lanka's devastated coastlines.

But an official from the country's housing ministry said some NGOs (non-governmental organisations) were less than honest. "We came across quite a few NGOs that had signed MOUs (memorandum of understanding to build homes) and then used the document to raise funds," said the official, who

declined to be named.

IPS's Steele said one way to monitor performance would be to consolidate. "It might be better if some NGOs are amalgamated. There is a whole plethora of costs," he said. "Administration costs are high. There are salary anomalies within NGOs, poor targeting of recipients and most unfortunately, competition among organisations themselves to get visibility within the community," he said.

The tsunami damage to infrastructure was estimated at one billion dollars, but the replacement cost was put at between 1.5 and 1.6 billion dollars, according to a study released in January.

"Costs are up by around 60 percent since January. For instance, the government estimated around 400,000 rupees (4,000 dollars) was enough to build a house. Now its over 600,000 rupees (6,000 dollars)," said Sisira Jayasinghe, economist and an author of the IPS post-tsunami recovery study.

The island's former tsunami reconstruction chief, Rohini Nanayakkara, warned that Sri Lanka has to compete for aid following natural disasters in other parts of the region. She said that although the initial pledges were twice the reconstruction cost, the country could end up with funding gaps. "If aid is not closely monitored, donor interest will slow down because there have been other disasters elsewhere that are now drawing their attention," she said.

In a report to parliament, Auditor General Sarath Mayadunne said continuous project delays had cost millions of dollars. President Mahinda Rajapakse, who was elected on November 17, has set up a new authority to coordinate all tsunami-related relief operations. (Courtesy: AFP)

War clouds descend with the return of the 'claymore mine'

D B S Jeyaraj

THE fourth of December was a bloody Sunday for soldiers serving in Jaffna as nine of their comrades-at-arms were killed in three separate incidents in the northern peninsula. Eight soldiers were injured in the same three incidents. Around 20 other soldiers suffered injuries in a spate of attacks conducted for three days in Jaffna from December 2 to 4.

The most serious attack was the landmine ambush at Kondavil on Sunday. Ten soldiers from the 51 - 1 brigade camp near the Thirunelvely farm school were travelling along the Palaly road to the brigade camp at Atchuveley in Jaffna.

The vehicle used was a tractor with trailer. The vehicle had passed the Kondavil junction and proceeded about 150 metres southwards when a claymore mine concealed on a tree was triggered by a remote controlled device. The explosion occurred at 1.10 pm in broad daylight.

The driver and two other men seated alongside the mudguards and three others seated on the front of the trailer were killed instantly. One soldier seated in the middle of the trailer was seriously injured and later succumbed. Three others seated at the rear end were injured but survived though the condition of two is serious. Seven soldiers had been killed in what was the most serious incident affecting the security forces in 46 months of a ceasefire between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Claymore mine attack

Meanwhile, in an almost identical incident, a minimum of seven Sri Lanka Army soldiers were killed in a second claymore mine attack on a SLA tractor in Irupalai, five kilometers

north east of Jaffna town yesterday (6) at around 10 a.m. Lt. D.V. Mutugalage, Corporal B.K.Samarasinghe, Corporal K.A.Sumith Kumara, Privates K.M.P.Attanayake, K.G.Dayawansa, W.G.I.Wijetunga and H.A.S Udayasiri were the troopers who died in the claymore attack.

At least one soldier was seriously wounded in the attack. The explosion took place 200 meters west of Irupalai junction on Jaffna - Point Pedro road. At least 10 soldiers belonging to the SLA Division 51-2 were returning to Irupalai camp in their tractor when it was hit by the claymore mine. They were returning after supplying morning meals to the soldiers stationed along the streets in Kalviyankadu, as in the previous incident.

For northern residents of Kondavil and adjacent Thirunelvely or Thinnevely as it is generally called, it was a bitter sense of deja-vu all over again. It was the usual practice in the bygone days for soldiers to descend upon the scene of an attack, surround the area and assault people in the vicinity and also detain them. The ceasefire had prevented such incidents for years in Jaffna. The bloody Sunday incident however revived memories as hordes of policemen and soldiers arrived. They had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing.

After the Sunday attack, people in the area were rounded up and assaulted. Shopkeepers at Kondavil junction and even Thirunelvely junction were grilled. The devotees paying pooja to the Aiyappan deity at a temple close to the incident suffered a lot of harassment. About 30 to 40 people complained of minor injuries after the assaults. At least 20 people

were detained for questioning and were gradually released. As is usual none of those responsible or related to the attack were arrested.

Bloody Sunday

If the Kondavil attack was the one with the most exacting toll two other incidents on the same bloody Sunday also had soldier casualties. A security forces truck was attacked with explosives near the Mananganup Pillaiyar temple at Nunavil near Chavakachcheri. One soldier was killed and two injured. This occurred at 5.30 pm. The assailants fired T - 56 rifles and at least 14 rounds were fired.

Fifteen minutes later at 5.45 pm a security convoy was returning to the camp at Villumathavaddi in Neervely near the glass factory premises. An attack was launched from a clump of trees along the Point Pedro road. Grenades were thrown and then firearms used. The firefight continued intermittently till about 8. pm. Though a search was conducted after reinforcements arrived none of those involved in the attack were apprehended. In a re-play of the Kondavil aftermath on a minor scale people were harassed in a cordon and search operation. One soldier was killed and three injured in the incident.

The soldiers killed in the three incidents were Sgt. P. R. Ananda, Chandrasiri, Priyantha, Navaratne, Ruwankumara, Ratnayake and Ekanayake at Kondavil; Lance Corporal Jayewardene at Nunavil and private Abeyewardene at Neervely.

'Virtual' curfew

The Jaffna people alarmed by the incidents kept indoors during the night and a 'virtual' curfew was in place. Residents living in the vicinity of places where incidents occurred moved to different places for fear of reprisals. There was a general feeling of apprehension and tension in Jaffna as people feared the worst. Talk of a full scale war erupting was in the air.

Three other attacks had also been conducted on the same 'bloody' Sunday. Two of these were within the Jaffna municipal limits. Youths on motorcycles had fired on sentry posts

indiscriminately and then fled from the scene. The first was at 9 am on the post near Arasady junction. The second was at 1.30 pm at Muthirai Santh junction. If both were within the Jaffna municipality the third was outside at Irubalai junction in Kopay. This too was done by youths on motor cycles. There were no casualties.

The attacks on Sunday were preceded by a series of attacks on December 2 and 3. Though no one was killed, about 20 soldiers sustained injuries. There were a few injured civilians too. None of those responsible for the attacks were injured or arrested.

Peculiar phenomenon

The three days of violence from December 2 to 4 are depicted as a peculiar phenomenon by sections of the media. It is as if the Tigers or their minions are engaging in violence for no apparent reason. While this violence certainly has to be condemned it is not difficult to seek out the reasons or the underlying causes. It is of the utmost importance to realise that this particular spree of violence is only an indicator that the shadow war promoted in the east has now moved to the north too. Though the LTTE and its agents have engaged in a lot of violence in the past during the ceasefire, recent developments show that other 'agencies' too are at work in Jaffna.

These columns spotlighted some weeks ago that the killing of Kopay Christian College Principal Nadarajah Sivakadatcham was committed by suspected Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) cadres aligned with the military intelligence division. It is widely believed that security intelligence controlling various anti-Tiger elements had mapped out a new strategy. The Karuna faction was to be used for clandestine operations in the east against the mainstream LTTE. The Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) was to be used in Vavuniya and Mannar. The EPDP was to be used in Jaffna. The Sivakadatcham killing along with the murder of a video shop owner in Uduvil were the surest indicators that

the shadow war had come to the north.

Being aware of this changing equation the political wing members of the LTTE pulled out of government controlled areas. But the LTTE intelligence wing operatives and members of the hit squads and pistol groups remained while maintaining a low profile. The LTTE 'secret weapon' with dangerous potential however was its civilian militia called Makkal Padaai or 'people's force'.

The Tigers have during the years of unfettered ceasefire brainwashed and trained a large number of Tamil civilians in armed warfare. The bulk of these are youths. Many are of a lumpen background.

In recent times these elements have played a big role in promoting political violence in Jaffna in the name of the people. The brutal murder of 'King' Charlie Wijewardene at Inuvil and related violence was mainly done by these elements. The violence related to the election boycott campaign in Jaffna was also done by these elements. The LTTE 'proper' plays a behind the scenes role directing and manipulating events. So the LTTE is able to claim that it is the 'people' and not 'Tigers' who are behind the violence in Jaffna. Typical Tiger doublespeak!

It was against this backdrop that the 'Great Heroes Day' or Maaveerar Naal was observed on November 27. On November 25 night at about 3.30 am a killer squad arrived at a Neervely residence, entered forcibly and shot a 22 year old youth Narendran Nirojithan. Nirojithan's brother was a Tiger martyr. Nirojithan identified openly with the LTTE and was in charge of putting up GHD decorations in the Neervely area. The injured Nirojithan is receiving treatment in the intensive care unit of Jaffna hospital.

On December 1 three youths in a Landmaster tractor stopped outside a tea boutique near the Athiyar Hindu College in Neervely. A killer squad opened fire and escaped in a three-wheeler. Twenty four year old Roopan was injured but 34-year old Gunaratnam Krishnakumar of Neervely and 24 year old Sinnaiah

Sivakaran of Alaveddy were killed. All three were civilian farmers but supportive of the LTTE. They had been involved in the Great heroes day ceremonies of the area. Media reports said that the killers had fled to the Neervely army camp near the Kopay junction.

It was this incident that set the stage for the violence on the following days. There is a prevalent feeling among many people that the EPDP cadres aligned to military intelligence were responsible for the incidents. Interestingly, the residence of Principal Sivakadatcham as well as the venues of the other incidents were all in close proximity of the Neervely camp. It is widely believed that the EPDP killer squad is housed at this camp and let loose periodically to target pro - Tigers or those with alleged LTTE links. The killers are aided and abetted by the security forces.

It was in such a resentful public mood that a Tiger front known as Tamil National Security Movement called for a hartal on December 2 to protest the Neervely killings. Posters were put up, road blocks set up and leaflets distributed. Whether out of sympathy or fear there was enough public response to the hartal call. The security forces in some places removed the roadblocks and posters on walls.

A series of attacks were launched on December 2 and 3. The security forces were the targets. The attacks occurred in Chavakachcheri, Sangathanai, Meesalai, Neervely, Kopay, Jaffna town, Kuppilan, Allarai, Manthigai, Nelliaddy etc. The targets were sentry posts, mini camps or security vehicles. The usual practice was to throw grenades or other explosive devices. In some instances guns were fired. The perpetrators were all young men on motor cycles.

Makkal Padaigal

Organisations calling themselves Makkal Padaigal or people's forces issued leaflets warning the security force 'aggressors' and their paramilitary acolytes to stop targeting the people of Tamil Eelam. Otherwise the people would continue to resist their activities and strive to remove their

presence from Jaffna. The statements were issued in the name of Seeru' (hissing), Urumum (growling) and Karchikkum (roaring) Makkal Padaigal.

In Chavakachcheri for instance the security post near the AGA office was attacked twice on December 3. Explosives were thrown at 1.30 pm and 3.30 pm. At Manthigai in Point Pedro a grenade was thrown at the security personnel guarding the EPDP office. At Maalisanthi in Nelliaddy an attack was launched against security personnel near the Telecom office. A fierce fight ensued and though three soldiers were injured fire was returned against the marauders. Altogether 22 security personnel were injured in 14 attacks over the two days. But it was Sunday which resulted in the loss of life with nine being killed in three incidents.

Monday December 5 seemed to indicate a lull in the violence. But students of Hartley College and Methodist Girls' High School in Point Pedro commenced a protest demonstration against security forces trying to erect barricades on paths used by students. There was some stone throwing and the security forces reacted by tear gassing the demonstrators. It is believed that the whole protest was instigated by the Tigers.

LTTE involvement

The LTTE political commissar for Jaffna, Ilamparithy denied LTTE involvement in an interview to the BBC Thamizhosai Tamil service. He claimed that the people were reacting to the paramilitaries aided and abetted by security forces. Ilamparithy also said that explosives in the hands of these paramilitaries had been seized and used by the people.

There are few takers for Ilamparithy's puerile attempt to bury the full pumpkin in a plateful of rice. It seems common knowledge in Jaffna that the violence is done by pro-Tiger elements of the so called civilian militia with the covert backing and logistical support of the LTTE.

It is also understood that the LTTE inspired violent response to-

Sri Lanka on peace track despite violence in North East

P K Balachandran

THE very disturbing series of violent incidents in Jaffna and the Eastern districts of Sri Lanka in the past week almost broke the ceasefire between the government and the LTTE.

The country did seem to be on

wards the security forces is a direct consequence of the shifting shadow war. The people do seem to be aware that killer squads believed to be EPDP are operating with the unofficial sanction and support of the military intelligence and security forces. Though the LTTE has engaged in a lot of violence in the past this particular round is seen as a result of the shadow war. The second deadly attack yesterday which claimed seven soldiers is confirmation of this.

What the ordinary people fear is an escalation of the simmering conflict. With a hardline regime in Colombo the official response could become fierce in the days to come. The Jathika Hela Urumaya is already calling for a 'war alert.' This is exactly what the Tigers want. The LTTE wants Colombo to unleash full scale war. So the so called response to the alleged shadow war activity is being intensified to unacceptable levels where the new President will be compelled to respond forcefully. After all was not 'Apey Mahinda' elected to teach the Tigers how to adhere to a ceasefire?

This is indeed a tricky situation for Mahinda Rajapakse who has already summoned an emergency meeting to discuss the situation and appointed a three - member fact finding committee to go into the causes of the current crisis. Whatever the hawks on either side of the ethnic divide may want, the ordinary people of Jaffna want only peace. They do not want this shadow war now or for it to become full - scale war in the future. □

the brink of another debilitating war. But ironically, despite the violence, people are talking about peace rather than war. Both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE have renewed their pledge to keep to the ceasefire agreement and begin talks. Some Tamil political sources said that the incidents had brought the focus back to the peace process and the LTTE, at a time when other matters could have claimed the attention of the country's new president, Mahinda Rajapaksa exclusively.

