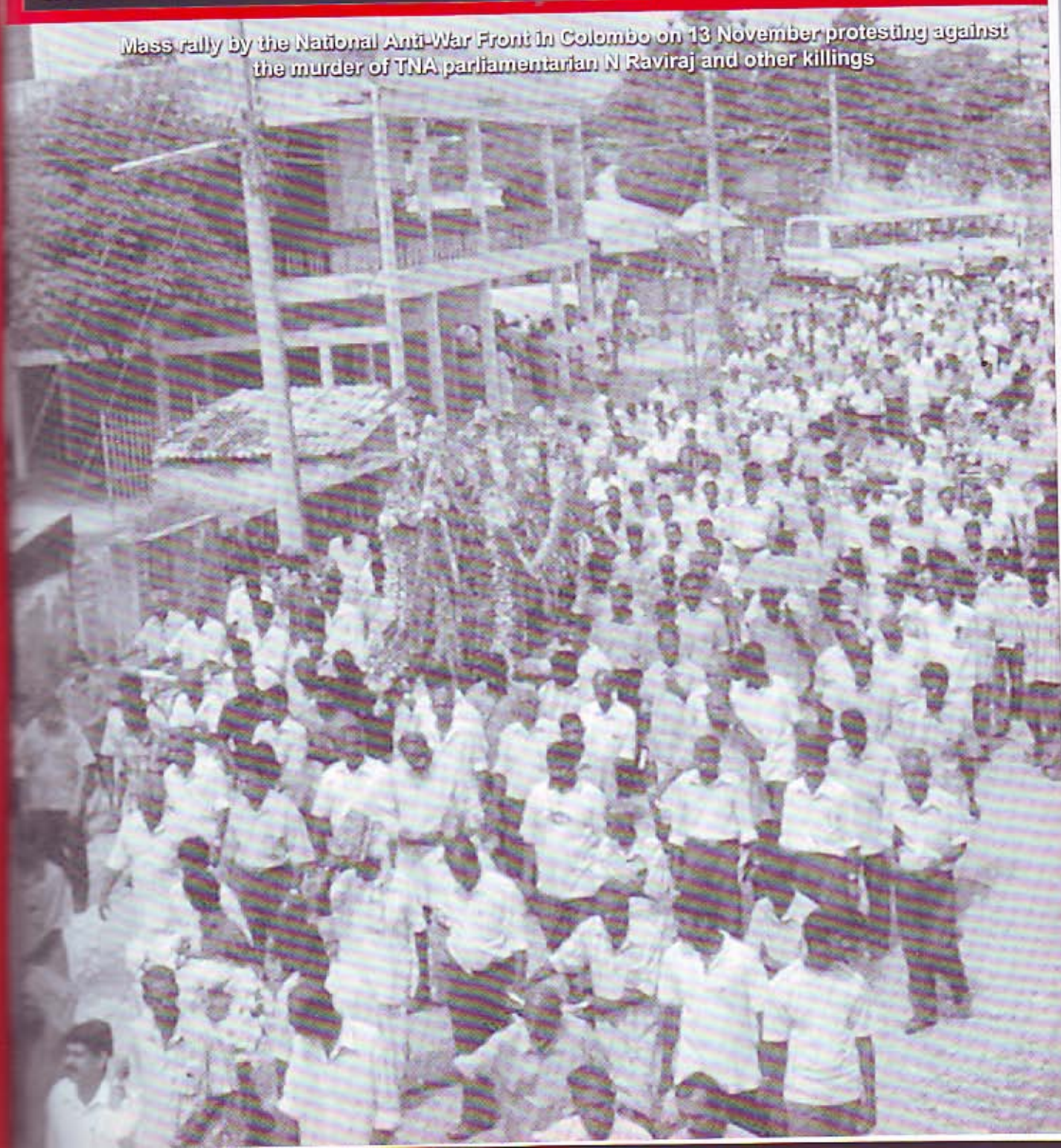


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Mass rally by the National Anti-War Front in Colombo on 13 November protesting against the murder of TNA parliamentarian N Raviraj and other killings





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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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Rock puts Sri Lanka in the Dock

It is almost one year since Mr Mahinda Rajapakse became President elected by a narrow margin thanks to the LTTE which enforced a boycott of the presidential election in the Northeast thereby depriving the Tamil voters from casting their ballot to his rival candidate Ranil Wickremasinghe. It is also almost one year since the LTTE leader; in his Hero's Day speech of November 2005, declared that the LTTE would intensify its 'liberation struggle' in the ensuing year.

Ever since, there has been an undeclared war between government forces and the Tamil Tigers reducing the ceasefire agreement to a mere piece of paper. The SLMM which was inducted to oversee a ceasefire has turned out to be a mere spectator of an undeclared war. At least 3300 persons from all sides - government forces, Tamil Tigers and civilians - are reported to have been killed since November last year.

The occasional clashes between the parties escalated further into an almost full blown war in August this year both in the northern and eastern fronts. The shutting down of the water facility at Mavil Aru in the east (which deprived water to tens of thousands of people) by the LTTE in July this year became the excuse for the military to carry out offensive military operations to capture Muttur and Sampur which came within LTTE-controlled territory. These operations and the ongoing fighting between the parties have displaced tens of thousands of people who are living in refugee camps with very limited access being permitted to receive humanitarian aid.

In the northern front, the unsuccessful attempt in August this year by the LTTE to make a forward thrust into Jaffna across the Muhamalai forward defence lines of the Sri Lankan military was followed by the closure of the A9 road at Muhamalai which is the only land route between the mainland and the Jaffna peninsula. The continuing closure of this route has severely disrupted essential supplies including food and medicine to the beleaguered people of Jaffna who are facing the threat of starvation. The LTTE remains opposed to the transport of supplies to Jaffna by sea and insists that the military entry/exit point at Muhamalai should be reopened for access to and from Jaffna. In the absence of security guarantees forthcoming from the LTTE, the ICRC and other UN humanitarian agencies have refused to escort the transport of essential supplies to Jaffna by sea. The supplies that the Government are transporting by sea escorted by the Navy have proved to be inadequate. As the standoff between the Government and the LTTE continues, the humanitarian crisis affecting the people of Jaffna is also growing. Hence it is time the parties avoid seeking to politicise the issue or view it from their military agendas and facilitate the opening of the A9 route for humanitarian convoys and provide parallel guarantees for the ICRC and other aid agencies to safely transport essential supplies by sea to the beleaguered civilian population of Jaffna.

Then there was the indiscriminate and reckless shell attack by the Sri Lanka military on a refugee camp for displaced people on 8 November at Vakara in the east of the country. The attack which left over fifty civilians dead and over 135 injured deservedly provoked widespread outrage and strong condemnation. The international human rights organisation, Amnesty International was "appalled that the military should attack a camp for displaced people - these were civilians who had already been forced from their homes because of the conflict," and was "particularly saddened and shocked to see such a large-scale attack on civilians." AI called on the "Government of Sri Lanka to initiate an immediate inquiry by international

and independent human rights experts into this incident and all serious violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law."

The excuses given by the military that it targeted a facility from which the Tamil Tigers had mounted an artillery attack upon the security forces and that the Tigers had used the civilians as human shields. These excuses have not been accepted as true based on the available evidence. Even if there was any substance in the excuses given, the attack breached basic principles of humanitarian law - principles of limitation; avoidance of unnecessary suffering and damage; distinction between military and civilian targets; proportionality and military necessity. Therefore the attack represents either a war crime or crime against humanity or a combination of both in respect of which the military must be held accountable.

While abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings have continued unabated as a matter of routine in the war-torn Northeast, in recent months there have been reports of many cases of abductions and disappearances which have taken place in Colombo and its suburbs. Most of those abducted in the Colombo region, some for ransom and others for political reasons, have been Tamils. It is intriguing that not even a single person has been caught by the police so much so strong allegations are being made that the culprits responsible for these abductions in Colombo are elements within the security forces or groups allied to them.

It is in this backdrop that the cold-blooded assassination of Tamil National Alliance parliamentarian, Nadarajah Raviraj, was carried out on the morning of 10 November near his residence in broad daylight on a public highway by two gunmen riding a motorbike. This senseless murder which is nothing but an act of unvarnished terrorism must be condemned without reservation in the strongest possible terms. Predictably there was widespread outrage and condemnation, both from within the country and internationally, at the brutal murder of this affable and easily accessible lawyer-turned-politician who was popular among all sections of the people across the communal divide. The sheer audacity of the killing is illustrative of the atmosphere of impunity that prevails in the island. Already fingers are being pointed at elements within the security services and at other Tamil groups working closely with them for the MP's murder. It is the duty of the Government to cause a proper and thorough investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Even as the global spotlight was turning on Sri Lanka in the context of a near collapse of the entire fabric of human rights and humanitarian protection and the rule of law, the shocking revelation that elements within the security services have been complicit in aiding and abetting the Karuna Group in the recruitment and use of child soldiers could not have come at a worse time for President Mahinda Rajapakse and his government.

Allan Rock, the Special Advisor to the United Nations

Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on Sri Lanka, at the conclusion of his 10-day mission to the island, "found strong and credible evidence that certain elements of the government forces are supporting and sometimes participating in the abductions and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna faction."

According to Mr. Rock government soldiers rounded up young Tamil children to be recruited by the Karuna group. Troops travelled to Tamil villages and photographed children who were later forcibly enlisted by the Karuna group which worked closely with security forces in the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Ampara. Speaking of instances of women wanting to poison their children rather than see them conscripted, he said, "The complicity of the security forces with the Karuna group is common knowledge. It corrodes respect for rule of law and creates space for more LTTE abductions of children."

The LTTE too came under criticism from the UN official who said that the Tigers had failed to keep pledges made to UNICEF on under-aged recruitment. "The LTTE has not complied with commitments under the action plan to stop child recruitment and release all the children within their ranks. Under-age recruitment continues and the LTTE is yet to release several hundred children as verified by UNICEF," he said.

The charge by the UN Advisor that government forces are guilty of complicity in assisting the enforced recruitment of child soldiers has sent shock waves across political and media circles in Colombo. The Government which has been using the issue of child soldiers as its most powerful weapon to hit at the LTTE for this abominable practice denounced in international law as a war crime now finds itself most uncomfortably in the same dock.

The reaction from the international community to this latest revelation is bound to be not very kind. "The Hindu" in one of its reports quoted a western diplomat as saying, "We are shocked that a section of the security forces, whose government is actively engaged in a campaign against the practice of use of children for combat by the LTTE, is now photographing children in villages and facilitating the Karuna group to do the same thing. This is totally unacceptable. If unchecked, the international community might be left with little option but to consider sanctions."

The seriousness of the situation in Sri Lanka demands an urgent and robust response from the international community, more specifically from the human rights community. The convoluted and cumbersome hybrid mechanism in the form of a domestic Presidential Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights violations overseen by an International Group of Eminent Persons (IGOEP) that is on offer from the Government is not an adequate substitute for the setting up of a UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission that is required in the case of Sri Lanka. □

NEWS REVIEW

British envoy on peace Mission to Sri Lanka

Nov 16 - : In the backdrop of escalating violence and the peace process approaching virtual collapse, special British peace envoy Paul Murphy who arrived in the country on Tuesday (14) has been meeting the political leadership of the LTTE in Kilinochchi on Thursday (16) in an attempt to revive the process. The special envoy of British Prime Minister Tony Blair was briefed by envoys of the Co-chairs to the Tokyo donor conference in Colombo. He also met the acting SLMM spokeswoman Helen Olfsdottir, according to a British High Commission spokesman said.

He has also met the Government's four-member peace negotiating team and discuss the tottering peace process with President Mahinda Rajapakse.

In regard to Mr Murphy's visit to Sri Lanka, a statement from the British High Commission in Colombo said, "The Right Hon Paul Murphy MP will visit Sri Lanka between 14 and 16 November. Mr Murphy was the Cabinet Minister responsible for Northern Irish affairs between 2002 and 2005, and was closely involved in the Northern Ireland peace process. He previously served as Political Development Minister for Northern Ireland. He is currently the Chairman of the British Intelligence and Security Committee. He will be accompanied by Mr Christopher MacCabe, the British Joint Secretary of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat.

"While in Sri Lanka Mr Murphy will meet a range of key participants in the Sri Lankan peace process and share his experiences of building peace in Northern Ireland. His visit follows a meeting in August where British Prime Minister Tony Blair discussed with President Mahinda Rajapakse ways in which the UK could support the Norwegian facilitated peace process."

Asked if the ban on the LTTE did not prohibit Murphy from meeting the LTTE in Kilinochchi, a High Commission official said when attempting to create peace the ban did not create an obstruction noting that even the IRA was banned when the British Government pursued peace with the now democratic

outfit.

Murphy and Christopher MacCabe met the LTTE's political head S.P. Thamilselvan at the LTTE peace secretariat on Thursday (16).

Speaking to reporters after meeting with the head of the LTTE's Political Wing, Mr. S. P. Thamilselvan at the LTTE's Political Headquarters in Kilinochchi, Mr Murphy said, "I was asked to come by the Prime Minister of Britain to give our experiences in Northern Ireland where I was Secretary of State for many years to see if people in Sri Lanka can learn from our experiences."

Peace talks can succeed only if "everything is on the table and there is respect for all points of view," Britain's former Northern Ireland Minister said after meeting Tamil Tiger officials. Saying there is a "huge comparison" between the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, Mr. Murphy said: "no one can win this kind of war, we have the same message for the Sri Lankan government as the LTTE: keep searching for a solution, ensure the ceasefire agreement is one of integrity, renounce violence and ensure there is a proper look at everything that can bring peace."

Saying that he had a useful meeting for nearly two hours," he told reporters "I will be reporting back to Tony Blair on the points that have been made here [in Kilinochchi], and the points that have been made in Colombo as well."

Paul Murphy, said that it is important for parties in the conflict to always keep open lines communication with each other. "We urge parties to keep the lines of communication open. This was the case even during the worst times of conflict in Northern Ireland,"

Emphasising that there were no winners in this kind of war Murphy said, "The war absolutely cannot be won by either side," he said.

Sri Lanka's conflict can be solved if there is genuine will on both sides, he said adding that there were "striking similarities" between the Northern Irish and Sri Lankan cases. The numbers of people killed in the two conflicts are proportionately the same. In Northern Ireland, 3,500 people out of a total population of one million were killed in the con-

flict. In Sri Lanka, the figure is 65,000 out of a population of 20 million.

Discrimination and human right issues were prevalent during the Northern Ireland conflict and remain so in the conflict in Sri Lanka, he said. "There were cases of discrimination and real conflict in Northern Ireland [also]," Mr. Murphy, who co-chaired the peace talks there for two years, said.