They speculated that the LTTE chief Velupillai Prabhakaran might have done what he did, only to give a jolt to the new regime in Colombo forcing attention on him and the issue he represented.

Since Prabhakaran had given Rajapaksa about an year's time to think about and come out with a "reasonable" political solution for the Tamil problem, the president could well have put this issue on the backburner till he had sorted out other matters nearer home, the Tamil sources said.

The President's concentration might have been on implementing the "Mahinda Chintanaya" his election manifesto designed to win the hearts of voters in the Sinhala-Buddhist heartland of South Sri Lanka, rather than attending to the peace process, implementing the ceasefire agreement "fully" and meeting the "urgent humanitarian needs of the Tamil people" in the North East.

Opportunity for attention-catching violent action came within days of Prabhakaran's Heroes' Day oration on November 27. On December 1, unknown gunmen killed Kunaratnam Krishnakumar (34) and Sinniah Sivakumaran (24), two farmers of Neerveli near Jaffna. They had been staunch supporters of the LTTE putting up pandals for the Heroes

Day celebrations. The LTTE pointed an accusing finger at the Tamil paramilitaries working with Sri Lankan military intelligence, a charge which the Sri Lankan army denied.

December 2 saw a number of attacks on the Sri Lankan armed forces. Grenades were thrown into army positions at Kallaikadu and the Arasadi junction, wounding a soldier. Some civilians threw a grenade at the Kaithady sentry point and killed a soldier. Two grenade attacks at Chavakachchery wounded two soldiers.

There were two other cases of grenade lobbing in Nunavil and Kachchai Road. Troops were fired at in Kaithady and the office of the anti-LTTE Eelam Peoples' Democratic Party (EPDP) at Manthikai was subjected to gunfire, which wounded an army soldier.

December 3 also saw a large number of violent incidents. One soldier was killed and two others were injured in Meesalai in unprovoked firing. Troops were fired at in Urumpirai, Vembadi, and Mampalam, and a grenade was lobbed into a sentry point in Nelliady, injuring five soldiers.

The most devastating incident was the claymore mine attack at Kondavil on December 4, in which six soldiers were killed. An attack in Neerveli killed one more soldier.

On December 6 (Tuesday), another claymore mine attack at Kopay killed one officer and six men.

Civil unrest

Prior to these incidents and after them, the North and East saw civil unrest, stirred by pro-LTTE organisations, aimed at getting the army to withdraw from the "Tamil Homeland", especially the High Security Zones (HSZ) in Jaffna peninsula. According to the High Security Zone Residents' Liberation Force (HSZRLF) these zones occupy 32 per cent of the land of Jaffna district and have displaced three lakh people. The outfit has threatened an "armed campaign" for the removal of these zones. The army, however, denies that so many people have been displaced.

According to The Sunday Times

the LTTE has been giving arms training to Jaffna civilians in its bases in the Wannai to "take over Jaffna" in the next war. And pilots are being trained in Iranamadu in Wannai where there is a 1.4 km runway.

Lankan commanders unfazed

However, despite all the military casualties and the saber rattling by the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government has been remarkably cool. It did condemn the incidents in no uncertain terms, but it stopped short of saber rattling and any precipitate action.

President Rajapaksa asked the three service chiefs to tell the country and the world that the state was by no means thinking of war.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Daya Sandagiri, told the media that the armed forces did not consider the LTTE's attacks as an act of war, but as mere terrorist acts. "We are not excited about them," he said, and added that the Sri Lankan armed forces were committed to maintaining the Ceasefire Agreement and furthering President Rajapaksa's policy of keeping to the peace process. He further said that if there were a choice between going to war and maintaining the Ceasefire Agreement, the armed forces would choose the latter. Asked if the LTTE was preparing for war, Adm Sandagiri said: "We have no evidence" of it.

The Sri Lankan military was clearly playing down the incidents. The world, including the United States, condemned them, but did not fail to call upon both Colombo and the LTTE to observe restraint and not break the Ceasefire Agreement, which had held since February 2002 despite many jolts.

Greater devolution under an improved 13th Amendment - While observing restraint on the military front, the Sri Lankan government has been slowly but steadily moving towards finding a political solution to the Tamil question.

Sources close to President Rajapaksa say that he wants to devolve powers to the provinces within the existing "unitary" constitution. The sources say that it is politically impossible for him to assure a "fed-

eral" solution despite the commitment made by predecessor governments to go by the Oslo (December 2002) and Tokyo (June 2003) Declarations and try to find a federal solution. This is because of his electoral promise to maintain the "unitary" character of the Sri Lankan state.

What the president is now thinking of is an improved version of the current system set up under the 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan constitution. The 13th Amendment, which was enacted under Indian pressure and the India-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987, created provincial councils, albeit with very limited powers.

What was given by one hand was taken away by the other, as former Constitutional Affairs Minister GL Peries put it. Former President Chandrika Kumaratunga had tried to rectify the situation in 2000 but without success.

It is said that President Rajapaksa is thinking of rectifying the flaws in the 13th Amendment to make devolution more meaningful. He wants to see how other unitary states in the rest of the world manage demands for regional autonomy instead of looking at federal countries only. His constitutional advisors say that the number of unitary states is very many times more than federal states, and many of these unitary states have worked out satisfactory and durable systems of power sharing.

Like GL Peries, the government thinks that the focus should be on "systems" rather than "labels" like "federal" and "unitary" especially when these terms create fear and anxiety among communities.

If the Sinhala majority is averse to the term "federal" as it smacks of separation, the Tamil minority is averse to the term "unitary" which smacks of enslavement.

Whether the LTTE will accept the president's line of thinking is yet to be seen. But it is unlikely that it will, especially in the light of the proposal it itself had given in October-November 2003 for an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) in the North East. That proposal was rejected by the Sinhala South as being "confederal" and therefore as a step-

ping stone to secession.

It is also understood that the Rajapaksa government is thinking of refusing to discuss any interim set up with the LTTE. Sources say that like his predecessor, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Rajapaksa is insisting on taking up proposals for a final solution. If this is the position, the LTTE will have great difficulty accepting it. The LTTE wants power immediately, even if it is only interim.

LTTE also seeks talks

Just like the government, the LTTE too has said that it wants talks, "urgent" talks on the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement. It has rejected the government's proposal to revise the Ceasefire Agreement, but it is ready to discuss its implementation.

However, the LTTE has continued to set off mines and fire at Sri Lankan troops. On Monday (12), two soldiers were wounded in a claymore mine blast in Vantharumoolai in Batticaloa district. And in Pesalai, in Mannar district, a grenade was thrown into a police camp wounding 20 policemen.

Issue of Facilitator critical

The unresolved issue of the peace facilitator is critical for both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. The Sri Lankan government has unwillingly bowed to international pressure to continue with Norway as the facilitator.

President Rajapaksa, like the majority of Sinhalese, wanted Norway out because it was thought to be pro-LTTE. But it was pointed to him by the international players, including India, that there was no alternative to Norway.

Both Colombo and Oslo want to discuss the contours of facilitation and re-draw the rules of the game. This is going to be discussed at the highest level. The LTTE will have to be involved in this exercise. Finding agreement on this is not going to be an easy task.

It remains to be seen if Erik Solheim will continue to be Norway's Peace Envoy in the light of the fact that there is so much opposition to him in the Sinhala South. Seen as being pro-LTTE, he has reportedly

Sri Lanka: North and East becoming zones of impunity for killers, says UN Expert

Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, has called upon the parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka to take more determined action to tackle the killings that have plagued the country in recent days. "The failure to effectively investigate the killings has resulted in many areas of the North and East becoming zones of impunity for killers with different motivations and affiliations," Alston said. "This in turn generates inflammatory and often contradictory rumours that risk giving way to cycles of retaliation".

The UN Expert expressed his

thanks to all those who met and provided him with information and insights in the course of my visit. "The Government of Sri Lanka is to be commended for its positive response to my request to visit. I have received excellent cooperation from the Government and this augurs well for its willingness to give careful attention to the issues that I will raise in my report," he said.

In the course of a week and a half in Sri Lanka, Alston has been travelling throughout Sri Lanka since arriving on 28 November. During his visits to the southern, eastern, and northern regions, he has met with a number of victims of the recent vio-

(continued on next page)

irked the Rajapaksa government by saying that Norway will not agree to resume mediation if the Sri Lankan government does not accept certain "conditions."

Move to bring India in creates jitters among pro-LTTE Tamils. The other ticklish issue, which has to be tackled, is the move by the Rajapaksa government to bring in India as a major and a more active player in the peace process to keep Norway and the Western countries in check. It is understood that the Rajapaksa government wants India to join the Co-Chairs of the peace process. Right now, the Co-Chairs are the UK/EU, US, Japan and Norway.

The Rajapaksa government is also thinking of getting Indian military help in case of an emergency. But India has not reacted to any of these "proposals".

But any mention of India creates jitters among the pro-LTTE Tamils, because they believe that India will thwart their plans to set up an independent Tamil Eelam. It is also feared

that India may prevent them from getting more autonomy than an Indian state. They do remember the tough time they had when the Indian Army was in the North East from 1987 to 1990.

The recent visit of the C-in-C of the Indian army's Southern Command Lt Gen BS Takhar and the on going India-Sri Lanka naval exercises in the presence of the C-in-C Eastern Command Vice Admiral Sureesh Mehta, are being portrayed in the Tamil press as muscle flexing by India and as a signal that New Delhi is backing Colombo.

New Delhi of course says that these are routine visits and exercises, which take place between friendly countries.

The LTTE, however, is not as excited as its Tamil supporters are. According to the outfit's ideologue, K Balakumaran, India will not intervene militarily again, though it may prop up anti-LTTE forces as it did in the 1980s. (*Hindustan Times*- December 12, 2005) □

lence and undertaken extensive interviews. He also met with senior officials of the government including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Attorney-General and Peace Secretariat; with Army Headquarters, the Inspector General of Police and many of their commanders in the field, with representatives of political parties and civil society, with Muslim community leaders, with senior representatives of the LTTE, with the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, and members of the diplomatic community.

Denouncing the widespread killings of Tamil and Muslim civilians and members of the LTTE and security forces during the course of his visit, Mr Alston said, I recognize that my visit has come at an extraordinarily sensitive and critical time for the peace process. During the short period I have been here, there have been numerous killings in the north and east of the country of both Tamil and Muslim civilians as well as members of the security forces and the LTTE. I condemn these attacks without reservation and urge all parties to take immediate steps to de-escalate the situation and prevent this tide of violence rising further with catastrophic results for the country and its hopes of finding peace. In my discussions with Mr Thamichelvan, chief of the LTTE political wing, I stressed the difference between denying responsibility and denouncing such attacks, and called on the LTTE to signal unequivocally its rejection of such acts of violence."

Saying that he would be submitting his full report to the UN Commission on Human Rights in early 2006 and emphasizing that his present comments were only of a preliminary nature, Mr Alston said, "The principal theme of my report is that extrajudicial killings, if left unchecked, have the potential to fatally undermine the peace process and to plunge Sri Lanka back into the dark days of all out war. This conclusion has tragically been borne out by the developments of recent days.

"Neither of the principal parties to the conflict seems to give adequate

recognition to the deeply corrosive impact of the killings that have been steadily accumulating and then accelerating throughout the course of 2005. These killings should not be thought of only in the cold and detached language and statistics of 'ceasefire violations', although they clearly are that. Nor should they be thought of only in abstract terms as violations of the international legal obligations of the parties, although they are that too. Most importantly, they are violating the right to life of a large number of Sri Lankans from all ethnic groups, and by undermining the peace process, putting at risk the lives of many more."

Calling for effective police investigation into the killings and advocating an enhanced investigative role for the SLMM, Mr Alston said, "Both the Government and the LTTE have signalled the need to review the implementation of the CFA and to strengthen international monitoring arrangements. But pending a resumption of contacts and talks on these issues, it is essential and urgent for all those involved to immediately adopt a range of confidence-building measures. These steps cannot wait until a major breakthrough is possible. But equally importantly, they will make it far more likely that such a development can occur.

"In order to put an end to the killings the key is to strengthen the accountability of those responsible. This involves a mix of initiatives including: far more effective police investigation, a role for the SLMM that includes investigation as well as monitoring, and unequivocal denunciations of killings by all parties. It is simply not enough for one party or another to throw up its hands and proclaim "we didn't do it, and we can't really tell you who did". Permit me to elaborate briefly.

"The upsurge in extrajudicial killings has been accompanied by a vacuum of investigative responsibility. The Sri Lanka Police have lost much of their appetite for serious investigations. While the difficulties presented by the environment in which they work must be acknowledged, they have in too many

cases become a recording agency. This deters witnesses from coming forward and leaves the groups involved free to accuse one another regardless of the facts which might emerge from serious investigation.

"The LTTE, for its part, issues frequent denials of killings and then contents itself with accusing the Karuna faction or other groups of acting in cahoots with the security forces to perpetrate most such killings. These denials do not appear credible to most observers and are contradicted by evidence I have collected during my visit that suggests that the LTTE has either been directly involved or has given protection to the perpetrators in some cases. At the same time, the security forces find it convenient to downplay the significance of the Karuna faction by dismissing many incidents as being LTTE-related and suggesting that it is irrelevant whether the LTTE or Karuna was responsible. This ambivalence toward the Karuna faction is reflected in the weak response of the Government to the relevant killings despite firm official instructions and denials of involvement.

He said that the North and East of Sri Lanka has become zones of impunity for the killers, Mr Alston said "The failure to effectively investigate the killings has resulted in many areas of the North and East - whether controlled by the Government or by the LTTE - becoming zones of impunity for killers with different motivations and affiliations. This in turn generates inflammatory and often contradictory rumours that risk giving way to cycles of retaliation.

"A case in point is the attack last month on the Akkairapattu mosque which killed six persons and seriously wounded 29 others. This was a particularly heinous act, involving the violation of a place of worship and an assault on innocent parties at prayer, and it has led to further convulsions of violence between the Muslim and Tamil communities in the East. I was able to visit the mosque, meet with representatives of the community and victims of the attack, and I do not exclude that there were many complex elements at play in the

incident. But no such elements can excuse such an act. And unless crimes of this kind are properly investigated, and those responsible held to account, they will only fuel the cycle of retaliation and violence. With that in mind, I call on the police to effectively investigate this attack. I must also note that, while the LTTE has denied its involvement in this attack, it has not taken the further step of unequivocally denouncing this act of killing."

Saying that it was time to reinforce SLMM's vital work, and accord it a stronger and better equipped role to enable it to carry out more in-depth monitoring of killings and to publicly report its findings of the facts in different cases, Mr Alston said, "The absence of effective investigation has placed considerable pressure on the SLMM to fill the vacuum. But its mandate has sometimes been interpreted excessively narrowly and in a way that makes it also appear to be mainly a recording agency. While it has made an invaluable contribution over its nearly four years in existence, it is time to reinforce its vital work. It should be accorded a stronger and better equipped role to enable it to carry out more in-depth monitoring of killings and to publicly report its findings of the facts in different cases. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said the Government had a long-standing desire to strengthen the effectiveness of monitoring arrangements. And Mr Thamichelvan indicated to me that the SLMM's role should be upgraded and 'given teeth'. While the parties should continue to explore other, specialized models for human rights monitoring, strengthening the role of the SLMM on these issues would be an important first step in promoting respect for human rights and building confidence among the parties and the people."

Saying that he had seen many encouraging developments during his visit to the island, Mr Alston said, "In the tsunami-affected areas of Batticaloa, I saw fishermen back in their boats and some housing construction underway. Even in Killinochchi, I saw new buildings and

AI call to 'prevent escalation of violence and abuse'

Dec 5 - Colombo: The Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam must act urgently to stop the downward spiral of violence and human rights abuses in the north and east of the country, said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International as she concluded her four-day visit to Sri Lanka.

Ms. Khan's visit follows a research mission by Amnesty International earlier this year to the north and east of the country to look into human rights concerns arising from the security situation as well as internal displacement resulting from the conflict and the tsunami disaster.

"People are being killed nearly every day in attacks that are rarely investigated and almost never prosecuted. The expansion of the range of people being targeted and the geographic spread of killings and attacks to the north are alarming trends. In this climate of fear, the voices of civil society and ordinary people are being stifled," Ms. Khan said according to an AI press release on 5 December.

"Both sides use Human Rights as a political weapon - each accusing the other of abuses but doing little to stop the spate of killings, abductions and harassment over the past year," she said.

The Amnesty International delegation listened to reports of rising tensions between communities. Muslim groups expressed concerns about murder, marginalisation and discrimination. As one man put it to Amnesty International's research

business suggesting that ordinary people are investing in peace. I met people from all communities who reject the path of violence and demand higher standards from those that claim to represent them. I have no doubt that with the requisite political will and the appropriate international support the current cycle of killings and violence can be ended." □

team: "The Sinhalese are afraid of the LTTE, the Tamils are afraid of the government, and the Muslims are afraid of both."

People of all communities are deeply fearful of what lies ahead. The inequitable, and at times inadequate, response to hundreds of thousands of people displaced by conflict and by the tsunami disaster last year has added to the volatility of the situation. "The situation is very grim and time is running out," said Ms. Khan. "We called on President Mahinda Rajapakse to seize the initiative urgently to de-escalate the violence."

"We have urged the government to be open and flexible on monitoring mechanisms and on establishing effective systems of accountability, including through independent investigations," said Ms. Khan. "Without a rapid reduction of human rights abuses, the prognosis for peace is poor."

The President assured Amnesty International of his readiness to address all allegations of human rights violations by the Sri Lankan security forces. "While we welcome his assurances, we want to see concrete action on the ground."

"A significant number of attacks and killings are happening in government-controlled areas," said Ms. Khan. "Although there is confusion as to who is behind these attacks, there can be no doubt about the clear responsibility of the state to investigate and prosecute. There also can be no doubt about the obligations of the LTTE, as an armed group, to respect international human rights and humanitarian law at all times, and to avoid targeting civilians, wherever they may be."

In talks in Kilinochchi with S.P. Thamichelvan, head of the LTTE political wing, Amnesty International pressed for accountability and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by the armed group. Amnesty International raised

concerns about the failure of the LTTE to halt recruitment of children and to release and rehabilitate children within their ranks, as agreed in the Plan of Action with UNICEF. "The recruitment of children must stop," said Irene Khan. "Attention must also be given to protection of children's right to education, shelter and non-discrimination."

"The LTTE and the government must both consider how best to make the human rights guarantees in the Ceasefire Agreement work," she said. "Differences between the parties on whether the Agreement should be revised or more effectively implemented should not in any way be an excuse to avoid or abuse human rights obligations."

"Recent killings and attacks in Jaffna are an indication of the volatility of the current situation." "Prospects for conflict prevention will depend on how fast and how far the government and the LTTE are willing to address the extremely fragile security situation now in the north and east," Ms. Khan said.

Addressing a Media briefing at the Galle Face Hotel on 5 December the Secretary General said the situation in both the Government controlled areas and the LTTE areas had descended to anarchy with the law enforcement machinery totally paralysed. She asked both the Government and the LTTE to come to an understanding on the setting up of an Independent monitoring body that could fill in the law and order vacuum prevailing in the North East.

She noted that the Norwegian truce monitors had only a limited mandate under the ceasefire agreement and is confined only to communicating incidents of violence by either party to the Government or the LTTE. Hence the need for an autonomous body in the wake of the absence of the law and order mechanism so that more targeted investigations could be carried out, she said.

She said the Government as a sovereign State is responsible for law and order and it is the LTTE's duty to cooperate. The Government expresses difficulties under the prevailing circumstances and that is why a

Are we ready for the next round?

Kumar Rupesinghe

The next round of negotiations by the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE is bound to resume soon.

The LTTE has invited the President to present a reasonable proposal giving a limited timeframe, failing which there will be a resumption of hostilities. On the other hand the President has stated that they will not be bound by deadlines set by the LTTE.

The two sides are ostensibly pre-

paring for war and peace at the same time. How this process will evolve depends on the genius and strategy adopted by both sides. It is my argument that a step-by-step strategy and architecture should be evolved and multiple strategies adopted to achieve a transformation of the conflict to a sustainable peace. This article will examine some of the issues relating to such a design and architecture.

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There seems to be a considerable deviation from the positions articulated by the Alliance since assuming the Presidency.

The significant changes are as follows: The positions taken with regards to the role of Norway by the JVP and the JHU that Norway would be asked to leave or its role substantially reviewed now seems to have been abandoned with the statement by the new Director General of the Peace Secretariat that Norway will remain as the facilitator.

The newspaper reports from Delhi after the visits by the new Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera and the Norwegian Minister for Development Cooperation Erik Solheim confirm the view that India wants the Norwegians to remain and that a settlement should be sought within a United Sri Lanka and not a unitary state. It also reiterates India's commitment to a United Sri Lanka and it eschews any notion of a separate state. Further in a statement issued from New Delhi by Erik Solheim it is clearly stated that Norway cannot be held as a scapegoat for mistakes committed by the two parties to the conflict.

Norway has stressed that it awaits an invitation by the Government of Sri Lanka. Any review that will take place with regard to Norway's future role should take into account that our national proclivity of shooting the messenger should not be encour-

mechanism should be put in place to carry out this task with the consensus of both parties.

The Amnesty International delegation was led by Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International. She was accompanied by Lars Normann Jørgensen, Director of Amnesty International Denmark; Purna Sen, Programme Director for the Asia-Pacific; and Liz Rowsell and Kavita Menon, campaigners on the South Asia team.

The delegation met with, among others, President Mahinda Rajapakse, Minister for Foreign Affairs Mangala Samaraweera; former prime minister and leader of the opposition Ranil Wickremasinghe, members of the diplomatic community, and human rights and civil society organisations based in Colombo, Jaffna and Batticaloa. The delegation traveled to Jaffna and Kilinochchi. They met with LTTE representatives, including S.P. Thamilchelvan, head of the LTTE political wing; E. Pararajasingham, head of the Eelam judiciary; P. Nadesan, head of the Eelam Police Force, and with members of the North East Secretariat of Human Rights. Delegates also visited an LTTE-run prison. They also visited two camps for internally displaced people, one for those displaced by conflict and the other for survivors of the December 2004 tsunami. □

aged.

The President has stressed that the ceasefire should be reviewed and have sought to bring to the agenda the questions of abductions, child conscriptions and political killings. On the other hand the LTTE has stressed that such a review should only be concerned with the implementation of the Cease Fire Agreement and the question of auxiliary forces should be placed on the agenda. Whilst the venue for the talks has not been decided it is important that steps are taken to resolve this issue soon.

The status of the SLMM should be considered. There have been serious criticisms that the Chairmanship being held by a Norwegian represents a conflict of interest. But these critics do not take into account that the decision to have a Norwegian Chair for the SLMM was at the request by the two parties and not imposed by Norway. What is striking however is that both parties have not made any attempts to explain the role of the SLMM to the general public.

Up to today the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) has not been translated into Sinhalese or Tamil four years after the Agreement was signed! Furthermore there is a profound misunderstanding of the mandate of the CFA. Some critics expect the SLMM to perform a policing function, which is outside the mandate of the CFA. The mandate of the CFA is only to monitor the CFA.

It has no powers of ensuring compliance by both parties. If we examine the violations of the CFA it is clear that political killings by the LTTE and auxiliary forces have significantly escalated this year.

There is no doubt that a proxy war is conducted by both sides and this matter has to be seriously addressed. Further, there is currently no verification mechanism with regards the numerous violations that have been committed. In future talks, a solid verification machinery should be put in place. Investigation of political killings in the Northeast and Colombo is a police function. The police have failed to apprehend any of the perpetrators. This means that the capacity

of the police should be seriously strengthened and cooperation between the Police and the LTTE must be a prerequisite for any success.

Further the questions of human rights violations have been brought up numerous times and in the Ian Martin proposal, which he submitted in Japan there is a role for independent human rights monitoring.

Those who are currently advising the President should seriously study the agreements reached in El Salvador where an independent human rights protocol was signed. Whilst political killings and child recruitment should be high on the agenda, the plight of many refugees who are still seeking support, i.e. the right to be settled, as well as the large numbers who are refused habitation in the High Security Zones should come under the purview of such discussions.

Further, serious attention should be given to the rights of a people to enjoy and exercise their own language, i.e. the implementation of the Tamil Language as a national language.

Every government has neglected the implementation of these provisions. It is very unfortunate that there are few police officers or administrators who are able to speak Tamil in the Northeast.

Despite pressure by the JHU and the JVP, the President by signing the gazette notification regarding the merger of the Northeast has indicated that at least for now he is committed to indivisible North East Provincial Council. But the Government should take note that the Eastern region is the most volatile and dangerous with continuous killings by various forces, which could endanger the peace process. It could lead to inadvertent war. Governments have paid scant attention to peace building programs between the communities and have no plan to create an environment of tranquillity in that region. It is important that regular talks between the military and the LTTE should be resumed and sustained. The LTTE on the other hand must address the grievances of the Muslim and Sinhalese communities.

The UNF negotiations concentrated too much on high table discussions between the parties and ignored the grievances of communities in the North East. The Sinhalese question and the Muslim question must be given high priority. For example 100,000 Muslims are languishing in Puttalam and elsewhere after being forcibly evicted by the LTTE fourteen years ago.

Further, over hundred thousand acres of agricultural lands has been acquired by the LTTE in the Eastern region. The land claims of the Muslims have been recorded and a register has been delivered to the LTTE but it requires a decisive intervention by the LTTE.

The Government has rejected the P-TOMs and has instead announced the formation of a new super entity to handle relief and rehabilitation as a single authority. The UNF government and the Chandrika Presidency failed to provide a structure, which could adequately address the problems of rehabilitation in the North East.

There were too many structures in place. As a matter of priority the problems of tsunami victims and war victims should be addressed immediately and simultaneously. Over a million people are languishing in makeshift shelters and are living in despair. Addressing their claims assumes the highest priority. An accelerated development plan can do much as a confidence building measure. I am also glad that the authority vested in the highly elitist TAFREN would be restructured.

The UNF focused too much on bilateral negotiations. The President has indicated that his peace initiative will be fundamentally different. He has stressed the importance of consultation with all other parties in parliament and outside. If we take a leaf from the South African experience a platform should be created for continuous consultations with all parties. Another mechanism which was used in South Africa, Guatemala and North Ireland was to engage civil society as a partner in the peace process.

Scant attention to this was given by the UNF peace process. Such a

platform should be inclusive and include not only the peace lobby with its limited Colombo base but trade unions, the Chambers of Commerce, professional organizations and representatives of the regions who could provide creative advice and support. Further in the South African experience, through the National Peace Accord, efforts were made to create viable peace committees at the grass roots level. These committees represented different sectors and parties, which played an important role in creating the space for dialogue.

The UNF acted within the constraint of a hostile President in a situation of dual power. The current President has no such impediments. He has the mandate from the Sinhalese people to pursue a just solution. Therefore the previous policy of pragmatism followed by the UNF should be replaced by a sound architecture and design.

I do hope that a lot of thought will go into this matter. Such architecture should ensure that the entire peace process is monitored and shortcomings rectified throughout the process. It should not be an ad hoc process. The peace process does not mean just the negotiations held at the high table but peace building initiatives to promote confidence building, coexistence and reconciliation at the grass roots level! Such an operational entity should be located within the President's office and be accountable to the President. The Peace Secretariat and the Muslim Peace Secretariat should be brought directly under the purview of the President's office. The operations room, which is currently under the Peace Secretariat should be evaluated and revamped. A Minister close to the President should be asked to oversee the entire strategy.