"No one can win this type of war. Everybody understands that and if there is a will for peace then there are all sorts of ways in which our experiences in Northern Ireland can help," he said.

"Everything has to be on the table, it has to be an inclusive process, everybody has to be involved and there has to be equal respect for everybody," he said.

Murphy said that any peace process would have to be inclusive. "Listen to views of all parties and take on all subjects for discussion. In Northern Ireland we looked at everything - constitutional arrangements, language, human rights, humanitarian issues, equality, police, criminal justice; all those issues were on the table," he said adding "Above all, equal respect for everybody's point of view."

Church leaders seek Indian help

Nov 14, IANS - Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has been urged by church leaders in Sri Lanka, #s north to 'sidetrack the past' and come to the rescue of Tamils in Jaffna peninsula reeling under serious shortages.

The Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Diocese of Jaffna has made the written appeal to the prime minister, with copies sent to Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi.

"We do accept that your country has had sad experiences in respect to her efforts towards our problem," said a letter from the Diocese to Manmohan Singh that has been made available to IANS.

"We appeal to your magnanimity to sidetrack the past and to your ingenuity to treat them positively as experiences for seeking new approaches," the letter said, in a clear reference to the assassination of former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi at the hands of a Tamil Tiger suicide bomber in 1991.

"We urgently appeal to you to play your role and exert your leadership impartially and justly as a powerful and true neighbouring nation whom almost

all look up to as the only saviour of Sri Lanka," said the letter, signed by the chairman and secretary of the Diocese.

The letter says, making a reference to 'physical hunger' that many reports say has enveloped Jaffna in the wake of a road blockade enforced by Colombo ever since a highway linking the mainland to the peninsula was shut in August, "Not only we but the whole world including Norway ... acknowledges that only your nation and its leadership can save this country and lead it towards a just solution, recognizing the rights of Tamil nationhood..."

"We appeal especially at this juncture when the population as a whole here in Jaffna is already sliding towards a slow death not only through physical hunger but by being deprived of most of the needs for minimal human survival, growth and social life."

Tigers object to Indian food aid

Nov 13 - The LTTE sees danger to its vital interests in the Government's plan to bring food from India to Jaffna to mitigate the severe food shortage there. Its military spokesman, Rasaiah Ilanthirayan, has reportedly said the Government's plan was a clever device to divert attention from the issue of re-opening the A9 main highway at Muhamalai, which is at the southern doorstep of Jaffna.

Ilanthirayan said that if there was a severe shortage of food in Jaffna, it was only because the Government had closed the A9 at Muhamalai. The closure of the road at this point was preventing the supply of food from the Wanni, an area south of Jaffna which is under the control of the LTTE, he said.

"We have enough grain in the Wanni to meet at least 50 per cent of the needs of the people of Jaffna. But we are not able to bring the supplies because the A9 is closed at Muhamalai," Ilanthirayan said adding, "The best solution would be to lift the barriers at Muhamalai and allow food to come from the Wanni and South Sri Lanka." Opening the A9 would obviate the need to get supplies from abroad, he said.

However, the SL government is determined not to open the A9 at Muhamalai because it fears infiltration of the LTTE from the Wanni. The Government had suggested an alternative land-cum-sea route through Pooneryn and the Sangupitty jetty on the Jaffna lagoon. But the LTTE rejected the route saying

that the Sangupitty jetty as well as the Pooneryn road were in a very bad shape.

Since the LTTE is not happy with the idea of getting food from India, the 5,000 tonnes of rice, 1, 500 tonnes of sugar and 300 tonnes milk powder, which India is ready to send as a "one-time gift", cannot be brought. Without a security guarantee from the LTTE, shippers will not undertake the task. Adding to the shippers' fears are the recent sea battles in the northern seas off Point Pedro and Kankesanthurai, in which a passenger ship with 308 people on board was caught.

The food will have to be off loaded at Kankesanthurai or Point Pedro, which have become a theatre of naval warfare.

But given the mounting pressure from the Sri Lankan Government as well as Tamil Nadu politicians, the Government of India is keen on supplying food to Jaffna and would like the LTTE to allow it.

It is learnt that New Delhi would like the LTTE to appreciate the need for such supplies for two reasons: Firstly, there is an emergency in Jaffna, where, since August this year, people have been getting only about a fourth of their daily needs of essentials, and that too at astronomical prices; and secondly the supply from India is only an "one-time gift" and New Delhi has no plan or intention to continue supplies with a view to solving the food problem in Jaffna or to divert attention from the issue of re-opening the A9.

Army distributes food items in Jaffna

Nov 15 - The Government in a statement issued on 15 November said, "Amidst other duties and continuous tiger attacks, the Sri Lanka Army undertook to distribute essential food items in Jaffna following LTTE threats on private traders not to operate in the area. 'None of the private traders are allowed to operate by the LTTE' the Essential Services Commissioner General, Mr. S. B. Divaratne said. According to ground sources, food items had been distributed through cooperatives which were easily influenced by the LTTE. 'We will not allow only cooperatives to operate' Mr. S. B. Divaratne said. The Army will continue to assist in distributing food items equally among civilians.

The Army has already established six grocery stores in the Jaffna peninsular for the benefit of civilians who had no

option other than to buy goods at exorbitant prices due to extortion by the Tigers. Goods at outlets opened by the Sri Lanka Army are sold at Colombo prices. The revenue generated is sent to the Government Agent of Jaffna.

According to the Ministry of Finance, The Government has ferried an air lifted 31,360 metric tons of food items to Jaffna up to 14th November 2006. The Government began transporting essential food items by sea and air since 15th August this year. The Transportation of food items and movement of civilians along the A9 road was disrupted following the tiger attack on the Muhamalai forward defence lines on 8th August this year. A total of 16 voyages and 6 Air Force Flights have transported these food items to Jaffna so far. Air Force Flights from Ratmalana to Jaffna have air lifted around 118 MT of essential items. The Navy, despite facing fierce tiger suicide attacks at sea, continues to provide protection to all cargo ships carrying food items to Jaffna. Cargo ships sail with a Navy escort as the ICRC refused protection. According to Mr. Divaratne, finding ships was a challenge due to the security risks.

According to the Ministry of Finance a total of 12,742 MT of rice, 8546 MT of flour, 3479 MT of sugar, 1612 MT of dhal and 526 MT of milk food has already reached Jaffna. 1,191,600 litres of diesel, 169,000 litres of petrol and 263,400 litres of Kerosene has also been dispatched to Jaffna."

Jaffna GA wants A9 opened

Nov 15 - The government cannot fulfil its pledge made to the UN of maintaining sufficient food supplies in Jaffna if the A9 remains closed, government officials in the peninsula said.

The government informed the UN recently that it was planning to maintain a month's requirement of supplies in Jaffna to avoid shortages. In order to keep the buffer the government needs to transport 10,000 metric tonnes of food and supplies per month.

However Jaffna Government Agent, K. Ganesh is reported to have told journalists that it would be difficult to transport 10,000 metric tonnes of food by only using the sea lanes and said that the A9 would have to be opened if the food situation in the peninsula is to return to normal.

"The people in Jaffna are starving. Food sent by the government is not dis-

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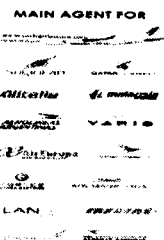
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tributed for free. Civilians are forced to buy the food. It takes days for food to reach the peninsula if it is transported via sea. Sending 10,000 metric tonnes via sea per month is not possible," he said.

The government had in August pledged to transport 25,000 metric tonnes of food within three months. However by the end of October, only 19,000 metric tonnes of food had reached the Peninsula, leaving half a million civilians on the verge of starvation. Due to the lack of food supplies, civilians in Jaffna have also been forced to have one meal a day and many women and children are now suffering from malnutrition. Amidst warnings that malnutrition and other starvation related illnesses could be chronic in the northeast, UNICEF has undertaken a survey in the area.

A9 closure a CFA violation, says SLMM

Nov 5 - The SLMM has severely criticised the government for the continuous closure of the A9 and called for its immediate opening. SLMM Head, Lars Solvberg who arrived in the country from Europe is also expected to hold discus-

sions with President Mahinda Rajapakse this week, urging him to reopen the A9.

"The government is clearly violating the Ceasefire Agreement and they have trapped more than half a million civilians within the Jaffna Peninsula. The A9 should be opened immediately" acting SLMM Spokesperson, Helen Olafsdottir said.

The SLMM had earlier informed relief agencies that the opening of the highway was one of their current top most priorities. They added while the government continued to ignore the pleas of aid agencies to open the A9, they would continue to mount pressure and hold discussions with the government till such time the gates were opened.

"We were expecting the government to discuss the opening of the A9 highway at the Geneva talks. We do not know what the government's intentions are by keeping the A9 closed," she said.

Minister Keheliya Rambukwella had during the previous week said that the government was willing to open the highway if the LTTE gave an assurance of stopping all attacks. The SLMM however has warned that violence has once

again started to rise after the conclusion of the Geneva talks.

"Both parties do not seem to keep to their word as there has been a steep rise in violence since the conclusion of Geneva 2. We will continue to pressurise both parties to stop violence as there are already too many violations committed by both sides," Olafsdottir said.

Meanwhile, according to the Asian Centre for Human Rights (AHRC), due to the closure of the A9 and the halt of essential supplies to the peninsula, child specialists attached to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital warned that many of the children in Jaffna were affected by malnutrition as the provisions sent by the government were inadequate and could only fulfill 25% of the entire nutrition requirements.

Jaffna Government Agent, K. Ganesh said that while there were queues outside the Jaffna Hospital each morning, urgent medical care was needed in the peninsula. He added that the food provided by the government was insufficient and would last only for a month due to which there was continuous concern about starvation.

"Food is coming in but in very small amounts. Since they are transported by ship, it takes days to reach the peninsula," Ganesh said.

Exacting unbearable human cost

Nov 10 - The National Peace Council of Sri Lanka in statement issued on 10 November states: "The unbearable human cost of the ethnic conflict has surfaced once again in a brutal form in the killing of between 23 and 60 civilians and injury to between 135 and 600 others in Vakarai in eastern Sri Lanka. The figures vary because of the propaganda war and the inaccessibility of LTTE-controlled territory where this attack has taken place. This incident has to be taken together with other incidents of bombings, abductions, killings and displacement, including the fighting at sea in which several naval and LTTE vessels were destroyed and a passenger ship placed in jeopardy.

"The National Peace Council condemns the Vakarai attack especially as it has killed and injured innocent civilians, including children, who were internally displaced due to earlier fighting and had taken refuge in schools. It is clear that Government forces were responsible as the artillery fire came from government-controlled territory. We welcome President Mahinda Rajapaksa's decision to ask for a military inquiry but we demand that the government should conduct an independent inquiry and to take disciplinary action against those responsible for this humanitarian catastrophe.

"We are also greatly grieved at, and condemn, the callous assassination of Nadarajah Raviraj, Member of Parliament for Jaffna District, who was killed in Colombo along with his bodyguard. It was only the day before that he had been in the forefront of a protest demonstration in front of the United Nations Office in Colombo about the humanitarian crisis in the country. Next week he was scheduled to participate in a public event organized by the National Peace Council and other civic organizations that sought a public dialogue on peace between political and religious leaders. Raviraj was always prepared to engage with like and unlike-minded persons inside and outside Parliament with dignity and with great courage.

The intensification of the violence is

an indication of the continuing belief in a military solution to the conflict between the government and LTTE. We are saddened that three decades of bitter experience has not taught the present leaders of the country that the military option is an unviable one, and an inhuman one, not befitting of a civilised and democratic society. The danger exists that the latest incidents will lead to retaliation in a like or more severe manner. We therefore ask that even at this late stage the government and LTTE make a declaration to cease hostilities to enable a more realistic dialogue on peace to take place.

An unfortunate and dismal aspect of the situation is that both sides have shown scant respect for humanitarian and human rights norms. And yet, the present situation has so much positive potential if only our leaders would commit themselves to a political solution. The government and main opposition party have committed themselves to a bipartisan approach to the peace process, and an all party conference is on the verge of presenting a proposed political solution. There is a need for people of goodwill, both locally and internationally, not to be discouraged but to continue to work positively on the government and LTTE to stop the military action and to negotiate a solution peacefully."

Disquiet in India over Sri Lanka killings

Nov 12 - By M.R. Narayan Swamy - The rockets and shells that rained over eastern Sri Lanka killing about 25 distraught Tamil civilians may also have killed India's dragging patience over Colombo's military belligerence. Friday's cold-blooded assassination of a Sri Lankan Tamil MP has only worsened matters.

It is a remarkable achievement for Colombo that its seemingly unapologetic killing of Tamil civilians including children has forced Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi to demand a "re-think" on India's Sri Lanka policy.

Only weeks ago Karunanidhi fell foul of the Tamil media sympathetic to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by stating that his Sri Lanka policy was no different from New Delhi's. Clearly, things have changed.

There is also growing disquiet among Sri Lanka watchers in India over the way events are unfolding in the island, whose President Mahinda Rajapakse is to come

here this month for his second trip in a year.

Some feel the visit could not have been more badly timed, as it follows the Nov 8 death of some 25 people, including children, when the military fired artillery shells and rockets at a school housing a large number of Tamils displaced by earlier fighting. About 60 were wounded. The area was LTTE-controlled Vaharai in Batticaloa district.

International condemnation was swift. Sri Lankan officials offered mumbling regrets.

Two days later a gunman, widely linked to the government, shot dead N. Raviraj, a popular MP from the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA), near his Colombo home. He was the second TNA MP to be assassinated after Joseph Pararajasingham, who was shot dead in a Batticaloa church last year.

Pararajasingham's killers were never caught - and it is most likely this is what would happen with Raviraj's assassin too.

Among all the players in Sri Lanka's barely alive peace process, it was the US reaction to both events that was most striking. There was no disguising the punches. It was perhaps so because there is a widespread feeling that Colombo's actions arise perhaps from Washington's full support to it vis-a-vis the LTTE.

In response to the Batticaloa deaths, the US urged Sri Lanka "to conduct an immediate, independent investigation" and "bring the responsible ... to justice". After Raviraj's murder, the US sought "an immediate investigation" and asked Colombo to "arrest and prosecute those responsible on the most urgent basis".

On both occasions, the Indian government offered no comments.

It was left to Karunanidhi to ask a pertinent question: How long is India going to keep patience?

Karunanidhi's concern, expressed after the Batticaloa killings, was formally conveyed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by DMK colleague and central minister T.R. Baalu. In response, the prime minister reportedly said that he was equally concerned over the "human tragedy" and would take up the issue with Colombo.

It is the only indication that the Indian leadership may have a heart-to-heart dialogue with Rajapakse when he arrives here later this month. Only two months ago, Manmohan Singh met Rajapakse in Havana but the situation has deteriorated

since then.

Sri Lanka watchers and even some in the establishment are now convinced that Colombo is oblivious to New Delhi's repeated requests to spare Tamil civilians, who are the worst hit in this year's violence spree in Sri Lanka that has left over 2,000 people dead.

Also worrying is the not-too-disguised official backing to undo the merger of Sri Lanka's northern and eastern provinces. The merger was a product of the 1987 India-Sri Lanka pact that for the first time dented the island's unitary face in the form of provincial councils. That the system has not performed admirably is another matter.

Although a serious issue, it looks far less menacing compared to the unbridled killings. Adding a twist to that is the rights group UTHR's revelation that the Sri Lankan military command structure has been tampered with and that some soldiers no longer answer their superiors but are utilised as mobile killer units, targeting LTTE/Tamils. If true, Sri Lanka is going the Latin America way.

For generations, Sri Lankan Tamils have been the most pro-India ethnic group in the sub-continent for more reasons than one. The LTTE's dominance changed that. But should innocent Tamils (and innocents of other ethnicity) be allowed to die so callously in a war that has no military winner? Should India remain silent? — IANS

Fierce sea-battle in the north

Sri Lanka, Nov. 9 – Contradictory claims and counter-claims marked the fierce sea battles between the Sri Lankan Navy and the Tamil Tigers that took place on Thursday, 9 November off the northern coast of the Jaffna peninsula.

In the sea battle off Point Pedro, the LTTE captured four Sri Lankan sailors, and an Israeli made Dvora gunboat with all its weapons, LTTE's military spokesman Rasaiah Ilanthirayan said.

"We boarded one of the Dvoras, captured four of the sailors, and removed all the weapons including a 23 mm cannon, five PK machine guns, an automatic grenade launcher and a Point 50 heavy machine gun which can be used against low flying aircraft," a report in the Hindustan Times said quoting Ilanthirayan who spoke to the reporter over the telephone from Kilinochchi.

He said the Tigers killed 25 sailors, damaged several navy vessels, and said the Tigers had lost only five boats of

their own and losing five cadres in the bid to board a Dvora.

According to Ilanthirayan, the fight began when the Sri Lankan Navy intruded into the "Tamil Homeland's" territorial waters and interfered with the Sea Tigers while they were carrying out routine exercises. "We cannot tolerate any intrusion into our territorial waters. We do not mind sacrificing any number of lives to safeguard our sovereignty," he declared.

Asked if the fighting in the Point Pedro-Kankesanthurai seas would not prevent the supply of food from India to Jaffna, Ilanthirayan said that by seeking food from India, the Sri Lankan government was trying to divert attention from the issue of re-opening the A9 main supply route at Muhamalai.

However, Sri Lankan military claimed that it sank 22 boats belonging to the Tigers in a fierce sea battle, killing dozens of Tigers as they tried to sink a passenger ship full of refugees.

At least 20 sailors were also reported missing, after a Sea Tiger boat loaded with explosives rammed into two navy gunboats and blew up, said Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe, a military spokesman.

The military said that a cluster of Tiger boats was veering toward the "Green Ocean," a passenger vessel transporting 308 civilians from the island's east to the northern Jaffna peninsula, when the navy spotted the boats and moved to intercept them.

In the subsequent battle, the navy sank eight rebel boats, while air force helicopter gunships and fighter jets sank 14 more, Brigadier Samarasinghe said. A typical Tiger boat carries a crew of 4 or 5.

It is known that both sides routinely exaggerate the number of casualties inflicted on the other, and independent verification of the toll is rarely possible.

Civilian passengers and supplies have been transported to the north by sea since August, when ground battles between government forces and the Tigers intensified, forcing the closure of the only land route linking the north to the rest of the island.

The civilian vessel was unharmed in the battle, Brigadier Samarasinghe said. "This is yet another instance in which the Tigers exhibited their callous disregard for the lives and the well-being of Tamil civilians," the defence ministry said in a statement.

"We did not use any suicide boats,"

Ilanthirayan said, denying defence ministry reports that a Tiger explosive-laden boat rammed one of the gunboats.

He also denied defence ministry allegations that the guerrillas were targeting a civilian passenger ferry carrying 308 passengers from the northeastern port of Trincomalee to the Jaffna peninsula further north.

"We deny the allegation made by the defence ministry," he said. "We were on a routine exercise when the navy tried to interfere with a small flotilla of ours. That is how the fighting started."

In less than 12 hours after the sea battles off Point Pedro, Tamil Tiger sources claimed that they had attacked and destroyed a Sri Lankan navy gunboat off the island's eastern coast. A Dvora gunboat was destroyed off Trincomalee just before dawn, with residents seeing the craft in flames after hearing a huge explosion. The fate of the crew was not immediately known, but officials said about 10 to 15 sailors were believed to have been onboard. Navy officials in the area also confirmed that the Tamil Tigers had attacked the craft.

Canada's call to renounce 'terrorism'

Nov 7 - Calling on the LTTE to renounce terrorism and violence, the Canadian Federal Government last week pointed out that the LTTE must demonstrate a willingness to make compromises necessary for a political solution within a united Sri Lanka.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Foreign Minister Deepak Obhrai making a special statement at the Canadian House of Commons last Friday urged the parties to build on the opportunity to commit to a further round of talks on the heels of the concluded Geneva session which he termed as commendable.

He said: "Canada calls on the LTTE to renounce terrorism and violence. It must demonstrate that it is willing to make compromises necessary for a political solution within a united Sri Lanka."

"We also call on the democratically elected Government of Sri Lanka to continue its efforts to resolve the current impasse and create conditions for talks to continue."

Obhrai has expressed that this call on the Government includes addressing credible allegations of human rights abuses against the Security Forces. "Canada continues to believe there can be no military solution to this lengthy

conflict. We urge the parties to work toward a negotiated settlement which satisfies the legitimate aspirations of all Sri Lankans."

Canada is one of the leading countries which has intensified operations to curb and take action against LTTE fund raising on their soil. A recent string of raids on LTTE linked organisations in Canada and the US and arrests of several suspects have handicapped the LTTE operations in North America.

Allies push Delhi role in Lankan strife

Nov 11 - Along with the ceremonial welcome he gets on his visit to New Delhi later this month, Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse will be given something which he has not asked for: a briefing on India's rising concern over the killing of innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka.

With the DMK joining the chorus of other parties in Tamil Nadu demanding India's intervention in the Lankan crisis, the Centre appears to have been forced to step down from its cultivated aloofness and acknowledge the damage in its south neighbourhood.

Shipping and Surface Transport Minister TR Baalu, who met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi's messenger on Friday (10), said that the Prime Minister had assured him that the matter would be discussed with external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee and taken up with Sri Lanka.

Except for the J Jayalalithaa-led AIADMK, all the parties in Tamil Nadu have been raising a hue and cry over the "brutal killing of Tamils in Sri Lanka by the Sinhalese army." Karunanidhi, who had been a vociferous supporter of the Tamil Eelam till the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, preferred not to join the chorus, evidently because of his relationship with the Congress.

But the Sri Lankan army's bombing of a refugee camp in Vaharai in eastern Lanka on Wednesday (8), which left some 65 civilians dead, had Karunanidhi deciding to not only to push for Indian intervention but also to make it be known that he is instrumental in breaking India's inertia on the Lankan ethnic strife.

"I wish to bring to the notice of the Central government the pertinent question, which has now arisen; as to how long India is going to keep patience. The time is now ripe to rethink and find an answer (to the ethnic strife),"

Karunanidhi has said.

While the pro-Eelam parties such as Vaiko's MDMK and Thol Thirumavalavan's Dalit Panthers have always been demanding India's interference in the Lankan issue, DMK's ally PMK has shrilled its pitch after Lankan forces bombed an orphanage in the LTTE-controlled Mullaitheevu, killing 61 children. Karunanidhi knows he cannot remain silent when Tamil sentiments peak.

While TR Baalu met the Prime Minister, Karunanidhi is understood to have asked his nephew and Union minister Dayanidhi Maran to brief UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi on the inevitability of taking such a stance. DMK organising secretary TKS Elangovan is candid when he tells DNA, "Karunanidhi's statement is for public consumption. We have been conveying our concerns within the UPA for sometime."

Erik Solheim slams Army for unprovoked shelling

Nov 9 - Norwegian International Development Minister Erik Solheim, after talking to the Head of Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission Major General Lars Johan Sølberg, who narrowly escaped from the Sri Lanka Army shelling while inspecting the Pooneryn jetty on Wednesday (8), told the online edition of VG, the largest national paper in Norway, that the shelling was launched after the former Norwegian Army Commander, had arrived at the site and it was gradually directed towards the delegation. "The most serious [act] is that the army fired at this level towards an unprovoking target," Mr. Erik Solheim told the paper describing the episode as a highly dangerous situation.

There was clear sight, Erik Solheim told the paper adding that it was impossible to misunderstand the situation. The army was in advance informed of the meeting which was about inspecting the pathway that has been damaged.

SLA fired artillery shells started to hit the ground first at 100 meter distance, but gradually the shells began approaching the delegation, at closest 50 meter from the Head of Mission. One of the vehicles was pushed off the path due to the air pressure caused by the artillery shelling, the paper said.

Solheim, describing the experienced 54-years-old Norwegian Major General as a "quiet and calm" person said the Head of Mission feared for his life while he came under artillery fire.

Meanwhile, in an interview to the Norwegian state owned NRK Radio, Erik Solheim said: "there is no doubt that shells were aimed gradually to kill those who were there. Probably those who fired did not know that they were shelling at the Norwegian observers."

"However, it is a very, very serious situation, where the Sri Lankan government soldiers have fired to kill unarmed people," the minister told NRK.

Commenting on the attack on refugee camp in Vaharai Solheim said it was a violation of what parties promised in Geneva ten days ago. Attacking unarmed people who were not provoking and attacking internally displaced people in which many women and children are reported to have been killed, is a violation of the cease fire agreement which both sides claim that they are observing, he told the radio.

Hospital damaged in Kilinochchi bombing

Nov 3 - On the 2nd of November 2006 at about 2pm, the Government of Sri Lanka's (GOSL) Air Force carried out bombing raids on Kilinochchi. In the course of so doing, at least 16 bombs had been dropped. The GOSL had confirmed the fact that air strikes had been ordered on Kilinochchi.

At the time of bombing there were about 700 out patients and 300 in-patients at the hospital. Soon after the bombs exploded, there was widespread panic in the hospital and during confusion many patients were escorted out by their relatives. In addition, many who were receiving intravenous treatment pulled out the tubes and ran out of the hospital. It was all a sad human tragedy.

All hospital services came to a standstill and patients have been deprived of medical treatment. As a result of the bombing close to the hospital, three patients and three employees of the hospital have suffered minor injuries, while five civilians have been killed.

Though the hospital was not directly hit, the bombs that fell about 300 to 500 metres from its boundary damaged some of the hospital quarters, and fragments of the bombs and other bomb impacted materials were strewn around the hospital premises.

Five civilians, which included two students, their father, uncle and an aunt were killed when their house 500 metres east of the hospital was destroyed. The victims were identified as Murugesu

Markandu, 62, his brother Murugesu Shanmugarathinam, 56, and sister Rathinam Sarawathy, 59. Two sons of Mr. Shanmugaratnam, S. Sasi, 20, and S. Krishanth, 18, both studying GCE A/L, were also killed and their house was fully destroyed.

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TNA condemns bombing raid

Nov 3 - The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has condemned the bombing raid carried out by the Sri Lanka air force on Kilinochchi in northern Sri Lanka. In a press release issued in Colombo on 3 November, the TNA said, "On the 2nd

of November 2006 at about 2pm, the Government of Sri Lanka's (GOSL) Air Force carried out bombing raids on Kilinochchi. In the course of so doing, at least 16 bombs had been dropped. The GOSL has confirmed the fact that air strikes had been ordered on Kilinochchi. Whilst the GOSL has insisted that the said strikes had targeted confirmed LTTE military installations, confirmed reports prove otherwise.

"In fact, the said air strikes had dropped the bombs within 500 meters of the newly built Kilinochchi General Hospital at Anandapuram. Extensive damage had been caused to the Hospital, resulting in all the patients and staff of the Hospital evacuating the premises. The patients included the seriously ill, the seriously injured due to previous military actions by the GOSL, pregnant women and mothers with newborn babies. The GOSL air strikes had also completely destroyed a civilian dwelling. At least five civilians have been killed."

The press release further said, "The TNA condemns this serious violation of International Humanitarian Law by the GOSL. The Military operations by the GOSL Armed Forces in the North-East, have been conducted with callous disregard for the safety and the security of Tamil civilian life and property. The TNA wishes to point out that this incident is the latest, in a very long list of similar incidents where the GOSL has acted in gross violation of the Ceasefire Agreement, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law."

Govt has no power to act against Court's verdict

Nov 8 - The Government has no power to act against the ruling of the Supreme Court (SC) that the merger of North and East Provinces was illegal, Rātnasiri Wickramanayake, the Sri Lankan Premier and Deputy Minister of Defense announced in the Parliament on Tuesday (7) while submitting a special report explaining Sri Lankan Government's stand on the issue.

Excerpts from Premier's speech follow:

"The North and East provinces were temporarily merged in 1987 in compliance with the Indo Sri Lanka Peace Accord. The Sri Lankan Parliament should have endorsed the decision and merged both Provinces permanently under Article 154 of the Constitution. According to the Peace Accord, the terrorists and armed groups should have surrendered

their weapons and entered the mainstream politics. Nevertheless, that did not take place and on the contrary, killings and anti-democratic activities continued. As a result, a non-conducive atmosphere prevailed to submit the bill in the Parliament and get endorsement.

"Based on these facts, the High Court too gave a verdict and cancelled the merger. The Government will never act against this verdict. Neither the Government nor terrorists can merge North and East. The merger should be done with the consultation of the people of East in a referendum.

"The terrorists also violated the Cease Fire Agreement reached in 2002 when Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunge was Sri Lanka's President.

"As the North and East Provinces remained merged so far, the rights of voting and other democratic rights of the people of East were denied. The de-merger restored their rights.

"The Government suggests three mechanisms to administer the North and East provinces. Firstly, de-merges both provinces and administer them as single units. Secondly, submit a Bill in Parliament in compliance with Article 154 of the Constitution to decide either to administer both provinces together or separately. Thirdly, Parliament should decide the reasons for merging two or more provinces together when necessity arises," said Mr Wickramanayake.