The LTTE has declared that it is waiting for a reasonable proposal from the President. He should avoid sending proposals, which are likely to be rejected by the LTTE. The UNF sent three such proposals, which were all rejected. It is better that these proposals are informally discussed either in the form of workshops which can be conducted by proxies appointed

President Rajapakse and the Co-chairs

Izeth Hussain

The LTTE's volte face in sabotaging the Presidential election in the North East, thereby showing a distinct preference for Rajapakse as President, stunned practically everybody. What is the explanation? There could be several possible explanations some of which might make more sense than others.

I would not give much credence to the fairly widespread notion that certain statements made by Navin Dissanayake and Milinda Moragoda in the course of electioneering greatly upset the LTTE. Those statements, together with some made by Ranil Wickremesinghe himself, were clearly meant to woo the Sinhalese voter, and would have been regarded by the LTTE as understandable electioneering strategy.

I believe that the volte face is in perfect consistency with the case I

by both sides. These informal meetings can be useful in reducing the levels of intractability.

The parameters for such a proposal to be submitted by the President are the provisions of the 13th Amendment with additional powers vested in the North East Provincial Council and the proposal submitted by the LTTE for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA). The deep divide between the two proposals should be addressed through such meetings. There should be a proper back channel, which can test the waters.

The LTTE has declared that it will resume hostilities within next year. The President has indicated that he will not be bound by deadlines. Both sides are preparing for hostilities. Given the time frame a multi-level and multi-track policy must be adopted. It is the art of politics to manoeuvre the situation both for war and peace.

As a great Chinese sage Sun Tzu once said, a war is best won without firing an arrow. □

argued in my article Rajapakse and the Ethnic Problem (Island of 16/17 November). I argued in that article that there has been no movement towards a federal solution and that the peace process has not even begun because the LTTE has been adamant in pursuing its objective of a de facto Eelam. Towards the conclusion of that article I wrote, "It is very probable, for obvious reasons, that only the powerful members of the international community can persuade the LTTE to change course."

Rajapakse victory

It seems obvious to me that should Ranil Wickremesinghe have come to power the pressure from the international community, more specifically from the co-chairs, could have become intolerable to the LTTE. On the other hand, in the event of a Rajapakse victory the LTTE would have much more latitude to keep on wriggling out of its commitment to explore a federal solution, citing as reasons his commitment to a unitary solution and his alliance with alleged extremists in the JVP and the JHU. It therefore became imperative to sabotage Wickremesinghe's chances.

The above view seems to be shared by the London Times, judging from extracts from one of its editorials which appeared in a local newspaper. It had stated that "those who have accused the separatist Tamil Tigers of bad faith in peace negotiations can draw powerful evidence from Sri Lanka's Presidential election." The editorial had also stated that Wickremesinghe's return to power "would have put huge pressure on the tigers to continue" the talks.

It is widely understood in Sri Lanka that the Co-Chairs and others in the international community have the power to exert huge pressure on the LTTE, but the reason for that may not be as obvious as I assumed in my earlier article. More is involved than a

generalised financial and military clout. What makes that power really redoubtable, possibly even decisive, is that several countries of the IC serve as the hinterland of the LTTE.

It was shown in the course of the last century that rebel movements, more particularly the ones with a large guerrilla component in them, can hardly be really effective with a hinterland behind them. Korea had China and Russia as the hinterland, Algeria had Morocco and other Maghreb countries, Vietnam had China and Russia, Afghanistan has had Pakistan and some Central Asian countries and Palestine has Syria, Jordan and other Arab countries. In the case of the LTTE, Tamil Nadu constituted its hinterland for many years, but after its expulsion from there it continued to flourish nevertheless. The reason is that the brain power and drive of the Tamil diaspora transformed vast segments of the globe into the hinterland of the LTTE, which was perhaps a unique achievement.

Tiger ploy

The point that I want to emphasise is that the power of the IC can do much more than merely weaken the LTTE. It can prove to be decisive because without the international hinterland the rebellion in the Vanni should not constitute all that much of a problem for the government in Colombo. That was probably the most important reason why the LTTE thought it imperative to sabotage Wickremesinghe's chances even courting the unanswerable condemnation of the EU election observers of contemptuously violating democratic norms. It is also the reason why the present government should go all out to get the Co-Chairs enthusiastic backing for Rajapakse's peace programme.

I fear greatly, however, that the Co-Chairs may fall for the Tiger ploy and give Rajapakse far less than enthusiastic backing, while awaiting the possible return to power of a UNP led coalition at the next General Elections. The UNP and Wickremesinghe have stood for the open economy and he has gone as far as to justify US imperialist aggression against Iraq, while

Rajapakse stands for opposed policies. Furthermore, he is allegedly in alliance with chauvinists and racists, and consequently he may be regarded as a write-off as far as making peace is concerned. In my earlier article I have argued at length for a more nuanced, less simplistic, indeed a more realistic reading of Rajapakse's position, in the course of which I drew attention to the way de Gaulle had initially got into an alliance with the French Ultras to solve the Algerian problem.

That article, written before the recent election, established at the least that it would be monstrous to write off Rajapakse without his being tried out. What transpired at the election itself provides material to show that he deserves the backing of all those who are really serious about starting the peace process.

The results showed that Rajapakse is pre-eminently the representative of the Sinhalese majority, while Wickremesinghe is of the minorities. This has enormous significance for the problem of establishing a national consensus, without which the ethnic problem cannot be solved. In a country such as Sri Lanka a national consensus can only be achieved with the backing of the Sinhalese majority, never by a leader who is seen as pre-eminently the leader of the minorities. It follows that for the time being only Rajapakse can solve the ethnic problem. The Co-Chairs must accept this fact.

The reasons for the Sinhalese backing for Rajapakse are so obvious that they need not be spelt out in detail. The truce process is a farce and the peace process has not even begun, while the de facto Eelamisation process has been a roaring success. These disastrous developments are not due to fortuitous circumstances, nor are they the unintended consequences of CFA basically sound policies. They follow ineluctably from the bizarre CFA which was perpetrated by Wickremesinghe and his associates.

Under the CFA it was acknowledged that the LTTE is in control of a sizeable chunk of territory, to which the government denied itself access. Has there ever been a parallel de facto

abandonment of sovereignty over part of the national territory by any government under the sun? In addition the LTTE was allowed access to government controlled territory, though without bearing arms. But any schoolboy would have told Wickremesinghe and the powerful personages around him that the Tigers could be expected to use that provision to go on the rampage, armed to the teeth. It appears that in Sri Lanka a weakened grasp of reality is synonymous with political power.

Killing Fields

There is a widespread view, shared by myself until recently, that whatever may be said against the CFA it did save thousands of lives. I have not been able to get hold of the relevant statistics, but I am sure that they will reveal a very different picture. There was no high intensity conflict after the Elephant Pass debacle in April 2000, and it is reasonable to think that during the military stalemate that followed thousands of lives were saved. But the killings were resumed, though not perhaps on the same scale as during the period of high intensity conflict, after the CFA came into operation and the Tigers were allowed to go on the rampage. The killings have been substantial enough to warrant the use of the term "Killing Fields" in one of the recent bulletins of the University Teachers for Human Rights. So the correct picture seems to be that the CFA led to a resumption of the killings that had virtually ceased.

The only positive thing that might be said for the CFA is that it restored some amount of business confidence in the North East. Perhaps in the eyes of the UNP this compensates for all the disasters that the CFA has brought to us. Some people have been able to make money and that is what really counts for the UNP, pre-eminently the party of the bourgeoisie of the Western littoral, particularly after 1977.

Sinhalese nationalism

The election result showed that millions of Sinhalese voted for Rajapakse because they were appalled by the performance of Wickremesinghe and the UNP in their

last spell of power, which stirred deep anxieties that their return would mean the irrevocable break-up of Sri Lanka. The voting pattern shows that those millions included the Sinhalese Catholics as well as the Buddhists. In other words, Rajapakse was the beneficiary of Sinhalese nationalism, not just of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. It would therefore be simplistic to think that the election has made him a creature of the chauvinists.

However, it is arguable that what I am saying about the Sinhalese voter may be true as a broad generalisation, but it remains that Rajapakse is greatly beholden to the JVP and the JHU, to whom he has made certain commitments and he is therefore the captive of racists. My answer to that is that ethnic groups and political parties are not endowed with essential and unchanging characteristics and that therefore they can change becoming less racist or not racist at all. To argue that they cannot change and will always remain racist would itself betray an essentialising habit of mind that is at the core of racism.

Today the JVP is regarded as hardly racist or not racist at all. This is partly the consequence of the fact that the admirable organisational abilities of the JVP were deployed after the tsunami to help the Sri Lankan people irrespective of ethnic divisions. I can attest that we Muslims will not easily forget that fact. Today the JHU is favourable to adaptation of the Indian model of the unitary state, which in fact allows such wide devolution of power that it can well be regarded as semi or quasi-federal or just plain federal. Who would have thought some weeks ago that the JHU could ever come to this position?

Rejecting extremism

I am not arguing that all our political parties have suddenly stopped being racist. As a Muslim I have to be disturbed by the Buddha statue placed in proximity to the Kollupitiya mosque, about which nothing has been done for weeks even though it is in contravention of an existing law. What I am arguing is that we must give due weight to the factor of change. For instance, we much em-

James T. Rutnam, a versatile servant

Prof. Bertram Bastiampillai

The International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Colombo is commemorating and celebrating the 100th birth anniversary of Dr. James T. Rutnam, scholar, politician, humanist at the ICES Auditorium on 2 December 2005.

Dr. S. U. Deraniyagala, Dr. Kumari Jayawardena, Prof. S. Pathmanathan and Mr. Silan Kadirgamar are to deliver lectures at this event.

The late James Thevathasan Rutnam hailed from Manipay in the northern peninsula but spent a good part of his life in Colombo 7 as its popular and illustrious personality.

His father was a man of means

and owned property in Pandateruppu in Jaffna district. James led a comfortable life in his early years. His mother was a Miss Dwight.

James Rutnam lived in spacious two storied house at Baron's Court in Guildford Crescent, Colombo 7, with a widespread garden around too.

He entered Ceylon Law College as a youth and in the first year examination won a coveted prize awarded for his highly commendable performance. Thereafter James Rutnam left Law College and did not pursue studies.

For a short while, James Rutnam adjourned to Nuwara Eliya and headed St. Xaviers College. An interesting incident of this time was Rutnam's encounter with a "white planter boss" of a tea estate. Rutnam was radical in his thinking and inclined to be a leftist in his ideas, ideals and attitude. He espoused the fair cause of the labourers in an estate who were on strike. James Rutnam "bearded" the arrogant authoritarian white planter in his office and strongly advocated the demands of the labourers. At a time when the white colonizers believed that the sun never set on their empire, the heady planter peremptorily gave five minutes to clear out of his office. James Rutnam recognized that the odds were against him and gave the planter the five minutes to be reasonable, and then quit the planter's office promising to fight another day. Rutnam was tenacious.

James Rutnam's left leanings made him to welcome Maude, later Mrs. Pieter Keuneman, of the Communist Party at the Colombo harbour and offer generous hospitality on her arrival.

With such a predilection, Rutnam later on extended hospitality at his abode to Robert Gunawardena, a left political figure, when he returned from China after a stint of national service

phasise the fact that the bulk of the JHU votes have shifted back to the UNP whence it came originally. This has been interpreted, quite understandably, as meaning that people are totally rejecting extremism.

What we have to avoid at the present stage was put with magisterial authority by Claude Levi-Strauss in the classic paper he prepared for UNESCO, Race and Ministry, "The adversaries of a political regime do not willingly recognise that it evolves; they condemn it en bloc, thrusting it outside history, as a sort of monstrous interval at the end of which only life will be resumed."

The President's policy statement of November 26 has been predictably rejected by the TNA. A change can come only though pressure exerted by the more powerful members of the international community. It is time for the Co-Chairs, that is the US, the EU, Japan and Norway to sit together with India and work out new strategies. They should give enthusiastic support for President Rajapakse as they would have for Wickremesinghe. Otherwise the LTTE ploy would have succeeded and we can expect the de facto Eelamisation process to continue, relentlessly. (The Island, 1 Dec 2005)

as a diplomat.

James Rutnam was an avid reader and an energetic collector of books, manuscripts, learned journals, and writings. It was also well known to the intelligentsia of Rutnam's propensity and eminence as a writer on politics, government, history, both ancient and modern archaeology and ancient lore.

It is in this capacity that Rutnam visited all the remarkable libraries, museums, and archives in the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States to record only a few countries where Rutnam spent time and money reading and collecting valuable books and originals of literary records.

No wonder scholars and researchers constantly visited James Rutnam from the universities in Colombo, Peradeniya and Jaffna. He never forsook his reading and collection of literary material and would go to great lengths in search of learned publications and rare manuscripts.

It was enlightening to read Rutnam's continuous contributions

to "The Tribune", a popular journal then among readers of contemporary national events.

Many will recall Rutnam's revelations in two noteworthy and popular recounts of the genealogies of two leading national and political personalities. In similar manner, Rutnam delved into esoteric data to refute wrong hypotheses propounded by some writers, more chauvinistic than scholarly.

Rutnam had a number of contacts with university dons, researchers, leading legal figures and businessmen. His stupendous library astounded one, and many learned personnel often consulted Rutnam and gained much from him.

He would spare time to inform and educate. It was no surprise that James Rutnam bequeathed his invaluable library to Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai, and even put up a building in Jaffna to house his rich bequest of books. It was named the Evelyn Rutnam Institute and remains under the American Missionaries as a testimony to James Rutnam's love of research and learning, and encouragement to

young students.

Rutnam took a lively interest in The International Association of Tamil Research (IATR), the architect and builder of which was the late Reverend Father Xavier S. Thaninayagam.

James Rutnam gained a prominent role when the Association held its International Conference of Tamil Research in Jaffna and Madurai. He was a close associate of Father Thaninayagam, archaeologists, Directors of Museum and university teachers like Professor T. Nadaraja,

W. J. F. Labrooy and many others.

James Rutnam was an active and regular member of the then exclusive club, Capri, and his companions and friends with whom he met were several. Reading, writing and research and travel kept Rutnam happily engaged in life.