At the conclusion of the speech, Wimal Weeravanse, JVP Parliamentarian, questioned the Premier whether North and East are to be administered separately in the light of the verdict of the Supreme Court.

The Premier said that both the provinces were administered separately at present and actions were underway to divide the provincial head office based in Trincomalee.

Muslims Welcome NE de-merger

Oct 27 - The de-merger of the North East is not a solution to the ethnic conflict even though the Muslims welcome it. Former Deputy Minister and SLMC High Command Member M. L. A. M. Hisbullah said Thursday that the Muslims were naturally happy about the de-merger, since they had not been consulted before the two provinces were merged. He said the de-merger has resulted in the LTTE having to talk to the Muslims.

"The LTTE will no longer be able to

ignore Muslim aspirations and grievances. They would have no option but to include Muslim representation in talks pertaining to the future of the two provinces."

Hisbullah said that since the Muslims have no problem with the de-merger of the North-East it was upto interested parties to move in the matter if they wanted the status quo changed.

He stressed that regardless of what happens the SLMC's position on a Muslim Administrative Unit remains unchanged.

"Whether the North and East remains de-merged or is re-merged at a later date, our request for a Muslim Administrative Unit stands", he said.

The Supreme Court on October 16 declared the merger of the North and Eastern Provinces invalid, null and void. The petitioners, three members of the JVP, were granted the entitlement to elect a Provincial Council for the Eastern Province under Article 154(a)(2) of the Constitution of Sri Lanka.

TNA calls on Govt to uphold 1987 merger

Nov 7 - It was the duty of President Mahinda Rajapakse's government to uphold the merger of the northern and eastern provinces as it constituted Sri Lankan state's recognition of the Tamils' historical existence as a people living in the Northeast of the island by the establishment of the Northeast province in 1987, the Tamil National Alliance Parliamentary Group leader, Mr. R. Sampanthan, said on Tuesday, 7 November during a debate in Parliament on the extension of the Emergency.

The TNA had earlier issued an ultimatum to the Government to the effect that, unless it clarified its position Tuesday, November 7, all the TNA Members of Parliament would boycott attending parliament.

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court last month declared the merger of the two provinces effected in 1987 null and void.

"We submit that it is the duty of this Government to take the necessary action to restore the status quo ante pertaining to the merger," Mr. Sampanthan said. "Procedural or technical flaws in regard to the process of merger cannot be an excuse for the non-merger," he said, in reference to the Supreme Court ruling which had identified certain errors in the procedure followed in effecting the merger.

"There is a duty cast upon the President to uphold the course of action

adopted by each one of his four predecessors over a period of 18 years," Mr. Sampanthan said.

Moreover, he noted that the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement "did not make the constitution of the Northern and Eastern Provinces as one administrative unit having one Provincial Council conditional upon the fulfilment of any other event."

"There is a duty cast on the President to fulfill Sri Lanka's obligations under an International Treaty signed with neighboring India."

"Technical grounds cannot be a valid excuse for non fulfillment of Sri Lanka's obligation under an International Treaty," Mr. Sampanthan said. International law stipulates a state "may not invoke the provisions of its internal law as justification for its failure to perform a treaty" with another state, Mr. Sampanthan said, referring to the 1969 Vienna Convention, the Law of Treaties.

If the Government makes the appropriate decision, I have little doubt this Parliament will support such a measure to restore the status quo ante," he said. "We urge the Government to act in this matter without delay," Mr. Sampanthan said.

"We appeal to India and the International Community to appreciate that the restoration of the status quo ante relating to the merger is an indispensable concomitant of the peace process and urge that they contribute their best efforts to ensure that the same is done at the earliest."

"It was the struggle of the Tamil people in the North-East for substantial self-rule, which brought about new Constitutional arrangements," he pointed out.

"The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the subsequent legislative measures and arrangements were the consequence of this struggle and were intended to accommodate legitimate Tamil aspirations," and "any contrived dismantling of the North-East merger would remove the corner stone of the peace process. If such a situation continues, the peace process must inevitably crumble," he said.

"The concept of a Tamil linguistic region first came about in 1957 under the Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam Pact which provided for the creation of regions in the Northern and Eastern Provinces and for the amalgamation of regions beyond Provincial limit," he said. "If the BC Pact was implemented this would have become a reality in 1957."

He pointed out "the Northern and Eastern Provinces enjoy the same linguistic character under both the 1972 and

1978 Constitutions and Tamil is the language of administration and the courts, whereas in all the other Provinces it is Sinhala."

"The linguistic contiguity continues through the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Even the present Constitution recognizes that the majority of inhabitants of both the Northern and Eastern Provinces are Tamil speaking."

Sri Lanka in the league table of corruption

Nov 7 - Sri Lanka has managed to stay just above the bottom half of the league table of 163 nations of the world in the Corruption Perceptions Index, according to the annual evaluation report produced by Transparency International, a Berlin-based graft watchdog. In the report released on Monday, 6 November, Sri Lanka scored 3.1 out of a possible 10.

Finland, Iceland, and New Zealand tied for the first with the near perfect score of 9.6. Haiti, Myanmar and Iraq were the bottom three, with scores below 1.9.

"Corruption traps millions in poverty," said Transparency International Chair Huguette Labelle. "Despite a decade of progress in establishing anti-corruption laws and regulations, today's results indicate that much remains to be done before we see meaningful improvements in the lives of the world's poorest citizens."

"Countries with a significant worsening in perceived levels of corruption include: Brazil, Cuba, Israel, Jordan, Laos, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and the United States. Countries with a significant improvement in perceived levels of corruption include: Algeria, Czech Republic, India, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Mauritius, Paraguay, Slovenia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uruguay," the report said.

Transparency International also said in its website that "TI will launch its 2006 Global Corruption Barometer which looks at public perceptions of the level of corruption in major institutions such as the courts, parliament and the police. The Barometer is published in anticipation of International Anti-Corruption Day, 9 December 2006."

Threat against civilian targets

Nov 6 - A suspected Tamil Tiger front organisation has threatened to attack civilian targets including hospitals and

(continued on page 41)

ANNIVERSARY BLUES

One year forward, twelve years backward

Rajan Philips

As he completes his first year as President, Mahinda Rajapakse has taken the country back to its bad and dangerous past that many of us thought ended for good in 1994.

The People's Alliance victory in 1994, after a decade of war and violence; had signaled a sea change in the Sinhala political leadership - a sincere readiness to address the Tamil question through a constitutional change. That change was best exemplified by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. That sincerity and readiness could not be translated into peace as fighting between the army and the LTTE resumed in 1995 after a few months of ceasefire.

The ceasefire agreement of 2002, under Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe's initiative, raised even stronger hopes of a permanent peace, while the Oslo Declaration by the government and the LTTE negotiators promised the search for a political solution predicated on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka.

Within one year as President, Mahinda Rajapakse has abrogated the ceasefire with the LTTE all but in name, and swept back the south into the hands of ethnic chauvinists and military extremists.

To indict Mahinda Rajapakse seemingly so severely is not to let off the LTTE any lightly. The LTTE has contributed as much as the Sri Lankan Army and the anti-LTTE groups to the current stalemate of violence. All of them stand thoroughly condemned in the light of UN Ambassador Alan Rock's devastating findings.

As the Head of a State that purports to include, protect and provide for all the people of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapakse should be held to a higher standard of accountability. The scary aspect of the Rajapakse regime is that there is no apparent southern alternative to it in the near political horizon. The regime's subordination of the political to the military

suits the LTTE just fine because, as an organization, the LTTE needs to fight to survive. When there is no fighting the LTTE suffers like a fish out of water.

Even at the worst moments between 1983 and 1994, there was reason for hope of a progressive southern alternative to the then militarist UNP. Vijaya Kumaratunga more than anyone else personified this hope and his brutal killing by the perpetual enemies of peace did not dampen this hope. Instead it inspired the emergence of the People's Alliance as the alternative to the UNP.

Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ranil Wickremasinghe both created opportunities for peace and political solution but wasted them by failing to work together. Despite their adolescent inability to cohabit, Kumaratunga and Wickremasinghe never wavered in their commitment to devolution and federalism as the framework for a political solution. And after the ceasefire agreement of 2002, all the while squabbling with each other, they scrupulously avoided any misstep towards a return to hostilities with the Tigers.

The first year record of Mahinda Rajapakse is a consummate reversal on both fronts while trying to be too clever by half. It is clear that government is clearly bent on using the military stick as severely as possible while pretending to offer political carrots mainly to deal with international criticisms.

On devolution and federalism, the furthest that Rajapakse has shown that he is willing to go is to offer "maximum devolution within the unitary constitution." Even this did not come about as a result of his own conviction but only as a result of the compulsion of India and the Co-Chairs.

Like J.R. Jayewardene between 1984 and 1987, Rajapakse has started a circus of consultation to achieve the elusive southern consensus. What more consensus is required when the two main southern parties, the UNP and the SLFP, are

both committed to a federal solution?

Even within this charade of consultation, Rajapakse appears to have given power and prominence in decision making to those who are opposed to any form of devolution. For example, the lawyers who argued the case in the Supreme Court against the North-East merger are also among his advisers on constitutional reform and his delegates at the peace talks. Running with the hare and hunting with the hound, you might say.

Of course there are others with a solid record of supporting a federal transformation of the state, but so far they have mostly been seen and not heard. And even when they are heard, they are heard only on such peripheral platitudes as the Panchayats and the Official Languages but not on the core issues of devolution.

Two anniversaries and one Court judgment

I wonder whether Mahinda Rajapakse was delighted or disturbed by the Supreme Court judgment setting aside the executive order recurrently issued by all of his predecessors merging the North and East Provinces. Questions have been raised about the priority given to hearing this case while cases filed against the imposition of High Security Zones by the army in Jaffna are still waiting to be heard. There have also been questions about the status granted by the court to lawyers appearing against the application to quash the executive order for merging. As well, rather than following the old dictum that justice must not only be done but must also appear to be done, the court appears to have diminished its own credibility by choosing a five-member, 'pan-Sinhalese' bench to hear an ethnically sensitive case. Just recall the damage done to ethnic relations by the 1931 pan-Sinhalese Board of Ministers under the Donoughmore Constitution.

The more substantive critique of the Supreme Court judgment, in my view, is about its rather unlearned and hypocritical use of the principle of 'equal protection before the law' as the premise for considering the arguments before it. I say 'unlearned' because the Court chose to apply this principle under a veil of innocence about the ethnic particularities that manifestly suffuse the question it dealt with. It is one thing to imagine such a veil of innocence for thought experiment pur-

poses as John Rawls did in his celebrated *Theory of Justice* (not to mention that Rawls has been criticized specifically for this limiting idealization), but it is quite a different matter when a court chooses to be oblivious to the ethnic facts in deciding a political case that was in fact provoked by conflicting understandings of those very facts.

More importantly, the court's emphasis on personal rights, as opposed to collective rights, flies in the face of current political and judicial thinking in plural societies. The approach now is to positively use the obvious tensions between the individual and collective spheres while appreciating that for minorities in a plural society the recognition of their individual rights will bear meaning only if their collective rights as a minority are affirmed and respected at the same time.

The premise is also hypocritical in being part of a judgment delivered in the fiftieth anniversary year of that infamous thirteen-word "Act to Prescribe the Sinhala Language as the One Official Language of Ceylon" that was the ultimate violation of the principle of equal protection. So the one time the Sri Lankan

Supreme Court invoked the principle of equal protection to decide a political question it ruled in favour of protecting the majority Sinhalese from the minority Tamils. The judgment therefore came as the bitter icing on the Fiftieth Anniversary Cake of Sinhala Only Act as well as the First Anniversary Cake of the Rajapakse presidency.

Prospects for the next five years

The political question after this unwise judicial activism is how Mahinda Rajapakse as President going to deal with the question of Northeast merger. The President could easily meet the procedural requirements laid down by the Court and maintain the merger with the help of UNP support in Parliament. Alternatively, he could propose to the LTTE, other Tamil groups, and the Muslims two new units – one a contiguous Tamil unit including the Northern Province and the Tamil majority districts of the Eastern Province and a separate Muslim unit including the Muslim areas of the Eastern Province.

He would rather seem to take cover

under the pseudo-democratic device of a referendum and leave it to the people of the Eastern Province to decide the matter. There is also mounting pressure on the President to insist that the North-East matter should be decided not just by the people of the Eastern Province but by a plebiscite of the entire country. Plebiscites offer a practically convenient mechanism for decision making in a democracy only where there is a *priori* and normative consensus on the organizing principles of that democracy. Sri Lanka manifestly lacks such a consensus at the present time and the situation in many parts

of the country can hardly be considered democratic.

The crucial question for a political solution is about the unit of devolution. President Rajapakse or any of his many advisers have yet to say anything at all about the unit of devolution. Some of us have been, for whole inaugural year of the Rajapakse presidency, making the case for replacing the unpopular and discredited Provincial Council system in the South with a more efficient system of administrative decentralization. We have also pointed out that regardless of the situation in the South there is no alternative to implementing political devolution in the North and East. The recent British experience of devolution – with devolved units in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland without any devolution in England, offers an excellent example for Sri Lanka.

It will not hurt for President Rajapakse to ask Prime Minister Blair for advice and assistance in regard to devolution. And it is more than likely that Mr. Blair, looking to leave the international stage on a high note after his disastrous nadir in Iraq, would be more than willing to help out his Commonwealth colleague. The question though is how serious is Mahinda Rajapakse about devolution and to what extent he is prepared to subordinate the military to the political.

If the first year of the Rajapakse presidency is a taste for the next five years to follow, it is difficult to be optimistic about Sri Lanka's future. The fact that he has just now raised the military budget by 45% clearly shows where his mind is and where he is putting his money in. The military obstinacy of the government is also patent in its handling of the A-9 closure. It is illogical and immoral for a government that waged undeclared war on the LTTE on humanitarian grounds over the Mavil Aru closure, to now refuse to reopen the A-9 roadway despite the humanitarian traumas of half a million people trapped in the Jaffna peninsula.

The Rajapakse government is clearly not in a mood to learn from the experiences of Northern Ireland, Kashmir, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq that military options do not solve any problem but only aggravate the old problems and create new ones. Until there is a change in the government's, or rather the President's thinking Sri Lanka will be deepening for the next five years the hole that it fell into this first year of Mahinda Rajapakse's tenure. □

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TNA MP Raviraj murdered in Colombo in broad daylight

Nov 11 - The Tamil National Alliance MP from Jaffna district, Naradharah Raviraj, and his bodyguard Sgt. Lakshman Lokuwella from Gampaha were shot dead in broad daylight at about 8.39 am in Colombo on Friday, 10 November.