The pursuit of stores of learning and learning itself in spite of a demanding social life and domestic engagements demonstrated that James Rutnam led a full rich life.

Although he would often refer to himself as "a successful failure"; really James Rutnam lived life to the best, and successfully, over the seven score and ten years of the Biblical span.

On the 1st of every month, James Rutnam generously assisted many who called on him, regularly and repeatedly. He was generous to his former aides in full measure. June 13th was another special day for James Rutnam as it was his birthday and he would recall that it is St. Anthony's day. He celebrated the event happily.

James Rutnam, when young, fell in love with Evelyn and thereby forfeited the favour of his father who did not like the union. But James loved Evelyn dearly and tears welled up in his eyes whenever he spoke of her with undying fondness. James had three daughters and five sons.

Today, I believe, only one son, Chandran, is in Sri Lanka. When young, James Rutnam did a lucrative business in rice imports from Rangoon, then capital in Burma, now Myanmar. Being magnanimous, liberal and sociable, and charitable, he spent as he earned.

Parkinson's Disease affected James Rutnam, and in his last days he was unfortunately and sadly paralysed too, I felt. I called on him then at a house in Anderson Road off Dickmans Road, Havelock Town. James Rutnam was a true, faithful, and lovable learned companion. Many are those who benefited from Rutnam's erudition especially. Rutnam did try to enter politics but failed. What national politics lost, yet learning and culture gained, better fields indeed. □

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'Missing in Action'

Lavanyan Ratnapalan

With the exception of Muthiah Muralitharan, there are hardly any well-known Tamil people in western cultural life. It would be interesting to find out whether this situation says more about the cultural obsessions of the West or the present aspirations of Tamils. In any case, one of the effects of the scarcity of famous Tamils has been the great interest in such individuals who do appear on the popular radar. Therefore, the mixture of surprise and expectation that has greeted the arrival of MIA has been as much a matter for consideration as the content of her work as a pop musician.

MIA (short for 'Missing In Acton', the suburb in London where she is from) is the musical alter-ego of Mathangi Arulpragasam. Born in 1976 to Sri Lankan Tamil parents who were then living in London, the family returned to Sri Lanka when she was 6 months old. As the war intensified, she came back to London with her mother and two siblings in 1986, while her father remained in Sri Lanka. She has maintained only a distant contact with him since this time.

In a recent interview she has described how upon returning to London as a young girl she discovered that the existing Tamil community had not been very welcoming to her family. 'They are really obsessed with impressing the British. They want to be doctors and engineers and go to Cambridge, buy leather couches to match their encyclopedias, have a sitar in the corner and whip their saris out once a year for a wedding. They'd look at us and go, "We don't want them hanging round with our kids, they're into rap, they think they're black."' She has had to become used to living as an outcast.

Despite such challenges, however, she was able to obtain a good education. She graduated in fine art, film and video at St. Martin's College in London, and has gone on to produce a book of her graffiti-inspired art work, which was nominated for the Alternative Turner Prize in 2002. Her artistic method is 'do-it-yourself',

using readily available material such as spray paint and cardboard to produce work quickly and effectively.

Her education in design comes to the fore in the clothes that she wears, in her forays into music video, and in the layout of her album cover and website. All are bright and vibrant, filled with repeated motifs and great splashes of colour, although sometimes her emphasis on visual aesthetics clouds the point that she is trying to make with her songs. The latter were released in the form of an album, *Arular* (named after her father), in 2005.

Arular might have remained a favourite of the 'underground', the hip and fashionable in music, had it not been nominated for the Mercury Music Prize in Britain last July. Although it didn't win the award, the occasion gave MIA enough exposure to send a message to the country that there was a new political voice in British pop music.

The album is strongly influenced by contemporary dance music from around the world, in particular Jamaican dance hall, the reggaeton style of Puerto Rico, and baile funk from Rio de Janeiro. For this reason, some people have criticised it for lacking a sense of place. MIA has countered this accusation by describing her fondness for music that has a sense of homelessness and for songs that don't fit anywhere. Her destructive and itinerant early life might be a cause of her reluctance to associate herself with a specific place.

Nevertheless, she aspires to inform her audience about what is happening around the world. Her song "10 Dollar" is the album's masterpiece, a redemptive tune about the exploitation of women. It also features her most successful fusion of American electro beats and eastern harmonies, with a freshness of vocal style that is sadly more reminiscent these days of the pioneer era of rap music, the early 1980s. Her delivery is based on the speech and inflections of young people in East London, and is different to her normal speaking

voice, which adds no recognisable twang to a generic British accent. She clearly wishes to ally herself with a youthful cultural modernity that she sees developing in London. She has stated that all she wants to do is to 'exist as a voice for the other people that you don't get to hear from. That's all.'

The themes of cultural homelessness and representation pervade the entire album, so that all expressions of an authentic identity, such as singing a few lines of verse in Tamil at the beginning of '10 Dollar', have a shocking and inexplicable effect. From her music alone we are led to believe that she has no history, when all of a sudden, she springs up with what to most of her listeners is an unfamiliar language.

MIA's history shows that she is a member of the global Tamil diaspora. As with the early stages of all diasporic cultures, this one still feels united somehow but has had difficulty in articulating it in a universally acceptable way. As much as the differences in language and the particular foreign culture into which they settle, there is a generational gap between Tamils that appears almost insurmountable at times. The problem lies in trying to represent a group that feels that it has no home. MIA tries to achieve this by cultivating an identity that is not rooted to a single place.

Throughout *Arular* her voice skips and trips deliberately between that of the blasé, hypercommodified urban teenager and the elusive trickster of countless stories. Sometimes in her music the two forms are inseparable. 'You no get my life 'cos I don't have a side...I got brown skin, but I'm a West Londoner', she raps on the last song of the album, which is titled after her own name. Out of the awkward materials of her identity she has built an artistic personality that is based on the tactics of evasion and camouflage. Rejecting the option of documenting the conflict in Sri Lanka, which could alienate her desired audience, she adopts instead a strategy that has proved decisive in the outcome of that conflict. In line with her professed 'do-it-yourself' method of production, politics is brought to the fore in art by means of action rather than reflection. □

● Ex-President's package of perks

Chandrika Kumaratunga, continues to remain controversial and commented upon even after her departure from her elevated position. Her long time detractors from the fourth estate are now going to town on the unusually large package of perks and perches of land she has secured for herself.

Though now she is only an ex-President, she must still be high on the hit list of the LTTE. Therefore no fair minded person would deny that the former President should be guaranteed adequate security cover for her personal protection. It would seem that the Cabinet considered this issue in August anticipating the President's term running out and her stepping down in November this year. The scale and extent of the provision for the ex-President's office and security has prompted some commentators to ask whether she is going to run a parallel administration. The provision included the following:

1. Setting up of a Division named Retired President's Security Division IV. A Senior Superintendent of Police to be appointed as Director. The said Director will be responsible to the IGP regarding the proper functioning of the Division.

The role of this Division should be to ensure security of the retiring President and her family members.

2. Deployment of 188 personnel comprising Police and Army Commandos, 18 vehicles and 18 motor cycles to be provided for the use of these officers as indicated in this schedule.

3. Allocation of the house No 27, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7, for this purpose since she needs to reside in a house where adequate security can be provided, and to effect repairs thereto in order to ensure security measures.

4. Allowing the Ackland Building, Slave Island, presently occupied by the officers of the Presidential Security Division, to be utilised as office and quarters by the Police and Army officers, who would be attached to this Division.

5. Continue to pay allowances to this Division as presently paid to the Presidential Security Division and pay all other allowances approved in future to the Police and Army officers of the Presidential Security Division.

In addition Cabinet approval was obtained to grant by way of transfer one and a half acres of State land at Madiwela close to the Parliament Complex to Kumaratunga in lieu of certain entitle-

People & Politics

ments under the existing President's Entitlements Act. This land was said to be for the purpose of constructing an official residence for the ex-President. The allocation of this land was justified on the basis that there was a shortage of official residences in the Colombo 7 area. However a subsequent Cabinet approval was given on 31 October 2005 for the allocation of house No. 27, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7 as the ex-President's residence. The market value of the Madiwela property is said to be staggering Rs. 360 Million.

Among all the difficult problems that the new President faces, he has also to confront the question of the propriety and legality of the decisions taken by the Cabinet in regard to the out-going President's entitlements.

● A People's Green

The Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, in a recent landmark judgement has held that "the Galle Face Green should be maintained as a public utility. The necessary resources for this purpose should be made available by the Govt. of Sri Lanka."

The judgement has been hailed as a victory for the people against the might of big business and scheming politicians

The Galle Face Green, which has all along remained an essential landmark in Colombo, is commonly regarded as public property belonging all the people who wish to use it for their pleasure from the time Sir Henry Ward dedicated it to the public.

A popular place for horse riding from the British colonial era till the late 1940s, it has since become the favourite haunt for walkers, joggers and other health enthusiasts.

It is the venue of important political rallies. Major political parties have held their May Day rallies here. Among those who have addressed the people of Colombo from the Green are the immortal Mahathma Gandhi and Pandit Jawarlal Nehru.

In contemporary times, it has become the venue of events connected with pop music where the young in their tens of thousands gather in this favourite meeting place of the people. It is the equivalent of the great squares in many countries where crowds in the many thousands assemble on important occasions. It has been a vast playground for children, to fly kites and have fun. To the men, women and children living in cramped ghettos in the working class areas of Colombo the Green provides much relief, entertainment and fun. It is also the romantic rendezvous of courting couples.

In recent years, several food courts have appeared here catering to hundreds of the gourmet inclined. To the religiously faithful, the Green is the venue of annual prayer and meetings.

No wonder citizens of Colombo were shocked when told an influential and resourceful business group had come into agreement with the Urban Development Authority in 2003 for the virtual "sale" of this common man's property. Here was the insensitive madness of the greed flowing from 'privatization' in full gallop where the commonwealth of an entire society was put on sale - sadly with the knowledge and blessings of those at the helm of affairs. If the deal went through successfully, the right now enjoyed by the public to free access to the Green could have been denied. They would have been called to pay to the new owners not only to walk in the Green but to breathe as well, now that many head to the Green also "for a breath of fresh air".

Fortunately, the Supreme Court, before which the matter went, came to the rescue of the people by setting aside the Agreement between the UDA and the potential buyers and holding that the Green was a public property and must be maintained for the benefit of the public.

Though NGOs have come into much flak in recent times, it is thanks to the relentless campaign and dedication of a responsible NGO - Environmental Foundation Ltd - the interests of the citizens of Colombo were preserved.

● A Question to ponder

It has been reported in TamilNet that a "one-day debate on the policy statement of the new Sri Lankan President Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse is to take place when parliament meets on December 7 on a request made by the Tamil National

Alliance (TNA) at the leaders of political parties. Mr Rajapakse presented his policy statement in parliament last Friday. Mr.R.Sampanthan, leader of the TNA will open the debate on behalf of the TNA which has a parliamentary strength of 22 members."

If the Tamil voters of the North and East were asked not to participate or vote in the presidential election on the basis that it was of no relevance to the Tamil people as it was only an election to elect a Sinhala President for the Sinhala people, then why is the TNA interested in debating the policy statement of the Sinhala President?

● Napoleon was model for Hitler!

Paris, Nov 29 (AFP) - A French author has taken a rare shot at one of the country's biggest heroes by casting Napoleon Bonaparte as a genocidal dictator and inspiration for Adolf Hitler in an incendiary new book.

"One hundred and forty years before the Holocaust, a dictator, hoping to rule the world, did not hesitate

to crush part of humanity under his boot," Claude Ribbe wrote in *"The Crime of Napoleon"*, which goes on sale Thursday, 1 December.

As France prepares on Friday to mark the bicentenary of the Battle of Austerlitz - considered the emperor's military masterpiece - Ribbe's book lists a string of atrocities allegedly carried out under his rule.

A black academic who sits on a government panel on human rights, Ribbe accuses the emperor of "exterminating" part of the black population of France's colonial islands and of introducing a system of racial segregation.

On the French island colony of Haiti, then known as Saint Domingue, Ribbe claims that Napoleon's troops launched a "vast operation of ethnic cleansing" in 1802, to stamp out a slave revolt.

Relying on written accounts from some officers in the Napoleonic armies, Ribbe writes that French troops used sulphur dioxide to suffocate slaves held in ships' holds and conducted wide-scale killings. The troops

were under orders to kill all blacks aged over 12, he writes.

"It is no surprise that he (Napoleon) served as a model for Mussolini, who wrote a play in his glory, or to Hitler, who saluted him with a 'Heil Napoleon' at the Invalides (in Paris) on June 28, 1940," writes the historian.

"All the facts contained (in the book) are known to historians, but are willfully overlooked," Ribbe charges in his introduction.

Joined by a number of associations from France's overseas territories, Ribbe has been campaigning to bring such episodes to public attention, as France prepares to pay tribute to its legendary emperor.

The groups have called for a march on Saturday in protest at the emperor's "glorification" and the "historical revisionism" surrounding his rule. "We cannot allow, in a supposedly law-abiding country, for history to be steered as it was done under the Soviet Union," they said in a joint statement. □



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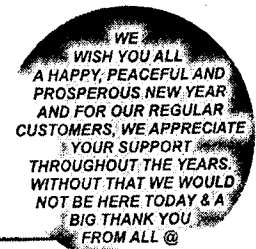
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Pirapakaran Birthday celebrated: November 26 - Supporters of Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers lit firecrackers and decorated the ancestral home of the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran

with balloons and lamps to celebrate his 51st birthday Saturday. Pirapakaran leads the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which has waged a two-decade war seeking an independent state for the island's ethnic Tamil minority.

The abandoned home where Prabhakaran was born on Nov. 26, 1954 in the northern Jaffna Peninsula was cleaned up by his supporters and decorated with balloons and lamps, while front organizations of the LTTE held cake-cutting ceremonies and played songs on loudspeakers to wish the leader a happy birthday. Prabhakaran founded the LTTE in 1972 with a small circle of friends to demand a separate state for minority Tamils in the island's northeast. He built up his outfit as a conventional army over the years with modern weaponry and perfected the art of suicide bombings well before other militants in the world employed them.

The Tigers have in the past marked Prabhakaran's birthday with attacks on military or economic targets, but no major attacks have taken place in the three years since the cease-fire was signed in February 2002.

Grenade attack on Police post: Nov 26 - At least seven policemen were injured in an attack despite a heightened security alert in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern provinces in view of the LTTE's Heroes' Week celebrations. A police post at Irudiyapuram in the eastern Batticaloa district had come under a grenade attack from suspected Tamil Tiger members around 8:00 p.m. local time (1400 GMT) on 25 November injuring the seven men, police said.

Abducted youth escapes: Nov 28 - A 21 year old youth who was reportedly abducted in July 2005 and subsequently detained by the LTTE in Karawa area in Eravur in eastern Sri Lanka has run away and surrendered to the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) at the Uppodai roadblock in Batticaloa on November 27. The 21-year old youth allegedly told troops that he was abducted by a group of Tamil Tigers on July 21, 2005 while he was near his house and was then taken away into the LTTE-controlled area in Karawa on a motor bicycle. However, the youth, who is said to hail from Kalawanchikudy area managed to run away from the LTTE detention on November 27 and surrendered himself to the troops. The youth was later handed over to Eravur Police station for further investigations and necessary onward actions.

318 attacks against Army since July 1, 2005: Nov 28 - A soldier fell victim to another hand grenade attack and received injuries on 27 November around 7.55 pm when a hand grenade was lobbed at the Army post in the general area of Sirimapura, Trincomalee. Private K.D.S. Ariyartne of Sri Lanka Sinha Regiment received injuries to his right hand and both legs after the hand grenade exploded. The Army also noted that this was the 318th attack carried out by Tamil Tigers against Security Forces and the Police after July 1, 2005 as per latest statistics.

Indian Commander visits SLA frontlines: Dec 1 - General Officer Commander-in-Chief of Southern Command Lt. Gen.

NEWS TRACK

B.S. Thakker visited the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) front lines in Vavuniya in northern Sri Lanka and discussed with SLA Commanders matters related to security.

Lt Gen Thakker arrived in Vavuniya in a special Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) helicopter where he met with Major General Vajira Wijegunawardane, Commander 11 Division, who accompanied the General to attend the Guard of Honor, Army Commander Lt. Gen Kottegoda, Chief of Staff Major General Sarath Fonseka, Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Susil Chandrapala, Director General General Staff, Major General Nanda Mallawaarachchi and Military Secretary Major General D. U Munasinghe at Lt Gen Kottegoda's office and discussed security matters.

Lt Gen Thakker then proceeded to the Omanthai checkpoint where he met with SLA officers in charge of the checkpoint. Lt Gen Thakker discussed possible changes to security arrangements in Vavuniya, the strategic border town that separates the South of Sri Lanka from Liberation Tigers controlled Vanni region.

Fundraising in Toronto: Dec 2 - Members of Toronto's large Tamil community say they're being hit up for money by door-to-door fundraisers for the LTTE. It is estimated that one-third of the Tamil diaspora is in the Toronto area.

Community members said they were told to make an immediate cash contribution of \$2,500, and that those who didn't contribute would not be allowed to travel in LTTE controlled parts of Sri Lanka when they returned for visits. "They started giving each family a PIN number, so whenever somebody visited to the LTTE-controlled areas of Sri Lanka, they would be told to provide the PIN number, and only then would they be allowed to go into the territory," said one man who didn't want to be named for fear of retribution. (CBC News)

Two shot dead Jaffna: Dec 2 - Unidentified assailants shot and killed two persons at a tea shop close to Athiyar Hindu College in Neerveli at 8 p.m. on Thursday December 1. A youth who was standing inside the tea shop was seriously wounded and was rushed to Jaffna Hospital. The victims, Mr. Kunaratnam Krishnakumar, 34 and Mr. Sinnaiyah Sivakaran, 24, had parked their Land Master tractor in front of the tea shop. Mr. K. Rooban, 24, the youth wounded in the incident had gone inside the tea shop. LTTE sources alleged that the killings were carried out by intelligence operatives working with the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and claimed that some people had heard the sound of speeding three-wheeler after the gun shots were heard. Both the victims were known to be LTTE supporters and were reportedly involved in decorating the streets in Neerveli during the LTTE's Martyrs remembrance week.

A tense situation developed as LTTE-backed hartal was called for on Friday to protest against the killings. Protesters burned barricades and blocked major roads in Jaffna as part of a general strike over the killings. "We accuse the Sri Lankan Army and the EPDP," said a leaflet handed out by a body calling itself the Tamil National Vigilance Association. "They are staging these killings in order to suppress the feelings and aspirations of our people at gunpoint."

Grenade attacks escalate in Jaffna: Dec 2 - At least seven grenade attacks were reported Friday (2) in Jaffna. The attacks

on Sri Lanka Army (SLA) positions escalated amid total shutdown in several SLA controlled areas of the Jaffna peninsula. A handbill issued in the name of "Roaring People's Force" warned that reprisal attacks on SLA soldiers and intelligence operatives would escalate if attacks against Tamils civilians continued.

On the same day, at least five SLA soldiers were wounded in four different grenade attacks in three locations in Thenmaradchi. Four Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were injured in two separate grenade attacks on a SLA camp in the northern town of Chavakachcheri, Friday (2) afternoon. Two soldiers were injured in the first attack when unidentified persons lobbed a grenade on the SLA camp, located in front of the Chavakachcheri Divisional Secretariat. At 3.30 pm two more SLA soldier were injured in the second attack on the camp. All four soldiers have been air-lifted to Palaly military hospital and receiving treatment, according to military sources who accused the Tamil Tigers of having carried out the attacks.

In Valigamam, in Kuppilan, an SLA soldier was wounded when unidentified assailants lobbed a grenade into an SLA position at Kuppilan Junction, 10 km north of Jaffna town around 7:00 pm. A grenade attack was also reported in Jaffna town, at Brown Road - Arasady Road junction, close to the Hindu Ladies College at 7:30 p.m. The grenade exploded outside an SLA check-post wounding a civilian, Mr. Shanmuganathan Sivanwaran, 35, from Erlalai. The wounded civilian was rushed to Jaffna hospital where five civilians hit by an EPDP paramilitary vehicle earlier on the day were being treated. In Vadamardchi, at 7.45 p.m. unidentified attackers lobbed a gre-

nade at the office of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) located in Manthikai. Sri Lankan soldiers providing security to the office returned fire.

LTTE targeting Tamils in France: Dec 2 - Tamil Tigers have collected some 100 million euros (120 million dollars) in a sophisticated operation targeting France's Sri Lankan immigrant community, a French newspaper reported on 2 December. Quoting French intelligence officials, Le Figaro reported that around 1,000 members of the LTTE enforce the collection of the so-called "revolutionary tax" among the 70,000-strong Tamil community.

Using threats and intimidation, they force each family to pay one euro a day for each of its members, who are registered in a computer file to ensure their payments are up to date, the report said. Death threats against family members still in Sri Lanka are commonly used to pressure families to pay up, it said.

Le Figaro reported that the Tigers were shortly to demand a 2,000-euro "loan" from each member of the community, including children, in order to replace a flotilla of speedboats destroyed in last December's tsunami.

The report said the funds were channelled into Swiss banks. A confidential intelligence memo from September, quoted by Le Figaro, says that France has become "an important rear base for the Tamil Tigers and their financing of the armed struggle in Sri Lanka". (AFP)

Fish vendor shot dead in Trinco: Dec 2 - Unidentified men on Friday (2) afternoon around 3.30 pm shot dead a Sinhala fish vendor, Mr. Hemasiri, alias Lokku Iya (57), in the market located at Anuradhapura junction, about two km off northwest of Trincomalee town. He succumbed to gunshot injuries after admission to the Trincomalee general hospital. Several checkpoints and temporary army camps are located along Trincomalee-Kandy road passing through Gandhinagar, Abeyapura and Anpuvullipuram, suburbs of the east port town.

Divisional Secretary shot dead: Dec 3 - Two motorbike-riding gunmen shot and wounded Mr. A.L.M. Falleel, the Divisional Secretary (DS) of Kattankudy in eastern Sri Lanka, at his office around 12:40 p.m. Friday (2). The senior government official who was in critical condition with gunshot injuries to his head and chest, was rushed to Batticaloa hospital, but succumbed to his injuries the following day. Kattankudy, a Muslim town, is located 5 km south of Batticaloa town.

The gunmen, who entered the DS office shot Mr. Falleel with 9 mm handgun and fled the site. The police and Muslim community leaders accused the LTTE of carrying out the murder.

New chief of peace secretariat: Dec 3 - President Mahinda Rajapakse has appointed John Henry Nihal Gunarathne, a recognized specialist on Foreign Affairs as the Chief of the Peace Secretariat, a press release issued by the President's Office said..

Gunarathne who functioned as Sri Lanka Ambassador in Iraq from 1989 to 1992 has also served as the representative of Sri Lanka in Jordan and Turkey. He is a talented writer who contributed useful articles to newspapers and other publications on terrorism and other topical subjects, it said. Gunarathne also served as Advisor of the Government delegation at the

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earlier peace talks.

The President has appointed Jayantha Dhanapala, the former head of the Peace Secretariat, as Senior Advisor to the President on future developments of the Peace Process.

Explosives found in private buses: Dec 3 - Policemen manning two road-block checkpoints detected 163 gelignite sticks from two private buses in Mannar and Murunkan, police sources said on 2 December. Mannar Police took into custody 56 dynamite sticks at Periyankadal from a private bus while it was moving from Medawachchiya to Mannar. In another incident Murunkan police seized 107 gelignite sticks hidden in a private bus plying from Kandy to Murunkan on the same day, police said. The two buses had been taken into police custody. Murunkan and Mannar police are conducting further investigations.

Muslim shot, two Tamils killed: Dec 3 - Mr. Saja Mohaideen, Thoppur Predeshiya saba member, was shot and wounded by unidentified gunmen at 2.40 pm on Saturday (3) in Muttur in eastern Sri Lanka. Mr. Mohaideen, with serious gunshot wounds, was admitted to Trincomalee Hospital. The incident took place when the victim went to his paddy field. The attackers alleged to be from the LTTE had arrived in two groups and fired Mr. Haja Mohaideen in the leg. Thoppur is a Muslim village 20 km south of Trincomalee town.

It has been reported that an angry Muslim mob had gathered following the incident and attacked the gunmen in the course of which two of the attackers were killed and one was injured. One of the two victims knifed to death was identified as Mr. Ilanko, 38, from Pallikudiyiruppu. Mr. Ramlingam, 48, with cut injuries, was rushed to Trincomalee Hospital in an unconscious state. The mob also set fire to the three-wheeler in which the attackers came. Tension prevailed in Muttur and its suburbs following violent incidents which took place Saturday (3) afternoon. Bus services were terminated and the roads remained deserted Saturday evening in Muttur.

Muslims abducted found murdered: Dec 3 - Four Muslim civilians, Abdul Majeed, Mohammed Saleem, Subayar Sada and Mohammed Buhari, all of them from Hariyanagar, Muttur area were in un-cleared areas to fetch their cattle when they were abducted allegedly by LTTE cadres on 3rd December, according to reports received by the Police. Their next of kin who went in search of the missing four the following morning (4) recovered the dead bodies of three of them lying in the jungle with the other Muslim civilian who was lying unconscious with serious gunfire injuries.

Two attacks on SLA in Jaffna: Dec 3 - A civilian passer-by was wounded when Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers returned fire following a grenade attack by suspected LTTE attackers on the army check post in Kantharmadam, close to Parameswara College Junction on Palaly Road in Jaffna around 2:30 pm Saturday (3). The civilian, Mr. L. Gopiraj, 29, from Alvaddey is being treated at the Intensive Care Unit in Jaffna Hospital, medical sources said.

On the same day, another SLA check post located in Kondavil Junction on Palaly Road came under gunfire by two motorbike-riding gunmen allegedly from the LTTE. No casualties were reported. The Jaffna-Point Pedro and Rasaveethy main roads remained blocked for traffic as a hartal had been

called reportedly by pro-LTTE organizations protesting against the killing of two persons on 1 December. Security has been strengthened in Kantharmadam areas and SLA has established checkpoints at several points in the area.

Soldiers injured in Point Pedro grenade attack: Dec 3 - Two Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers providing security to the Sri Lanka Telecom's Transmission tower based in Malusanthi in Vadamaradchy were seriously injured when suspected LTTE assailants riding in a motorbike hurled a grenade at the sentry at 6.10 pm Saturday (3). The injured soldiers have been taken to Palaly military hospital for treatment. Malusanthi is a town located 3 km southwest of Point Pedro town and lies between Manthikai hospital and Nelliady on the Point Pedro Jaffna road.

Meanwhile, a bowzer distributing water to SLA troops came under gunfire in Ariyalai, Jaffna along the Kandy-Jaffna A9 road. Although the gunmen aimed at the bowzer driver, no one was injured in the attack but the vehicle was reportedly damaged.

SLA soldier killed in Chavakacheri: Dec 3 - One Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier was killed when a tractor carrying SLA soldiers came under gunfire from suspected LTTE gunmen near Chavakacheri Hindu College Saturday (3) evening, sources in Jaffna said. Three SLA soldiers were injured in three other grenade attacks in Meesalai located 3 km from Chavakacheri. The injured soldiers were first taken to Puttur SLA camp by road and from there they were airlifted to Palaly military hospital. Two of the Meesalai attacks were carried out near the Meesalai junction and the other was aimed at the SLA camp near Meesalai.

Muttur violence death toll increases: Dec 4 - The death toll in clashes that took place in Muttur division in eastern Sri Lanka since Saturday (3) afternoon has increased to five with the recovery of three more bodies of Muslim persons Sunday (4) early morning from an abandoned well in Muttur town area. One Muslim person was admitted with cut injuries in Muttur government hospital, Muttur Police said.