The assassination took place against the backdrop of rising abductions, disappearances and killings that have raised alarm in international human rights circles.

The slain Member of Parliament was the second high profile member of the Tamil National Alliance, seen as the LTTE's political proxies in parliament, murdered since December.

The spot where the shooting occurred was in close proximity to the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and the Registrar of Motor Vehicles Department. There were many people who saw the shooting and have come forward to give information, according to Police sources. "We have received a lot of information and vital evidence is available as some items have been left behind. We are confident of a breakthrough," a senior Police official said.

Raviraj was shot close to his residence in Manning town Naradenpita. The Jaffna MP had returned home after a discussion - interview on "Derana" TV from 7.00 am - 7.30 am. He had quickly changed clothes, had breakfast and started out again to his law office. Raviraj a lawyer by profession had his own law firm: "Raviraj and Associates".

Though the MP had his own driver the man was on leave. The driver had requested a further extension of leave a few days before the killing. According to Raviraj's brother-in-law, the MP had then told the driver good-humouredly "Even if I die you can have your leave".

The TNA Parliamentarian had first tried to use his wife's car but finding the battery had run down chose to use his own vehicle. Raviraj had asked his bodyguard Sgt. Lakshman, a native of Gampaha, to get in and climbed into the drivers seat.

The Toyota Landcruiser Prado bear-

ing the No WP KE 1279 was then slowly driven along Martha Road by Raviraj. The vehicle was turning into Elvitigala Mawatte when a motor cycle numbered JE 3507 came near from the opposite side. Two men with helmets were riding it. One got down from the pillion, removed his helmet, went across and stood on the pavement. He had a shoulder bag.

Raviraj's vehicle was cruising along very slowly when the man tore apart the bag he was carrying and started firing. The weapon was a T-56. The assassin did not pull the gun out but fired while it was yet inside the bag.

The assassin fired away at point blank range on Raviraj's vehicle from the front, side and rear. Reportedly an entire magazine was emptied in the firing. The gunman then ran quickly and climbed on to the motor cycle pillion again. The assassins had then turned into Martha Road and sped away. The bag containing the T-56 as well as the helmet of one rider were found on the side of the road.

Police also say that a three-wheeler parked close to the spot had also driven away after the shooting. It is suspected that the three-wheeler driver was a "look-out" for the assassins and had tipped them off by mobile telephone about Raviraj's vehicle. Raviraj was hit five times and Lokuwella eight times. Both victims were taken to Colombo National Hospital speedily. Lokuwella was pronounced dead upon admission.

Raviraj was in critical condition and urgent surgery was done but Raviraj was dead at 9.20 am. Hospital sources said the MP was "clinically dead" even when admitted.

Within an hour of Raviraj's death Police officials cordoned off the Mannington flats and conducted a search operation.

Meanwhile President Mahinda Rajapakse has instructed Inspector-General of Police Victor Perera to conduct a speedy probe into the killing. The IGP in turn has authorised Colombo DIG Pujitha Jayasundara to undertake the investigation. Rajapakse, who is said to be a

personal friend of the slain Raviraj, has also initiated steps to bring in Scotland Yard detectives from Britain to assist in the investigation.

Raviraj is the second Tamil National Alliance MP to be assassinated within 12 months. Veteran Eastern Province Parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham was shot dead last year at the St. Mary's Cathedral in Batticaloa during midnight mass for Christmas. Joseph was returning to his pew after partaking of Holy communion from Batticaloa Catholic Bishop Rt. Rev Kingsley Swampillai when the assassins came from near the altar and shot him dead in full view of the terrified congregation.

Rajavarotheyam Sampanthan, leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) told the press, "Raviraj's assassination is a clear attempt by the paramilitary operating with the Sri Lanka Army to stifle the Tamil parliamentarians' voice in and out of the Parliament to inform the International Community of the Sri Lanka Government's genocide against the Tamils." Sampanthan further said, "Almost an year has passed since the assassination of Batticaloa parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham and the Sri Lanka government is yet to bring the killers to book. This reveals the covert connections the government has with them."

Mr. Raviraj, a former Mayor of Jaffna, was elected to parliament from his hometown Jaffna. During his short tenure as MP, he played an active role as a champion of Tamil rights. He participated in television debates where he was seen as the voice of the Tamils and was in the forefront of protest rallies against human rights excesses. A day before his tragic death at the hand of a mystery killer, who managed to escape after committing the heinous crime, he attended a TNA demonstration outside the United Nations' Colombo office, carrying a board which read "UNHCR-UNICEF why are you silent" (over the killing of scores of Tamils in Vakarai in the Army shelling on Wednesday and the worsening humanitarian situation in Jaffna).

Though he was a member of the TNA, a political mouthpiece of the LTTE, he had criticised the rebel group, especially on issues related to children in the north.

In an interview, Mr. Raviraj said that LTTE leader Prabhakaran's children were leading a comfortable life abroad, but poor Tamil children had to wait in long queues all day to get a loaf of bread with-

out even going to school.

"This is the sad plight that has befallen thousands of children living in the country's North. While children of big-wigs live a plush comfortable life on foreign soil. That includes the children of LTTE leader Prabhakaran," he said.

LTTE leader Prabhakaran has conferred the group's highest award, 'Mahamanithar' (Great Human being), on Mr. Raviraj for his work and dedication with which he served the Tamil people. "In recognition of, Mr Nadaraja Raviraj's love of freedom, his patriotism and his services to our freedom struggle, I am proud to bestow the title of Mamanithar on him. Death never destroys the great souls who lived their lives for truth. They will live for ever in our nation's soul as heroes of our history," Mr. Prabhakaran said in a statement.

Condemnation

The assassination of the firebrand TNA parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj has drawn widespread condemnation from leaders, political parties and the international community.

The president, Mahinda Rajapakse, condemned the killing calling it a "cowardly and heinous act" by "those opposed to dissent and political pluralism in a democratic society." He described Mr. Raviraj as "very good friend whom he had known for a long time" and a courageous and active politician. He could speak in Sinhala, Tamil and English fluently and was able to present his views very clearly before the people. The President said that this assassination of Mr. Raviraj shows every indication of being a deliberate and well planned attempt to bring the country and the Government in to disrepute; it was also a serious move to create obstacles to the efforts being made to bring about better understanding among the different communities in the country, in the search for peace and harmony.

Opposition UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe called for an independent inquiry into the killing of TNA MP Nadaraja Raviraj saying the death would not only be mourned by his supporters in Jaffna but all right thinking people in the country. "I condemn the brutal assassination of Mr. Raviraj and his security officer. This is the second killing of a member of parliament within one year. The police have so far not apprehended the killers and it is of paramount importance that an independent inquiry be con-

ducted to apprehend the culprits," Mr. Wickremesinghe said describing the slain politician as a visionary leader."

The UNP leader recalled he had known the late Mr. Raviraj as a person who worked tirelessly for a peaceful settlement of the national question and consistently advocated that the two sides should engage in serious negotiations with a view to finding a lasting solution.

Leader of the TNA Parliamentary Group R. Sampanthan in a statement said Mr. Raviraj was the second MP of the Alliance to be killed in a space of one year. The other was Joseph Pararaja singham who was gunned down in a church in Batticaloa on Christmas eve. "His killing, like very many others, was yet another addition to the long list of killings of Tamils in various walks of life. The persons who commit these crimes do so with impunity. They have the confidence that the arm of the law will never catch them."

The United States has deplored the assassination of TNA parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj. A press release from the US embassy in Colombo said, "The United States deplores the assassination on November 10 of Mr. Nadarajah Raviraj, member of the Sri Lankan Parliament. We express our deepest sympathy for this loss to the family of Mr. Raviraj, to his parliamentary colleagues, and to the people of Sri Lanka, who have been unjustly robbed of his energy and talent.

It is critical that crimes such as the murder of Nadarajah Raviraj not go unpunished. We urge the government to begin an immediate investigation into the circumstances of his killing and to find, arrest, and prosecute those responsible on the most urgent basis."

TULF leader, Mr. V Anandasangaree expressing his deepest sympathies to Mr Raviraj's family "vehemently condemned the brutal killing". Saying that a decent society would not condone the culture of killing of those holding opposite political views, he said that Mr. Raviraj was a fearless and outspoken politician. He has had the courage to assume the responsibilities as Acting Mayor of Jaffna at a time when no one was ready to assume the responsibilities, under the death threats from the LTTE, which had already assassinated the two of his predecessors, Mrs. Sarojini Yogeswaran and Mr. Sivabalan.

The Federation of All Mosques and Organizations in Eastern Province

(FAMOEP), in a statement expressed its deep sorrow over the death of Mr. Nadarajah Raviraj, and said "Muslims of North East revere Raviraj as a Tamil leader who had given an important place in his heart for the well-being of Muslims."

The statement said that FAMOEP severely condemned the brutal assassination of Raviraj in daylight in Colombo and demanded the Sri Lanka government to conduct an impartial investigation and to bring the culprits before the court of law without fail. The FAMOEP further requested the government to take immediate steps to halt gruesome and brutal killings of innocent persons now taking place in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Raviraj worked tirelessly for the liberation of Tamil speaking people in the North East and also vehemently advocated the unity of Tamils and Muslims. He openly expressed regret in public platforms for the suffering the Muslim people had undergone in the North East during war period, the statement added.

The London-based Tamil Information Centre said in a statement that it "condemns the assassination of Jaffna District Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj today. The assassination is another in a series of cold-blooded murders targeting prominent members of the Tamil community who publicize human rights violations against the Tamil people. The assassins wore police uniforms and emptied the entire magazine of a T-56 rifle into the car which he was driving, to make sure that he would not survive. Raviraj's security officer Lokkuwala Murage Luxman, 36, who is a Sinhalese from Gampaha was also killed in the attack.

The death of Raviraj is a blow to the cause of human rights, a great loss for Sri Lanka and an ill omen for democracy. Two other parliamentarians were similarly assassinated, but no investigation has been carried out."

"The Island" in its editorial (11/11) said, "It is with shock and sorrow that we note the brutal assassination of TNA (Tamil National Alliance) MP Nadaraja Raviraj and his security officer. That cowardly act of terrorism must be condemned unreservedly by one and all. The identities of his killers and their motive are not known but it is believed that he was killed for political reasons."

"Raviraj was not what he looked. He may have been vociferous and pugnacious

in debates but he was of amiable disposition. It is puzzling why someone thought of taking his life in so barbaric a manner.

"The assassination of Raviraj has removed from our midst an educated politician who had the potential to fill the leadership vacuum that the LTTE has created in Tamil politics through years of systematic elimination of the educated Tamils. His assassins have helped further the interests of the LTTE - either wittingly or unwittingly. That is the tragedy!"

Bishop calls for probe

In a statement on 14 November, the Rt Revd Duleep de Chickera, Bishop of Colombo said, "The brutal assassination of Mr Nadarajah Raviraj, M.P. is yet another reminder of the deep animosity and violence that engulfs our country. This senseless killing of a gifted and accessible Parliamentarian must be condemned without reservation. The killing must be promptly investigated and the perpetrators dealt with under the law. The President's decision to invite Scotland Yard to help with the investigation is welcome, but must be expedited.

I offer Mrs Raviraj, the children, Mr Raviraj's elderly mother and the rest of the family the condolences of our Church.

The murder of a Member of Parliament in broad daylight is an indication of how vulnerable all other citizens of this country are. No one is safe on our streets and the worsening situation continues unabated.

The public outrage at this killing from a wide cross-section of ethnic groups, political parties and religions has to be taken note of by the GoSL. Time is fast running out and unless immediate transparent and radical changes are made in our approach towards conflict resolution, the situation will get hopelessly out of control. People cannot simply be killed because they hold different views.

I consequently urge the President, the Cabinet and leaders of all political parties to set aside time for a Parliamentary debate and initiate a Parliamentary probe regarding this killing and the prevailing culture of violence with a view to taking the necessary steps to arrest this sinister trend."

Funeral

Raviraj's family and his party had wanted to drive his body in mortorcade to Chavakachcheri, his hometown in the northern Jaffna peninsula and had re-

quested the authorities open the A9 road to be opened for the purpose. The government turned down the request and offered airlift the body of slain MP's and his family members and party colleagues to enable the performance of funeral rites in his hometown in Jaffna. Defence Spokesman and Minister Kheliya Ramubkwellla said all facilities had been offered to airlift members of the family, relatives, colleagues as well as friends to Jaffna.

However, the body of Raviraj was airlifted to Jaffna at 6 am on 15 today in a private air craft, a party source said. A spokesman for the TNA said though the Government agreed to provide assistance to transport the body and family members, the party had rejected the offer and decided to use a privately chartered plane as the Government denied the use of the A-9 route to transport the body.

People of Jaffna peninsula, in their thousands, paid their last respects to the remains of Raviraj, the slain Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for Jaffna district, whose body was flown from Colombo to Palaly air base in Jaffna on Tuesday (14) around 11:00 am and later kept at Jaffna Municipal Council (JMC) at Nallur. Special Commissioner JMC S. Sarvanabavan took charge of Raviraj's remains around 11:30 am which was kept in the JMC precincts for people to pay their last respects.

Jeyalath Jeyawardene, United National Party (UNP) parliamentarian and TNA parliamentarians Mavai Senathirajah, Selvam Adaikalanathan, Sivan esan, Gajendran, Ms. Pathmini Sithamparamanathan accompanied the remains from Colombo.

Thousands of mourners including students, government officers, representatives of several civil and Non-government organisations, local distinguished personalities and Hindu, Christian religious heads paid their last respects to the remains of Nadarajah Raviraj who was their former Deputy Mayor of Jaffna.

Later the body was taken to his home town Chavakachcheri in Thenmaradchi and was kept at Chavakachcheri Driberg College for people to pay their tribute.

The entire Jaffna peninsula was at a standstill as the funeral procession paraded through the streets of Chavakachcheri to the cremation grounds located at Sri Lanka Army High Security Zone.

The cremation of body of the slain

parliamentarian according to Saivite rites, took place on Wednesday (15) at Chavakachcheri Kannadipiddy cremation grounds located along Kerathivu Sangupiddy Road in Sri Lanka Army demarcated High Security Zone along the Kearithivu-Sangupitty road in Chavakachcheri.

Nearly five thousand strong funeral mourners consisting a wide spectrum of the society of Jaffna district, took part in the rituals. People from all walks of life including University students, Professors, politicians, Hindu Christian Muslim religious dignitaries, Judges, lawyers, government and private officials, representatives of Non-governmental organisations and others attended the funeral.

Several prominent personalities spoke of Raviraj's unique efforts to bring peace and good will among the people of the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

Daughter on father

Praveena Raviraj, daughter of slain Jaffna district MP, Nadarajah Raviraj described her father as a strong proponent of peace who had not just loved members of his own ethnicity, but all Sri Lankans irrespective of race and religion.

"I can't believe that this has happened. Words are not going to bring my father back; his name will be buried with him. For a few days, everyone will speak about him and then he will be forgotten. It is we who are going to suffer... Why us?" she queried, her eyes full of emotion.

Speaking to the Daily Mirror from a neighbours' home in the Manning Town flats, Raviraj's grieving daughter said her father's death was completely unexpected, and its location even more astounding.

"My father never feared death, but he would have never thought that he would be killed in Colombo, just near our home. He thought the Sinhalese loved him and he loved them in turn. He didn't see ethnic differences, but he saw that it was red blood which unites us all," the late Parliamentarian's daughter said.

Speaking further, she said, "I'm just fifteen but I've seen life through his eyes. He was my role model, even though we may not necessarily have agreed on everything. Politics was his life; he lived for the humble people. He fought for peace and he was killed for no reason."

Praveena, who is a student of Bish-

ops College, Colombo had last seen her father alive before leaving to school in the morning. At around 8.45 a.m. the school Principal and Vice Principal had informed her that her father had been shot at.

Asked how she felt on being informed of the incident, Praveena said, "It didn't sound so serious at that point but I was praying that he would be alright. When I heard that he had passed away, I think I just went blank."

Raviraj's wife who also spoke to the Daily Mirror said that he was a "genuine, open person with a good heart who had close ties with people of all backgrounds." A relative of Raviraj, A. S. Sinnadurai added, "This was most unexpected. He was an outspoken but moderate leader who mixed with people of all ethnic communities."

Mass protest against killings

Nov 15 - An estimated 3,500 people belonging to anti-war groups and civil society organisations, on Monday (13) marched through the streets in Colombo before holding a mass rally to protest against the assassination of TNA parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj and demanding a halt to the spiralling violence in the

island before the body of the slain MP was air-lifted to Jaffna for the funeral which was held on Wednesday (15) in his hometown of Chavakachcheri in the northern, army-held Jaffna peninsula.

Accompanying the coffin of the slain MP, most of the marchers carried placards and waving banners reading "Shame" "Live and let live", "Stop crimes against humanity" as they walked toward the Park.

Sri Lanka's police stepped up already tight security in the capital ahead of a mass protest over the assassination. Several major roads in the city were closed and vehicle inspections intensified as anti-war demonstrators prepared to stage their demonstration.

The funeral cortege carrying the remains of Raviraj, organized by the Anti-War Front organisation, proceeded from Raymond Flower Parlour in Borrelia around 2:15 p.m. to Vihara Mahadevi Park for people to pay their last respects.

Pall bearers included Dr. Kumar Rupasinghe, the Front's Leader, Rajitha Senaratne, United National Party (UNP) MP for Colombo, S. B. Dissanayake, senior member of UNP, Mano Ganesan, Leader and parliamentarian of Western

Peoples' Front, Deputy Ministers Dilan Perera and Rathakrishnan of the Sri Lanka government (GoSL).

The National Anti-War Movement which organised the march and the rally as a mark of protest against the recent rash of killings and abductions in Colombo, including that of Raviraj, had requested all political parties, labour unions, foreign diplomats, civil society organisations and all the peace loving people of this country to take part in the protest.

Just within 48 hours of the assassination, the NAWF had organised a mass scale publicity campaign plastering most of the public walls with 10,000 posters and using electronic and print media, to mobilise the public to participate in the protest march and rally.

Eight arrested

Nov 12 - While Scotland Yard assistance is being sought by the authorities to find the killers of Jaffna MP Raviraj, it is reported that they have made some meaningful progress in their investigations.

According to Deputy Inspector General Pujith Jayasundera, one suspect believed to be closely involved in the killing was arrested in Wellawatte. On information given by him, seven others were also taken in. He said the arrests were made during cordon-and-search operations in Wellawatte, Borella, Narahenpita and Cinnamon Gardens areas.

He said the CID was grilling the suspects while several eyewitnesses had also come forward to give evidence. Detectives said they had obtained the registration numbers of the three-wheeler and motorbike used in the killing and they were on the trail of the owners. They said they were now aware that the motorbike used for the killing bore the number plate JE 3500. Two people were involved in the slaying - the rider and the pillion rider.

The detectives have also found that the assassin had dropped his T-56 assault rifle which was covered in a cricket bag and his helmet and fled the scene after the shooting. □

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The cortege proceeded through Senanayake Circle, Horton Place and reached Vihara Mahadevi Park along Maradana road. After the paying of respect by thousands of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, the remains of Raviraj was taken back to Raymond Flower Parlour and kept there for people to pay their last respects.

Dr. Kumar Rupasinghe, UNP parliamentarians Rajitha Senaratne and Tissa Athanayake, Junior Ministers Dilan Perera and Ra-

Govt forces, LTTE and Karuna Group blamed on child soldier issue

Nov 13, Colombo - Allan Rock, the Special Advisor to the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on Sri Lanka, at the conclusion of his 10-day mission to the island, has blamed the LTTE and the Karuna Group for the forcible recruitment and use of child soldiers, and certain "elements" within Government forces for assisting the Karuna Group in forcibly recruiting children to join its ranks.

The criticism of the government is not about recruiting under-aged children to the armed forces. It is related to aiding and abetting the Karuna faction of the LTTE known as Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) of conscripting child soldiers. The LTTE is condemned for not honouring its earlier pledges and continuing with recruitment of children to its ranks.

The charge by a senior UN Advisor that government forces are guilty of complicity in assisting the enforced recruitment of child soldiers has sent shock waves across political and media circles in Colombo.

In the words of a western diplomat, "We are shocked that a section of the security forces, whose government is actively engaged in a campaign against the practice of use of children for combat by the LTTE, is now photographing children in villages and facilitating the Karuna group to do the same thing. This is totally unacceptable. If unchecked, the international community might be left with little option but to consider sanctions," according to report in the "The Hindu".

While sections of the local and foreign media have given prominence to the charges against the GOSL and its allied TMVP, the state controlled media has emphasised the condemnation of the LTTE by Allan Rock and blacked out the other charges. Likewise the pro-Tiger media too while highlighting the accusations against the GOSL and TMVP has conveniently ignored Rock's criticism of the LTTE. Predictably the JVP and the JHU, operating in an entirely

different political orbit, have come to the defence armed forces seeing the ghost of a diabolical conspiracy against Sri Lanka in Allan Rock's report.

Allan Rock, a former cabinet Minister and one time Canada's Ambassador at the United Nations, visited the island on the invitation of Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) as special representative of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Under-Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, to study the plight of children affected by war in Sri Lanka.

"It is increasingly clear that children are at risk from all sides," said Mr. Rock. "It is crucial that ways be found to monitor and protect their rights and interests. Wherever I travelled, I saw with my own eyes that systems meant to safeguard children's rights are either deteriorating or absent. It is apparent that there is an urgent need for an independent monitoring capacity to ensure that children affected by the conflict are protected" stated Mr. Rock.

Speaking to reporters at a media conference on Monday 12 November, Allan Rock accused certain "elements" of the government forces of assisting the Karuna group which also fighting the LTTE to forcibly recruit child soldiers. It is the first time the UN has made such a charge against the government forces. The LTTE has long been under fire for recruiting and using child soldiers in their war against the Sri Lankan government.

Mr. Rock, told reporters that government soldiers rounded up young Tamil children to be recruited by the 'Karuna' group. He said troops travelled to Tamil villages and photographed children who were later forcibly enlisted by the Karuna group which worked closely with security forces in the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Ampara.

"The complicity of the security forces with the Karuna group is common knowledge. It corrodes respect for rule of law and creates space for more LTTE abductions of children," Rock said. Mr. Rock spoke of instances of women wanting to poison their children rather than see them conscripted.

Mr. Rock, at the press conference, talked about a "sense of fear, terror and grave concern wherever we travelled." He spoke about an "atmosphere of impunity," that those with connections could get away with anything, which has gained ground particularly in the North and the East thanks to the undeclared war between the Government and the LTTE since April-May.

"There is a widespread feeling among people that police can't be counted upon, the army is not responsive and the security forces are not able to assist. The institutions of human rights have either deteriorated or disappeared. There is no one to turn to remedy even in case of grave human rights violations," Mr. Rock said.

He said the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had documented the cases of 164 children abducted by the Karuna group in the period ending October 31, but the actual numbers could be three times higher.

Mr. Rock said he had raised the issue directly with President Mahinda Rajapaksa. The President promised an "immediate" inquiry and to take action against any officer found guilty, he said. "I expect he (the President) will fully follow through," Rock said.

Mr. Rock said the Tigers had not honoured their pledges in the past to end the practice of underage recruitment, but had given him a fresh assurance to release all children within their ranks by January 1, 2007.

Rock said the Karuna faction also gave him an assurance it would work closely with UNICEF and free child soldiers, but he urged more international pressure on the Tigers, the Karuna group and the Colombo Government.

"It is increasingly clear that children are at risk from all sides," Rock said. "People are even afraid to go to the bathroom fearing that they will be hit by shells," added Rock, the first foreign official to enter the eastern regions after the military shelled a refugee centre, killed up to 65 civilians, some of them children.

"People did not want us to leave," Rock said. "People are scared. They are frustrated. They have no one to complain to. The situation is beyond desperate."

"Wherever I travelled, I saw with my own eyes that systems meant to safeguard children's rights are either deteriorating or absent," he said. "It is apparent that there is an urgent need for an independent monitoring capacity to ensure that children affected by the conflict are

protected."

The Office of the Sri Lankan President complained that a large section of the media had "distorted" the remarks made by the UN official Allan Rock on the government's alleged complicity in child abductions.

Setting the record straight, the Secretary to the President Lalith Weeraratunga said that the government had a "long-standing zero-tolerance policy on the recruitment of children as combatants." But it was regrettable that certain conclusions that Ambassador Rock had made public had led to many "distorted" media reports, he said.

"During Ambassador Rock's visit to Sri Lanka the government provided him with unlimited access to all areas and facilitated meetings with a cross section of government actors, as part of a long-standing policy of openness and constructive engagement with UN Human Rights Mechanisms."

"Ambassador Rock brought to the attention of President Rajapaksa certain allegations of some elements of the security forces supporting the abduction and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna faction."

"In response the President said that if there is credible evidence of such incidents he would have them investigated. Ambassador Rock expressed his appreciation to the President for this response," Weeraratunga said.

SLMM confirms troops involvement

In the meantime, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) confirmed charges made by Allan Rock about involvement of government forces in child recruitment and emphasised that the SLMM too has supportive evidence, though it had never before made the charge in public.

"The statement made by the UN official is correct and the SLMM in its second Geneva report released in August also stressed that we had sufficient evidence to prove that the government forces were involved in child recruitment," Acting SLMM Spokesperson, Helen Olafsdottir told "The Morning Leader" in Colombo.

In its second Geneva report, the SLMM said that child recruitment and child abduction continued on a relatively high level in June, July and

August but unlike earlier months, a majority of the cases reported were not against the LTTE, but against the Karuna group.

"While it is evident that LTTE was behind most of the child recruiting as confirmed by several of the victims and the LTTE, there are also strong indications that the Karuna (group) were behind several of these abductions," the SLMM report said.

Latest reports compiled by the SLMM too said that abduction were continuing in Batticaloa. "Batticaloa is more tense than the week before and SLMM received complaints of eight killings and 17 abductions (including three children). Numbers are bound to be much higher as parents of abductees have been threatened by the perpetrators not to report to police or international organizations," it said in its latest situation report.

Meanwhile the UNICEF in a re-

cent report states that the breakaway Karuna faction of the LTTE known as Tamil Makkal Viduthalaip Puligal (TMVP) has recruited 142 child soldiers. "As of 31 October 2006 there are also 142 outstanding cases of under age recruitment by the Karuna group, all of them boys," the report said.

However the UNICEF estimates that its database only reflects a third of the actual number of children, because often parents do not report abductions in fear of being harassed by these rebel cadres.

According to the latest statistics, as of October 31, 2006, there are 1598 outstanding cases of under age recruitment by the LTTE. Of these, 649 are under the age of 18, and 949 were recruited while under 18 but have now passed that age.

UNICEF was given a mandate to monitor child rights violations of the ceasefire agreement at the Oslo round of Peace Talks in November 2002.

Children are at risk from all sides - UN Advisor

The following is the full text of the statement issued by the UN's Special Advisor: "Allan Rock, the Special Advisor to the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on Sri Lanka, has concluded his 10 day mission to the country. During those ten days, the mission visited Colombo, Ampara, Batticaloa, Kilinochchi and Jaffna districts. The Mission enjoyed the full cooperation of the Sri Lankan government and met with all parties concerned with the ongoing conflict. In his meeting today with President Rajapakse, the Special Advisor expressed his appreciation for the extensive efforts made by the Government of Sri Lanka to facilitate his visit and access to all areas.

The purpose of Mr. Rock's visit was to ascertain first-hand the situation on the ground, mainly in the North and East, with a particular focus on compliance with the Action Plan for Children Affected by Conflict. The Action Plan was endorsed by the Government and the LTTE following their commitment during peace talks in 2002 and 2003 to work with UNICEF and the Government to end the recruitment of children and to release under-age recruits in their ranks.

The mission's initial findings reveal that the LTTE has not complied with its commitments under the Action Plan to stop child recruitment and release all the children within their ranks. Under-age recruitment continues and the LTTE have yet to release several hundred children as verified by UNICEF.

The mission also found that the so-called Karuna faction continues to abduct children in government-controlled areas of the East, particularly Batticaloa district. Since May of this year, 135 cases of under-age recruitment by abduction have been reported to UNICEF, with evidence that this trend is accelerating.

The mission also discovered a disturbing development involving the Karuna abductions. It found strong and credible evidence that certain elements of the government security forces are supporting and sometimes participating in the abductions and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna faction.

The mission met with the parents of many of the abducted children in Batticaloa district. As a result, it learned of eye-witness evidence that links the Karuna faction abductions to certain government elements. Based on the evidence

as a whole, the mission concluded that some government security forces are actively participating in these criminal acts.

Apart from the issues of child recruitment and abductions, the mission also observed the deteriorating humanitarian situation in certain areas of the North and East. During his visits to Vaharai and Jaffna, Mr. Rock saw first hand the fear, isolation and critical unmet needs of IDP children there.