In the meantime, more soldiers and police personnel have been sent to several Muslim and Tamil villages in Muttur division to prevent further violence between communities, police said. Several Muslim and Tamil families residing in the border areas of villages affected by the violence have sought refuge in safer areas in the division, police said. Normal life in the Muttur division has been disrupted. Monitors of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) Sunday (4) morning rushed to Muttur to take steps to diffuse the tense situation.

Six soldiers killed, four wounded in landmine attack: Dec 4 - Six Sri Lanka Army soldiers were killed and four wounded when a claymore mine hit their tractor Sunday (4) at 12:52 pm 200 meters south of Kondavil Junction on Palaly Road in Jaffna. Wounded soldiers were rushed to Palaly Military hospital.. SLA soldiers cordoned off the site, blocked all the traffic and carried out cordon and search operations leading to a tense situation.

Three soldiers seated in the tractor cab including the driver and three soldiers seated behind were killed on the spot. Four soldiers were wounded, according to the civilian sources. One soldier was wounded, said SLA sources confirming six deaths.

The soldiers killed in the claymore attack belonged to SLA's 51 Division in Jaffna.

Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) officials and the District Judge in Jaffna arrived at the site following the attack for which the LTTE has been blamed by the Government and the military.

CWC protests over Thonda's security: Dec 4 - The Ceylon Workers Congress has warned that the government would be held responsible for any lapse in the safety of its leader Armugam Thondaman, since it withdrew a special contingent of security personnel leaving him with only five men.

The party said Mr. Thondaman was provided 16 men from the army commando unit with a back up vehicle, but the whole contingent and the vehicle had been withdrawn. It claimed the party leader's life was in danger in the current political situation caused by the envy of political forces and the move was a serious breach of his fundamental rights.

Soldier killed in attack on army camp: Dec 4 - A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldier was killed when suspected LTTE gunmen attacked Neervely Jaffna SLA camp at 6.10 pm Sunday (4). SLA soldiers returned fire and the firefight lasted more than five minutes. The SLA camp is located near the Kopay junction on Point-Pedro Jaffna A9 highway. SLA blocked all vehicular traffic on A9 following the incident.

Protest over checkpoint in HSZ: Dec 5 - Hundreds of young persons, reportedly students, setup road blocks and protested

against the Sri Lanka Army's (SLA) attempt to construct a new checkpoint on College Road leading to Hartley College and Methodist Girls High School located in the High Security Zone (HSZ) in Point Pedro, on Monday (5) evening. As the crowd began hurling stones and missiles, soldiers fired warning shots into the air and tear gas to disperse the crowd. Members of Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) arrived at the scene to defuse tension in the area. The developing tension has forced scores of families living in the vicinity to abandon their homes seeking refuge elsewhere.

Muttur death toll rises to seven: Dec 6 - Muttur Police recovered two bodies of civilians on Monday (5) evening from the old jetty in Muttur town in eastern Sri Lanka. The bodies reportedly belonged to two of the five Tamils abducted on the previous day by a mob. Number of people who have died in violent incidents in Muttur division since Saturday (3) has now increased to seven.

Two Muslims shot dead in Kalmunai: Dec 6 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed two Muslim anglers on Monday (5) night at Maruthamunai, 34 km south of Batticaloa town in eastern Sri Lanka. Maruthamunai remained tense Tuesday when the dead bodies were recovered by the Police. Batticaloa - Kalmunai road remained deserted with no vehicular traffic. The victims were identified as Mr. Nizwan, 22, and Mr. Rizwan, 32. While the LTTE has denied involvement, Muslim leaders blamed the LTTE for the killings.

Key Karuna Group men killed: Dec 6 - In eastern Sri Lanka, a key operative reportedly from the Karuna Group, Iniyabarathy alias Barathy, was killed on Monday (5) night when the LTTE launched an attack on a group of nearly ten men which was on an ambush mission towards Kanjikudichcha Aaru forward defence post of the Tigers. LTTE sources claimed that Iniyabarathy was killed with three other Karuna cadres in the no-man zone between the Sri Lanka Army held Manthoddam and the LTTE held Kanjikudichcha Aaru, located 5 km east of Siyambalanduwa near the border of the Moneragala and Amparai Districts.

Iniyabarathy was from Kaluwankerny in Eravur, the sources said. The three Karuna cadres killed along with Iniyabarathy were identified by the LTTE as Mr. Suman from Sithandy, Eravur Mr. Thevan from Kaluwankerny, Eravur and Mr. Suresh from Vavunatheevu in Batticaloa.

US condemns Jaffna attacks: Dec 6 - US State Department Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli in a statement issued on Monday (5) condemned the LTTE's landmine attack on 4 December in which 7 soldiers were killed and called on the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to take immediate action to prevent violence and to uphold the terms of the Ceasefire Agreement. The US statement said, "The United States remains gravely concerned about persistent violations of the Ceasefire Agreement, particularly over the past few weeks. We condemn the December 4 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attack in Jaffna on a Sri Lanka Army vehicle that caused the deaths of seven soldiers. Such violence is inconsistent with LTTE claims to be committed to the peace process. We call on both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to take immediate action to prevent violence and to uphold the terms of the Ceasefire Agreement."

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Seven killed in another Claymore mine attack: Dec 6 - Six Sri Lanka Army soldiers and an SLA official belonging to the SLA Division 51-2 were killed in a Claymore mine attack by suspected Tamil Tigers on a SLA tractor in Irupalai, 5 km North east of Jaffna town on Tuesday (6) at 10:00 am. The mine blast took place 200 meters west of Irupalai junction on Jaffna-Point Pedro road. The soldiers were returning after supplying morning meals to the soldiers stationed along the streets in Kalviyankadu, military sources said. Lt. D.V.Mutugalage, Corporal B.K.Samarasinghe. Corporal K.A.Sumith Kumara, Privates K.M.P.Attanayake. K.G.Dayawansa, W.G.I.Wijetunga and H.A.S Udayasiri were the troopers who died in the claymore attack.

Gnanakone released: Dec 6 - Charles Gnanakone, an Australian citizen detained on suspicion of being connected with the assassination of former Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, has been released from custody following an undertaking given by the Attorney General to the Court of Appeal on 5 December.

The Deputy Solicitor General, Jayantha Jayasuriya, told the Court that having considered the representations made by the Counsel for Mr Gnanakone, he had decided to his release. In view of the undertaking given by the Attorney General, the Counsel for the petitioner moved to withdraw the Habeas Corpus application, which was filed by an Australian national, resident in Sri Lanka, seeking the release of Gnanakone. The petitioner, Smet, had said that Gnanakone had been arrested and detained without a reason. He had been questioned in connection with the Kadirgamar killing.

Killed for defying boycott call: Dec 6 - Two civilians who defied the LTTE's directive not to vote on November 17 were brutally hacked to death, an *Asian Tribune* news report said on 5 December. One Balasingam Premanathan, known as 'Appan', aged 30 of Pandiyankulam, 8th ward, Mallavi, formerly of Kopay was hacked to death on 19th by LTTE cadres, the report said.

The report also said that earlier, Kalwunkerni Post Mistress Komathi Veerapathiran (35) of School Road, Kalwunkerni was kidnapped and hacked to death allegedly by LTTE cadres. Armed LTTE cadres allegedly had gone to her post office in the day time on November 16 and demanded that she hand over the undelivered poll cards. Komathi had refused. Subsequently, LTTE cadres went to her house on the same day November 16 evening abducted and brutally killed her. Her body was found around 11 pm on the same day, the report said.

Vadamaradchy tense: Tension gripped Vadamaradchy area as a crowd of protesters calling for removal of checkpoints near the High Security Zone (HSZ) encompassing Hartley College and Methodist Girls High School in Point Pedro. The protesters set up road blocks using tree branches and dragging concertina fences, and burning tyres along all four roads leading to the HSZ, College Road, Vinayagamudaliyar (VM) Raod, Harbor Road and Sea Road, and blockaded the SLA camps. The Army blamed the LTTE for orchestrating the protest.

Additional soldiers and Police were brought into the area and formed a cordon around the protesters. Situation further deteriorated as parents, fearing safety of their children participating in the protests, assembled around the outer circle of SLA soldiers and police. Although tear gas was used in places

and soldiers fired into the air, there are no report of any injuries. Reportedly, protests spread to other towns in Vadamaradchy when students from schools in Nellyyady, Valvettiturai (VVT), Udupidy and Thunnalai set fire to tyres in front of their schools. Traders in most towns in Vadamaradchy closed their businesses fearing the escalating violence. It is also learnt that families resident in the area have begun to leave fearing an outbreak of fighting.

Protests to widen: Dec 7 - Jaffna Student Consortium, allegedly a LTTE-front organization, is reported to have said that they have decided to expand the protests across Jaffna district schools since the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) had not met the demands by the protesting students demanding the removal of the new check point set up near Hartley College in Point Pedro within the High Security Zone. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) members had told the students that it is unlikely that additional SLA troops brought to the Vadamaradchy region would be removed any time soon.

In Valigamam East comprising towns of Nallur, Irupalai, Kopay, Kondavil, Atchuvely and Vadamaradchy region remained deserted and businesses closed following the claymore attack in Irupalai and the unrest near the HSZ in Point Pedro. Public transport came to a standstill following the previous day's incidents.

Grenade explosion, civilian killed, seven wounded: Dec 7 - A civilian was killed and seven persons, including a Sri Lanka Army soldier, were wounded near Vavuniya bus stand around 3:45 pm on Wednesday (7) in a grenade explosion that took place on the pavement, Vavuniya Police said. The wounded, Ms. Baskaran Kamelswari, 36, Mr. Maheswaran Kamalarooban, 21, Mr. Thambirajah Chandrabose, 30, Jerald Neelameham, 25, and the SLA soldier Mr. Prasanna Jayathilake, 22, were rushed to Vavuniya Hospital. Names of the two others wounded in the incident were not available. Vavuniya District Judge Mr. Manickavasagar Ilancheliyan visited the site and ordered an investigation into the incident.

Two sisters killed in revenge: Dec 8 - Two sisters of Puhalventhan, Mrs. Yogarasa Yogeswary, 26, and Thurairasa Vathany, 17, were shot dead, Wednesday (7) night by suspected Karuna loyalists at Palacholai in Batticaloa. According to a TamilNet report, Puhalventhan, a renegade cadre from Karuna Group, had surrendered along with Gnanatheepan, his colleague, to the LTTE in Amparai, Tuesday (6). The sisters were shot in revenge as they emerged from their door to greet two callers who had entered the compound around 9:30 pm. A two years old child was seriously wounded. Eravur Police, investigating the case, said that Yogeswary's child, Usha, 02, seriously wounded and rushed to the base hospital at Batticaloa, was still in critical condition.

Reportedly, Puhalventhan and Gnanatheepan had claimed responsibility for the killing of Iniyabharathy, a senior Karuna operative.

Protests escalate in Jaffna: Dec 8 - Protest by some Jaffna University students at Kaladdy in Jaffna turned violent when Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers fired at the air and tried to disperse the protestors. The Scandinavian ceasefire monitors who tried to calm the situation had to withdraw from the site at 12:30 p.m. as they were unable to persuade SLA commanders

and student leaders to come to an understanding to defuse the situation. The protest was reportedly in support of the demands against the expansion of Sri Lankan checkpoints close to Hartley College premises in Point Pedro within the HSZ. The protests which spread to other parts of Jaffna district shut down the educational institutions. Protest leaders vowed to expand the protests in Jaffna and set-up road block at Kaladdy Junction. More than 300 soldiers were rushed to Kaladdy area in an attempt to quell the protest. The soldiers reportedly confronted the protesters attacking them with gun butts and by firing tear gas.

Muslim man shot dead in Eravur: Dec 9 - Unidentified gunmen shot and killed Mr. S. Samsudeen, 53, a Muslim civilian employed as watcher at a timber shop in Punnaikudah, 5 km northeast of Eravur town in eastern Sri Lanka on Thursday (8) midnight. Another Muslim civilian, Mr. Mohammed Asanar, 55, who was sleeping inside his restaurant, located close to the timber shop, was shot and wounded by the gunmen who came in a van. Punnaikudah is a border area between Tamil and Muslim villages. The wounded person, Mohammed Asanar, was rushed to Batticaloa Hospital.

Security measures in the east: Dec 9 - Preparations by the Sri Lanka Government to set-up the first naval base in Batticaloa district close to Eravur was revealed at a meeting between the Police officers of the Batticaloa district, a Muslim Minister and Muslim representatives in Eravur. The special meeting which took place at Eravur Ummah Mosque Friday (9) noon also discussed special security arrangements for Muslims in Eravur. Punnaikudah beach 4 km northeast of Saddam Hussain Village was identified as the location for the first Sri Lankan naval base in Batticaloa district, according to a TamilNet report quoting some Muslims who attended the meeting.

Batticaloa Superintendent of Police (SP) D.B. Ranasinghe and Eravur Senior Superintendent (SSB) M.S. Kiragala with a Muslim Non-Cabinet Minister of Disaster Relief Services, Mr. Ameer Ali Shihabdeen, met Muslim representatives in Eravur and the board members of mosque societies to discuss security measures to be provided to the Muslim community affected by a spate of violent incidents recently.

Sri Lankan police officials had said they would have a police post near each of the thirteen Mosques in Eravur, Muslim. Night-patrols by Sri Lanka Army and Police would be provided as an additional security measure in and around the Muslim villages.

Two youths shot dead in Valaichenai: Dec 10 - Unidentified gunmen on Friday (9) night shot and killed two Tamil youths in Kiran, 4 km south of Valaichenai in eastern Sri Lanka. The victims were abducted from their houses on Kali Kovil Road around 9:30 pm by the gunmen who reportedly wanted to "interrogate" the youths for having contacts with the Liberation Tigers. Valaichenai The victims were identified Jeeva Chandrasegaran, 25, and Sasikumar Krishnapillai, 31. Police recovered Jeeva's body on Kiran Road and Sasikumar's body on Vishnu Temple Road around 10:00 am Saturday (10). The bodies are kept in the Valaichenai Hospital mortuary. Kiran is located 25 km north of Batticaloa town.