The Special Advisor met with the leadership of the Muslim Community in Batticaloa and elsewhere, and learned of their feelings of isolation and vulnerability. The mission concluded that special efforts should be made to acknowledge the rights and needs of the Muslim Community.

With respect to attacks on civilian areas, the mission called on all parties to respect their obligations under International Humanitarian Law.

In the case of LTTE, the mission reminded it of its obligation to ensure that military assets are not placed in areas where civilians, especially children, can be at risk. It also called on the LTTE not to engage in the use of civilians as human shields.

With respect to the Government, the Mission reminded it that it has a responsibility to ensure that no civilians are targeted in military operations.

On these various issues, Mr. Rock sought and received several assurances and commitments by the parties involved.

The LTTE gave him assurances that they would work with UNICEF, commencing immediately, to accelerate the release from their ranks of all children, with the objective of completing that process by January 1, 2007. They also committed to better training for their military commanders in relation to recruitment, and a process of discipline for those who do not comply.

The Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), on behalf of its military wing Karuna, undertook to publish formal policy statements forbidding under-age recruitment, and to release any children who may now be in its ranks. The TMVP agreed to work with UNICEF in an effort to trace the whereabouts and arrange the release of those abducted children whose families have complained to UNICEF.

Mr. Rock also received assurances from President Rajapakse concerning the allegations that elements of the Sri Lankan security forces have been

UTHR: 'Conscripting children to kill each other'

The UN special adviser Allan Rock's findings on child soldier recruitment has come in the wake of an earlier revelation in the report by the University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) released on 7 November 2006 which gave details of the role played by the security forces in the abduction and forcible enlistment of children by the Karuna Group.

Despite their protestations to the contrary, the LTTE's engagement in the practice of recruitment and use of child soldiers over the years has been common knowledge and well documented even at the level of the UN Security Council.

When Karuna and his men defected from the LTTE in April 2004, he disbanded all the cadres, who included child soldiers, in what could be described as an act of "liberation", but sadly it turned out to be shortlived. Since December last year following the escalation of violent clashes between the LTTE and government forces, the Karuna Group joined forces with the military in its battle with the Tigers. Needing fighting cadres for the purpose, the Karuna Group began a campaign of active recruitment which included re-recruitment of its old cadres and a return to its previously familiar practice of forcible enlistment of child soldiers. This was common knowledge among the people of the east.

complicit with the Karuna faction in its child recruitment, and that they participated in or facilitated child abductions. The President made clear to Mr. Rock that he will order an immediate and thorough investigation to determine whether such things have occurred and, should the evidence support that conclusion, he will take action to hold accountable those who are responsible.

The Special Advisor welcomes all such assurances and will seek concrete evidence of compliance by all parties before the submission of his formal written report to the Security Council in January next year."

A fuller report including Allan Rock's detailed findings is to be submitted in due course to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Under-Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict □

But what has come as a revelation for the first time is the reported involvement of the security forces in assisting the Karuna Group to indulge in this prohibited practice, which is deemed to be a war crime.

In the section headed "The Navy's Role in Child Conscription in Trincomalee", the UTHR reported:

"Since the middle of this year, there have been well-authenticated reports of the complicity of the government forces in the conscription of children and adults by the Karuna group. This was extended to (continued from page 17) Trincomalee in August. The following instance of child conscription took place in Trincomalee on 21st October.

Mas. Selvarajah Rasamanikkam and Mas. Satyaraj Konam of 3rd Mile Post, near Anbuvelipuram, Trincomalee, were abducted by the Karuna group in the night of 21st October as communicated by relatives. About 9.30 PM, persons in the neighbourhood saw the Karuna party with arms bringing some boys, stopped at the Green Rd. junction naval check point. A little later Navy men came on motorcycles and escorted the Karuna men and their illicit human cargo to their office. People in the area hear sounds of agony, as abducted persons are tortured to join the group.

"This is the level at which the State is safeguarding the rights of the people after years of protesting loudly about child conscription by the LTTE. We have recorded a host of cases of the LTTE doing the same thing and have condemned it as a crime. We expect better standards from the Government. It should know better that there is no justification for expecting Tamils to fight its war when all its actions point to denying them a decent settlement. Abducting Tamils to fight for the Government is slavery according to the ICCPR that has now been dispensed with. The number of persons conscripted in Trincomalee is placed by local sources at over 50."

In the section headed, "Partly State Aided Conscription for Fratricide Gathers Momentum", the UTHR reported:

(continued on next page)

Civilians killed as army targets refugee camp

Nov 10 - At least 47 Tamil civilians were killed and more than 160 injured in the Batticaloa district coastal village of Kadiraweli in a barrage of artillery and MBRL rocket fire launched by the Sri Lankan Army stationed at the Kallara (Kallaru) military camp in Trincomalee district on Wednesday 8 November.

The 47 dead comprised 28 adult males, 9 women and 10 children. More than 160 were injured of whom 76, 57 and 36 were at the Vaaharai, Valaichenai and Batticaloa hospitals respectively. Those with comparatively less serious injuries are at the Vaaharai hospital while the more serious victims are at the other two hospitals.

The SLMM spokeswoman Helen Olafsdottir said that the SLMM had initially counted 23 bodies at Vaaharai. She also confirmed to the media that the artillery firing had come from the army but declined to pinpoint the location at this stage.

According to Defence ministry circles the artillery and Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher barrage was a retaliatory measure as the Tamil Tigers had earlier in the morning fired artillery at the Serunuwara camp in Trincomalee district injuring five soldiers. The Army had responded to this

attack by launching an artillery barrage on the Batticaloa coastal village of Kadiraweli situated close to the Trincomalee district border.

The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) claimed that the LTTE artillery fire came from Kadiraweli and tried to justify army action on those grounds. The tragic reality however is that only innocent civilians mostly displaced Tamil people were killed and injured in the attacks. Most of the victims were housed at the Internal Displaced Persons (IDP) camp at the Vigneshwara Vidyalayam school in Kadiraweli.

It is reported that 6068 people from 1680 families were staying at the school camp and its environs at the time of the attack. The IDP numbers at Kadiraweli had swollen in the last few days as many people from Paalsenai, Panichankerni and Ooriyankattu had moved in due to constant shelling and bombing by the GOSL security forces.

According to Kadiraweli residents and IDP's now at Batticaloa the artillery and MBRL barrage had commenced suddenly and without any warning. An Unmanned spy plane was scouring the skies above Kadiraweli and Vaaharai as the firing was in progress.

(continued from page 21)

"With the collapse of the recent second round of Geneva talks, all the parties are making a show of their bankruptcy by taking it out on children. In the LTTE-controlled area of Batticaloa District, especially Vavunathivu and Pattipalai DS Divisions, the LTTE (Vanni faction) has resumed conscription and many conscripts taken on 29th, 30th and 31st October are children. The number taken is about 70 and sources in the area name the leaders of the abduction teams as Raja, Nathan, Muthulingam and Annaseelan. On 2nd and 3rd November, the LTTE hosted the same circus in Vellaveli 14th and 16th colonies and Kakkachivattai.

"The Karuna group showed no less zeal in conscripting children and adults in the government controlled areas abetted by the government forces. The Karuna group abducted 15 persons at a

Siththandy temple festival on 26th October. Subsequent reports spoke of large abductions in Batticaloa North from Kalkuda Namahal School, Valaichenai Hindu College, Puthukkudiyiruppu Vani School and Petthalai Vipulananda School. Persons in the area when asked are terrified of talking about it, given the context of ongoing killings by both sides. These are also places where the Army is present. All these conscripts have to be taken to Karuna's bases through several government checkpoints.

"The combined LTTE's conscription of children before the 2004 split was terrible enough. Now two factions are conscripting children to kill each other. The international community, Norway and the Government bear a severe responsibility for this state of affairs; which stemmed from their lack of foresight and absence of principle in handling the Karuna split."

"We suddenly heard artillery reports and saw a house nearby exploding and going up in flames. Before we realised what was happening another shell fell on our house" said an injured woman.

"The shells started falling rapidly on the school and nearby places. Everything exploded and burning. We ran screaming everywhere carrying our children" said another wounded man.

It is reported that of the children killed at least 6 were infants below the age of one. Among the 36 injured admitted to Batticaloa hospital sixteen are children.

Apart from the Vikneshwara school IDP camp and its environs about 120 dwellings consisting of houses, huts and tents in Kadiraweli and Vaaharai had been hit in the artillery barrage. Among places affected in Kadiraweli were the Sonobo childrens home run by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) Twelve children in the Sonobo home were injured.

The situation was aggravated further when shells fell within the vicinity of the Vaaharai hospital about 15 km away from Kadiraweli. The hospital is the only one catering to health needs in the LTTE controlled region of Koralaipattu North AGA division. It has only two doctors, an Italian national and another displaced from Eechilampattu AGA division in Trincomalee district.

Most of the victims in the attack were displaced persons from the Muthur East and Eechilampattu divisions in Trincomalee district. 31, 903 displaced people from 8441 families of Trincomalee are currently in the Vaaharai - Verugal region. Some victims were residents of Kadiraweli and Vaaharai. There are about 10, 000 people living in the Koralaipattu North AGA division.

Many of the people and IDP's in the region had been moving from place to place in recent times as fighting continued between the military and the Tigers and the air force had been off and on bombing the area regularly during the past weeks.

Army spokesperson Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe told the BBC that there had been exchanges of artillery fire between GOSL forces and the LTTE. The Army websites alleged that the LTTE was using refugees as a human shield. There were also unconfirmed reports that the LTTE was preventing terrified civilians from leaving the region and moving into GOSL areas for safety.

ICRC deplores attack on civilians:

Nov 9 - The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Thursday (9) in a press release deplored the tragic loss of life and injury to civilians resulting from the Wednesday shelling of the densely populated area of Kathiraveli, a coastal hamlet north of Vaharai, where several thousand internally displaced people had sought shelter.

The press release further said:

"An ICRC convoy of six ambulances, a bus, a truck and three cars reached Vaharai hospital to which the dead and wounded had been brought, and transferred 69 urgent cases to Valaichchenai hospital, a better equipped facility in the government controlled area. A second ICRC convoy returned to the area today to deliver aid to civilians there.

"With fighting continuing between the Sri Lankan security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the eastern district of Batticaloa, the ICRC reminds the parties to the conflict of their obligation to comply with international humanitarian law. In particular, it urgently call on the parties to ensure that the civilian population is respected and protected in all circumstances, complying with the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets and thus avoiding indiscriminate attacks. They must also take feasible precautions to protect civilians under their control against the effects of attacks by the other side. Finally, the ICRC urges the parties to respect the freedom of movement of internally displaced people.

"The ICRC has been active in Sri Lanka since 1989, in particular in the north-east of the country, acting as a neutral intermediary, protecting and assisting the civilian population, visiting detainees, restoring contact between members of separated families and promoting international humanitarian law," the press release said.

U.S. regrets attack on IDPs camp: Nov 10 - The U.S. Department of State in a media note issued on Thursday (9) said the United States "strongly regrets" the loss of innocent life caused by the shelling by the Sri Lankan military in Vakaraï region on Wednesday (8).

The Press Release issued by the Embassy said, "The United States strongly regrets the loss of innocent life caused by the shelling by the Sri Lankan military of a camp for internally displaced persons in the Vakaraï region in eastern Sri Lanka on November 8. We exhort the

Sri Lankan Government to adopt corrective measures to prevent civilian casualties that also take into account instances where civilians may be used as "human shields" in the future. We call upon the Government of Sri Lanka to conduct an immediate, independent investigation into the November 8 incidents and bring the responsible parties to justice. We are also disturbed that the Head of the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission and his delegation came under fire in Pooneryn in the north of Sri Lanka the same day.

"The United States urges both the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to honour their commitment to abide by the cease fire, end all hostilities immediately, and return to negotiations to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. We fully support the ongoing Norwegian peace facilitation efforts designed to bring both sides back to serious negotiations."

TNA alleges genocide: Nov 10 - 19 Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians led by Mr. R. Sampanthan, Leader of the TNA Parliamentary group and Member of Parliament for Trincomalee district, protested on Thursday (9) at 11:00 am in front of United Nations office in Colombo condemning the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) bombing of Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Vaharai and Kathiraveli, killing 53 civilians and seriously injuring 127. The protesters urged the United Nations to urgently intervene to stop the "genocide against Tamils let loose by the Sri Lanka government."

TNA parliamentarians Mavai Senathirajah, Thurairatnasingham, Ariyanenthiran, Suresh Premachandran, N. Raviraj, Pathmini Sithamparanathan, Sivasenan, Pathmanathan, Thankeswary, Selvam Adaikalanathan, Sivasakthy Anandan, Kanagasabai, T. Jeyanandamoorthy, Chandrakanthan, and Gajendran participated in the protest, sources attending the demonstration said.

Protesters carried placards and shouted slogans including 'Stop killing Tamils!', 'Don't kill Tamils by starvation', 'GoSL, Stop assassinations.'

A memorandum signed by the parliamentarians was submitted to the Secretary General United Nations and to the Head of the United Nation Children's Fund through Colombo UN office

"The UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO and other World Organisations remain silent while the Sri Lanka Army (SLA)

perpetrates violence on the Tamils. The silence encourages the SLA to continue its atrocities against the Tamils unquestioned, we told the UN residential representative," said T. Jeyanandamoorthy.

"We also told how our non-violent protest in the Parliament is being ignored by the Sri Lanka government and pointed out that Tamils were driven to take arms because their non-violent struggles were ignored by successive Sinhala governments," added the MP.

UN condemns indiscriminate use of force: (New York: 9 November 2006): "Yesterday's massive attack on civilians shows that force continues to be used indiscriminately in the conflict in Sri Lanka," said Jan Egeland, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs.

A Sri Lankan Army artillery bombardment yesterday hit Kathiraveli School, which was hosting some 1,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Vaharai area in Batticaloa District of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission in its initial report on Wednesday said that they had counted 23 bodies and that 135 people were being treated in the hospital with serious and minor injuries, but the number of fatalities is expected to increase. The Monitoring Mission found no evidence of military installations. However, there have been equally disturbing reports that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) prevented some 2,000 civilians from fleeing to safety. Shelling between the two parties has continued in Vaharai over the last few days.

"The people trapped in this camp are terrified and feel that they are completely at the mercy of others," said Allan Rock, Special Advisor on Sri Lanka to the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. "The time has come for all parties to respect the basic human rights of these people, which are simply not being observed at the moment," he added. After his visit to the camp today, Rock described it as a "shocking sight."

Vaharai is a narrow peninsula north of Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It hosts over 30,000 IDPs who left their homes in Trincomalee province due to the fighting in August 2006. They have since lived in public buildings and ad-hoc camps in the location, which is quite close to the frontlines.