Bomb attack on EPDP office in Trinco: Dec 10 - Four EPDP cadres were injured in a bomb attack on their office located along the Inner Harbour Road in front of the Trincomalee Harbour around 11:30 am Saturday (10). One cadre was seriously wounded. The injured cadres were identified as Velayudam Raghunadan (38) Joseph Abraham (58) Gnanapragasam Pulogarajan (39) and Gnanapragasam Anthony Fernando (31). The office building sus-

tained heavy damage.

Trincomalee observes general shut down: Dec 10 - Trincomalee town and its suburbs were brought to a standstill on Friday (9) following a call for a hartal (general shut down) by the Trincomalee District Tamil Peoples Consortium, believed to be an LTTE front organization, demanding the withdrawal of troops from the east port city and condemning the killings of civilians in the northeast province.

Schools were closed, and branches of public and private sector banks did not operate. Offices of the North East Provincial Council, Urban Council and Pradesiya Sabahas did not function. State and private sector run bus services came to a standstill as commuters as bus terminals were deserted. Shops belonging to Sinhalese and Muslims did open their establishments. The general market of the Trincomalee Urban Council was deserted although Sinhala vendors opened their stalls. Additional troops and police personnel were deployed in every junction of the town as a precautionary measure to ensure law and order.

India- Lanka joint naval exercise: Dec 11 - Indian Navy and the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) will stage a joint naval exercise on Tuesday, 13 December, in Lankan waters. This is the first joint Naval exercise between the two countries to exchange the naval strategies in combatting common threats faced by the two countries territorial waters close to India and Sri Lanka, Naval sources said. Vice Admiral Suresh Mehta of the Eastern Command of the Indian Navy, the second high ranking Indian Defence official to visit Sri Lanka in one week, will be in Sri Lanka today to oversee the joint exercise. Earlier the Indian Army's Eastern Commander Lt.Gen B.S. Thakar was in Colombo last week to exchange views with regard to the defence issues.

According to a press release by the Sri Lankan Navy Headquarters the joint Indian and the Lankan Navy exercise which is scheduled to commence on December 13 will continue till December 16. INS Sukanya and INS Kirpan of the Indian Navy and the Sri Lankan Naval crafts which were widely used during the North East conflict will be deployed in the joint exercise.

Claymore mine attacks increase: Dec 12 - Two Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers were seriously injured when suspected Tamil Tigers detonated a claymore mine at a foot patrol of twelve SLA soldiers in Vantharumoolai, 17 km northwest of Batticaloa town. The attack took place Monday (12) morning around 7:30 am near the Eastern University building on Batticaloa - Valaichenai main road. Wounded troopers S. Kalaratna, 23, and corporal T.M.G Appuhamy, 40, were rushed to Polannaruwa Hospital. The soldiers in the patrol opened fire following the attack.

In another incident on the same day, a claymore mine went off around 7:00 a.m. at an unmanned SLA post on Vavuniya - Mannar road at Varikuddiyoor, 12 km northwest of Vavuniya town.

A convoy of SLA and Police vehicles narrowly escaped from a roadside bomb in Morakoddanchenai, 4 km away from Vantharumoolai, on Sunday (10) evening around 5:30 pm. The bomb missed the target, a bus with 30 policemen. In another incident a civilian was wounded when two unidentified men riding in a motorbike lobbed a grenade at a road patrol of Sri Lanka Army soldiers at Pethalai in Valaichenai around 12:45 pm on Monday (12). Mr. S. Uthayakumar, 38, who was waiting for a bus, was wounded in the explosion admitted to Valaichenai Hospital.

Senior PLOTE cadre abducted: Dec 12 - A senior cadre of PLOTE operating from Vavuniya was reported missing Monday

(continued on page 41)

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Third Year Remembrance

In ever loving memory of
Mr. Canagasabai Viyakesparan on the third anniversary of his passing away on 13th December 2002.

Dearly loved, sadly missed and fondly remembered by his beloved wife Neelambal; loving sons Jivitkumar, Branavan and Senthuran; daughters-in-law Roshanthi, Ramanthi and Vijitha; precious grandchildren Manisha, Manojkumar, Ambika and Janaka; sister Viyakeswari; brothers-in-law Sahadevan, Rasadevan, Vamadevan and Nadarajah.

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Lakshmi Kuhendran In Bharatha Natya Arangetram Performance

An arangetram is a key-stage in the development of an artiste whether of dance or music. It requires years of training under an adept guru, and commitment not only by artiste, but also by the guru and parents. The preparation needed on the arangetram day too is not insignificant. It is indeed a joyous occasion when all these efforts are culminated into a memorable evening, as was on 19th November 2005 when Lakshmi Kuhendran, 15 years of age, rendered a magical evening of Bharatha Natyam, to a full house and received the accolades of those present at the Ashcroft Theatre.

Lakshmi began her career in Bharatha Natyam at the age of five under the tutelage of Subathra Sudarsan. She is well remembered for her natural talent for dancing from the young age. For the past six years, she has been training under Guru Shri Prakash Yadagudde at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London. Karnatic vocal music is a prerequisite for Bharatha Natyam dance and Lakshmi has been a student of this art form under Karnatic Vocalist Smt. Sivasakthi Sivanesan of the same institute.

At her Arangetram, she danced majestically exhibiting her mastery of the art forms. Her Guru Prakash Yadagudde is a disciple of Padma Shri Chitra Visweswaran, the legendary dancer from Chennai, who was also the Chief Guest for the evening. Shri Yadagudde also had training in Kathak and other dance forms. This enabled him to create innovative and diverse choreography combing the finesse and elegance of the different styles, which was reflected in Lakshmi's dance. In presenting Lakshmi, Shri Yadagudde was staging his fiftieth arangetram, and it was memorable to see the three generations of guru-shishya forming a Parampara present on this milestone event.

The repertoire on this particular evening gave ample opportunities to Lakshmi to exhibit her expertise. The opening item Pushpanjali, an invocation to Lord Ganesha, was written specially for her arangetram by Rajkumar Bharathi, great grandson of the famous poet Mahakavi Bharathiyar. It was a fast moving melodious composition in Mohana ragam. Lakshmi's initial entry onto the stage was unique, and her dancing blended beautifully with the music. This was followed by Alarippu in Nattai ragam, a pure dance (nritta), depicting the blossoming of the mind. It is here that Lakshmi first exhibited the power of her eye movements and perfect control of her postures.

The introduction of abhinaya occurred for the first time in Shabdham in Ragamalika. In this dance, through her graceful movements and facial gestures, Lakshmi glorified Lord Muruga, and vividly described his conquest of Valli, the gypsy girl who became his second consort.

The piece de resistance of the evening was the Varnam, the central piece that measures the training, skill and stamina of the dancer. It was a very long composition by Rajkumar Bharathi, also written specially for her arangetram. Very skilfully, he crafted together stories depicting the legends relating to Goddess Lakshmi in Ragamalika. This rare composition in praise of the eight Lakshmis - Gajalakshmi, Adilakshmi, Santhanalakshmi, Thanalakshmi, Dhaanyalakshmi, Vijayalakshmi, Veeralakshmi and Mahalakshmi - was in itself an

inspiration to Lakshmi the dancer herself. She did full justice to this demanding piece, which brought her skills to the forefront. She never let up, not for one moment, even in the faster portion towards the end of the Varnam; such was her control and discipline. Lakshmi the dancer was in fact the Mahalakshmi of the evening illustrating the dance and abhinaya in grand style and measures.

The Varnam was followed by a Kirtanam in Revathi ragam by Tanjavur Shankara Iyer, describing Lord Shiva as the embodiment of moksha. Her portrayal of Lord Shiva in the dance was magnificent and meticulous. She portrayed the reverse Natarajah, which of course is referred to in Thiruvilaiyadal - Lord Shiva has to turn and dance in the opposite way. Then the popular Padam: Enna Thavam in Kapi ragam composed by Papanasam Sivan took pride of place. This padam was full of moving expression and precise co-ordination with the music, depicting the relationship between Lord Krishna and Yashoda when he addressed her as 'Amma'

Lakshmi's dance excelled in the philosophical composition 'Kurai Onrum Illai' by Rajagopalachari. In fact the whole performance personified "Kurai Onrum Illai". Padma Shri Chitra Visweswaran, summing up the whole function said, "May the

Paramparas of Gurus from Thakshana-moorthy onwards bless Lakshmi. I can sum up this entire evening in one sentence - Kurai Onrum Illai. The ease that I saw in Lakshmi's dance is not one that is born in one jenma, but through jenmas of experience - there is someone in the past birth who has brought her to this dance. The emotion is not just in the eyes, face or gestures but is something more. That natural movement of enjoying the musical phrase is so beautiful in her - very rare in one so young. You will find them technically perfect, very precise but that spontaneous reaction to melody and rhythm is what sets the excellent dancer apart from the good. I could see the wonder in her dance and the sheer beauty in her soul, shown out through her eyes - gentle eyes that could become filled with energy depending on the character she portrayed"



The joyous end to the dance came in

the form of Thillana in Behag ragam composed by the popular musician T. V. Gopalakrishnan with the traditional ending in mangalam in Madhyamavathi ragam.

Lakshmi's training in music enabled her to interpret the dances appropriately. She was backed by a skilled and experienced orchestra in Shri Prakash Yadagudde (Nattuvangam), Smt. Sivasakthi Sivanesan (Vocal), Shri. M. Balachandar (Mridangam), Shri. Balu Raghuraman (Violin), Shri. Pitchaiappah Gnanavarathan (Flute). The compering by Dr Kandiah Sivakumar was excellent.

Her costumes were beautifully and appropriately designed. The stage décor was very apt depicting a temple with rows of small hanging oil lamps, a simple but brilliant idea, all contributing to the required ambience. Lakshmi's parents must certainly be proud of their daughter's performance and must be complimented for their dedication and love for this ancient art form. Lakshmi's tutors must be equally proud. Kudos Lakshmi!

Recent Arangetram students, especially from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan have exhibited very laudable standards. We members of the audience would like to witness many more performances by such artistes. This would mean further continuous training to higher levels. We are glad that such facilities are available at the Bhavan.

- Siva Sivananthan

Forthcoming Events

January 2006

1. Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
3. Sathurthi
4. Shashti; Vinayagar viratham ends & Thiruvembavai commences
7. Feast of St. Raymond
9. Karthigai; Vaikunda Eekathasi
11. Pirathosam
13. Fullmoon; Feast of St. Hilary
14. Thai Pongal
17. Sankadakara Sathurthi; Feast of St. Anthony
20. Feast of St. Fabian
21. Feast of St. Agnes
22. Feast of St. Vincent
24. Feast of St. Francis de

Sales

25. Eekathasi; Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul
27. Pirathosam; Feast of St. Angelea Merici
28. Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas
29. Amavasai
31. Feast of St. John Bosco

Wedding Bells

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Rajarajan son of Mrs T. Vaitheeswaran of 35 3/1, Albert Place, Dehiwela and the late Mr. Vaitheeswaran and **Sangeetha** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Sittampalanathan of 49 2/3, Nelson Place, Colombo 06 on 11th December 2005 at Sapphire Ball Rooms, Ceylon Continental Hotel, Colombo.

Her Majesty visits the Royal Borough of Kingston



[The Queen, Mayoress, Mayor and Mr. Duncan Baxter, Headmaster, Kingston Grammar School]

On 5th October 2004, our Queen visited (returned) to the Royal Borough of Kingston to open the new £ 12 million, Queen Elizabeth 11, 200 seat-Theatre and green room of Kingston Grammar School, located in the heart of Kingston town. There was a sea of Union Jack flags and happy people to welcome the Royal visitor. The last royal visit to the school was about 44 years back.

The Queen was received by the first citizen of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, The Worshipful Mayor Yogan Yoganathan and Mayoress Saro Yoganathan, both Srilankans, resident in the borough for over 35 years.

SriLankan Bharathanatya Dancers Greet Her Majesty



Smt Annapooranam Sathiyamoorthy, Founder Head of the London Meenatchi Natya Palli was greeted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at the Eastham Langdon School, where Her Majesty was warmly received by a group of dance students of the Dancing School on 19th October 2005. The occasion was Her Majesty's visit to the Olympic Park – a 500 acre site that would include an 80,000 seat stadium, Acquatics centre and an Olympic village among various other facilities for the 2012 Olympic games in London. Smt Annapooranam was the dance teacher at the Anuradhapura Vivekananda Tamil Maha Vidyalaya and Alaveddy Arunodhaya College.

(continued from page 38)

(12) noon. Unidentified persons riding in a van allegedly abducted the senior cadre, a central committee member of PLOTE. Meanwhile, three men riding in a van were arrested by the Police around 1:30 p.m. at Kidacheri in Vavuniya. The police alleged that the arrested persons were involved in the abduction of the PLOTE operative. Mr. Sinnathamby Ganeshalingam alias Farook, a senior cadre and central committee member of the PLOTE, was abducted when he was riding in a motorbike between Sithamparapuram and Samanankulam, 8 km southeast of Vavuniya town.

20 policemen injured in Grenade attack: Dec 12 - Twenty police officers including a sub-inspector were injured when suspected Tamil Tigers lobbed a grenade into the Pesalai police check post in Mannar district Monday (12) night around 7.30 p.m. At the time of incident police officers were attending a class inside the police post. Pesalai is located about 14 km off Mannar town. A contingent of police party from Mannar on receipt of information rushed to Pesalai and took all the injured, some of them seriously, to the Mannar district hospital. They are now warded in the hospital with tight security around the hospital premises and wards.

Two shot dead in Kiran in Batticaloa: Dec 13 - Unidentified gunmen who entered a house in Kiran in Batticaloa district Monday (12) night abducted two men at gunpoint, shot and killed them 500 meters away from the house. The victims, Mr. Thambirasa Thambymuthu, 29, a father of two children, from Eravur and Mr. Chandran Kandasamy, 22, were taken away by the gunmen who wanted to "interrogate" them around 9:30 pm. The incident took place near Parankiarmadu school, 2 km from Kiran which is located 25 km north of Batticaloa town. □

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