At the moment, UN agencies' access to the area due has been limited by the fighting.

The fighting in Sri Lanka between the LTTE and the Government has displaced almost 200,000 people since April 2006. In addition, hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans are displaced due to previous conflict and by the tsunami.

On 2 November, Sri Lankan Army aerial bombardment hit the vicinity of the hospital in the LTTE-held town of Kilinochchi, in northern Sri Lanka. The bombing killed 5 civilians and damaged the hospital's maternity ward.

"I call upon all parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians under all circumstances in accordance with International Humanitarian Law," Jan Egeland said.

AI calls for inquiry:

Nov 8 - The London-based international human rights organisation in a statement concerning the killing of civilians in Vakara in eastern Sri Lanka in an artillery attack said, "Amnesty International is deeply concerned by reports of the killing today of as many as 65 civilians taking refuge in a school in Kathiraveli, a coastal hamlet 15 km north of Vaharai in the eastern district of Batticaloa.

"The Sri Lankan Army (SLA) reportedly fired multi-barrel rockets and artillery shells which hit a school where internally displaced people (IDPs) were taking shelter. As many as 40 bodies are reported to have been recovered from the scene and more than 100 have been wounded. It is likely that many more may have been injured as the area targeted was densely populated and inhabited by some 5000 IDPs.

"Amnesty International is appalled that the military should attack a camp for displaced people - these were civilians who had already been forced from their homes because of the conflict. Amnesty International condemns all attacks on civilians and is particularly saddened and shocked to see such a large-scale attack on civilians just days after the government's announcement of its Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuses.

"A Sri Lankan military spokesman has confirmed heavy artillery and mortar bomb exchanges in Batticaloa district, but has accused the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of using civilians as human shields. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 60,646 people remained displaced in Batticaloa district alone, as of 23 October 2006, and over 200,000 have been

displaced in the north and east of Sri Lanka since 7 April 2006.

"Amnesty International condemns the targeting and killing of innocent civilians and calls on the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to take immediate and adequate precautions to protect civilian lives. All parties to the hostilities must comply with international humanitarian law, which prohibits murder or other violence to those taking no active part in hostilities, requires parties to ensure that their forces comply with the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets and do not target civilians or carry out indiscriminate attacks.

"Amnesty International calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to initiate an immediate inquiry by international and independent human rights experts into this incident and all serious violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law. Amnesty International reiterates the urgent need for the Government of Sri Lanka to establish a strong and effective international human rights monitoring operation as a matter of urgency to respond to the dramatic deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation. Such a mechanism must have the full cooperation of both the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE and the support of the United Nations and its member states."

Canada condemns Vakara killings:

Nov 11 - Mr. Peter MacKay, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, on Friday (10) condemned the shelling of civilians in a camp for internally displaced persons near the town of Vakara in eastern Sri Lanka on November 8, 2006.

"This incident demonstrates once again the heavy price paid by civilians caught in this long-standing conflict," said Minister MacKay. Canada urges both sides to immediately cease hostilities and return to negotiations.

"The Government of Canada continues to believe that there can be no military solution to this lengthy conflict. The targeting of non-combatants is never acceptable and is a clear violation of international humanitarian law.

"Canada calls on all parties to the conflict in Sri Lanka to strictly adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and the facilitation of safe and unhindered access for humanitarian agencies to reach civilians in need," statement issued by the Minister said.

Bishop condemns Nov 9, 2006 - Rt. Rev. Duleep de Chickera, Bishop of Colombo, in a statement regarding the death of scores of displaced people in Vakara as a result of shell-fire by the military said, "Yesterday's incident at Kathiraveli-Panichchankerni in the Eastern Province which killed scores and injured several hundred civilians has sent further shockwaves through the nation.

This utterly unnecessary human tragedy must be condemned outright. While arguments and explanations will be offered from all sides reports being received seems to indicate that the Sri Lankan armed forces must be held accountable. Whatever the provocations, there is no justification for targeting displaced civilians housed in schools.

The persons affected were civilians, amongst whom there are several children and elderly persons. This community fled the violence in Muthur/Sampur a few months ago. They are as always in situations of war and violence, the poor and several times displaced, have nowhere to rest their heads. I offer the condolences and prayers of our church to the injured and the families of the bereaved.

The Government of Sri Lanka must take note of this continuing human suffering caused by violent aggression and make a deliberate shift to a non-violent dialogical approach as the best chance of resolving this sad and bitter conflict. The LTTE must change its illusive stance and reciprocate. The people are weary of war and tired of excuses. They reject strategies of talking peace and pursuing violence by all sides.

The religions of our country demand this shift and provide a spirituality to facilitate it. The immense goodwill and advocacy from the international community, the general public and civil society groups in Sri Lanka offer additional resources for this shift. To disregard the potential in these pro-life forces and opt for meaningless aggression justified with political rhetoric will only plunge the country into far more acute human suffering and immeasurable destruction.

We pray to God that this incident may open our eyes and redirect our journey and never be repeated.

I refer to several news reports that our church at Morakottanchenai was damaged in the recent fighting. While our church and vicarage are in the vicinity of the fighting I confirm that these reports are inaccurate. Our church has not been damaged." □

Rhetoric and Reality and Reflections on Raviraj

D.B.S. Jeyaraj

The daylight murder in Colombo of Tamil National Alliance MP for Jaffna district Nadarajah Raviraj and his bodyguard Police sgt. Lokuwellamurage Shanthan Laxman Lokuwella has placed the Government of President Mahinda Rajapakse in great difficulty. The on going killings of Tamils in the North-East and Colombo by "unknown assassins" has been a regular phenomenon in recent times. While the murders of relatively lesser known people can be glossed over by the Rajapakse regime the Government finds it on the defensive when a well known Tamil Parliamentarian is murdered on a public road. The concern showed by the International community in this matter has increased pressure on the Government.

TNA parliamentarians described derisively by the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party's (EPDP) Douglas Devananda as "Tiger nominated agents" have been increasingly vulnerable after Mahinda Rajapakse became President. There was a time when moderate Tamil politicians were on the hit list of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). With a new re-alignment the Tamil moderates grouped as the Tamil National alliance became to the LTTE what the Sinn Fein was to the Irish Republican Army. While danger from one direction was diminished after this "alignment" new threats from other directions have emerged.

On Christmas eve last year veteran Batticaloa Parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham was shot dead at the St. Mary's cathedral during midnight mass. Pararajasingham had just received holy communion at the altar from Batticaloa Catholic Bishop Kingsley Swampillai. Another Batticaloa MP Jeyanandamorthy's house was deliberately targetted by Rocket Propelled Grenades in another incident. The family survived miraculously. The TNA nominee to fill Pararajasingham's vacancy Viknewaran was shot dead in Trincomalee while at work. In another incident Wanni district MP Sivanathan Kishore's house in Vavuniya was

attacked with hand grenades. Now the anti-TNA violence has spilled over into Colombo.

Attempts are being made by vested interests to convey an impression that the Raviraj killing was a consequence of the internecine warfare between the LTTE and its break away Karuna faction. In order to buttress this impression a purported statement from the "seerum padai" has been given publicity. The idea is to show that the Rajapakse regime had nothing to do with Raviraj's killing and that it was purely an intra-Tamil affair. It is hard to believe that these "running dogs" of the Sri Lankan state could have had the temerity to target a high-profile MP like Raviraj in Colombo without the tacit support of the state. In any case as organizations like the Sri Lanka Democratic Forum (SLDF) have pointed out "The onus of investigating the assassination of MP Raviraj, a fierce critic of the current government, rests on the government. There are strong allegations of state complicity in this assassination."

The LTTE and its media minions have capitalised on Raviraj's killing. The overseas Tiger media is going on ad nauseam about Raviraj. It is projected as a great loss to the Tamils. The state is being portrayed as anti-democratic for assassinating an elected representative of the Tamils. The "Sinhala" oppressors are being accused of promoting a culture of killing Tamil politicians. Raviraj is being depicted as an Eelam separatist patriot. The conferring of "Maamanithar" (great man) award by LTTE chief Velupillai Pirapakaran is described as the highest ever achievement of Raviraj. The Tiger media constantly refer to him as "Maamanithar Raviraj".

The LTTE leader makes glowing references to Raviraj in the citation issued in connection with the "Maamanithar" award bestowed upon Raviraj posthumously. Pirapakaran observes thus - "A great soul who carried the ideal of the liberation of our homeland as a burning flame in his heart has been made a victim

of the Sinhala oppression." The Tiger supremo also says: "he (Raviraj) whole heartedly accepted the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and their goals and served the nation. He contributed on several fronts in this freedom struggle".

There is however a great hiatus between this LTTE rhetoric and the reality of who Raviraj was. The TNA was certainly functioning like an appendage of the LTTE but MP's like Raviraj were not people who subscribed to the LTTE philosophy or goals. There was a convergence and similarity of views in certain respects but there was certainly no identity of interests between both. Due to political compulsions of broad Tamil unity and personal imperatives of physical security people like Raviraj went along with the LTTE but they were not Tigers.

The LTTE leader describing Raviraj as one "accepting the LTTE goals" and wanting "the liberation of our homeland" is incorrect to say the least. Raviraj certainly felt deeply about the Tamil predicament and wanted the Tamil people to be free but he was not for separatism. He was a Tamil nationalist but not a racist or extremist. What Raviraj wanted was a united but federal Sri Lanka. He never ever subscribed to the LTTE slogan of "Puligalin Thagam Thamil Eelathayagam". (The thirst of the Tigers is the Tamil Eelam homeland).

Pronouncements and views expressed on ones deathbed or prior to death are treated as sacrosanct. Raviraj did not know that he was going to be shot at 8.40 am and that he would die at 9.20 am on November 10th. His final media interview was between 7.30 - 8.00 am that same morning. Some of the views he expressed then could be regarded as his last testament and will in political terms.

What did Raviraj tell "Derana" just 30 minutes before he was gunned down?

"The people in the north-east aspire to live together. They aspire for the merger of the two provinces, it is a basic human right of those people. In the ancient times, there were Sinhala and Tamil kingdoms in Sri Lanka. It is not new to our people. That is mainly an area of Tamils from ancient times. It does not mean that we want to divide the country. We believe that North and east be considered as a one unit. That should be the base to find a solution to the ethnic crisis."

"In 1947 when India achieved independence, Mohamed Ali Jinnah de-

manded Pakistan to be separated. We asked for 50-50 and then a Federal system and now the LTTE is fighting for separate state. However, as politicians we still believe in a united country".

Those who know Raviraj intimately will realise that these words of Raviraj came from his heart. The LTTE leader's rhetorical statement may describe the dead MP as a separatist. But the real Raviraj was the man who boldly distanced himself from the LTTE on TV and said "It does not mean that we want to divide the country" and also observed "now the LTTE is fighting for separate state. However, as politicians we still believe in a united country". The rhetoric of the LTTE leader and reality of Raviraj's position are truly different.

LTTE propaganda makes out that Raviraj was a Tiger in TNA garb. The reality however is that the evolution and early growth of Raviraj's political career was steeped in anti-Tiger politics. It was not the LTTE but the moderate TULF which Raviraj joined at the age of 25. His advent into Jaffna municipal politics was in courageous defiance of the LTTE. This column is appreciative of his courage in taking up municipal office in Jaffna after two TULF Mayors and a would be Mayor were assassinated by the LTTE. It was with great hardship that Raviraj survived in those years living in fear of the LTTE.

Things changed! The TULF along with other Tamil parties formed the TNA and began toeing the LTTE line for political and physical survival. Even then Raviraj like his political mentor Veerasingham Anandasangaree remained "independent" at heart. The first "crack" between Sangaree and the LTTE came when the TULF President issued an effective rejoinder to some insulting remarks made by Anton Balasingham about the party. Raviraj's initial reaction was: "Annai katchiyin Maanathai Kaappatrineengal "(Elder brother you have saved the self-respect of the party) Yet circumstances compelled Raviraj to break with Sangaree and be subservient to the LTTE.

The LTTE and pro-LTTE rhetoric harps constantly on the "killing culture" (kolai kalacharam) setting in as a result of state sponsored terror. Those with different political views are being killed by agents of the state. It is true that the state

terror killings are exacting a heavy toll on the Tamil people and those perceived as being supportive of the LTTE are being gunned down.

The reality of the situation is that the culture of killing Tamils with different political opinion was ushered in not by the Sinhala dominated state but the LTTE. It began on July 25th 1975 when Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraiappah was shot dead at the Ponnalai Varatharajap Perumal temple. Pirapakaran has publicly claimed credit for the killing. From that day onwards the culture of killing those with different political views continues among Tamils. Other Tamil groups too have engaged and continue to engage in this practice. Yet the pioneers and the greatest exponents of this "culture" both qualitatively and quantitatively are the Tigers.

LTTE and pro-LTTE rhetoric also laments about a democratically elected Tamil Parliamentarian being killed by agents of the state. This certainly is true and the state deserves condemnation for this and other murders such as that of Joseph Pararajasingham. But again what is the reality? The LTTE has killed more Tamil MPs and ex-MPs, ex-DDC chairmen, ex-Mayors etc than the state or other Tamil groups. Appapillai Amirthalingam, Vettrivelu Yogeswaran, Sam Thambimuthu, Arunasalam Thangathurai, MEM Maharoof, Neelan Tiruchelvam, Nimalan Soundaranayagam, Yogasangari (EPRLF) Shanmuganathan (PLOTE) Sarojini Yogeswaran, Pon. Sivapalan, "Pottar" Nadarajah, Sambandamoorthy etc. etc.

History is often distorted by the victors and powerful. The lesser narratives are submerged or obliterated by the greater narratives. The subaltern is overwhelmed by the dominant. The LTTE narrative about Raviraj depicts him as a Tiger fighting for Tamil Eelam in Colombo. The Sinhala hawkish narrative portrays Raviraj as Tiger stooge working against a united Sri Lanka while living in Colombo. Both sides "agree" on this being the cause of death.

As is the ironic case in extreme viewpoints both narratives seemingly converge in this instance. But what is the reality of the lesser narrative as opposed to this rhetorical greater narratives?

Raviraj lived and worked in Colombo. His bodyguard who died along with him

was a Sinhala Policeman. Raviraj's mother describes the bodyguard as "part of our pfamily" and laments about the dead cop's wife and two young children. Raviraj's teen aged daughter Praveena in speaking about her father says: "He thought the Sinhalese loved him and he loved them in turn. He didn't see ethnic differences, but he saw that it was red blood which unites us all," Raviraj's wife Sashikala says about her husband: "He was a genuine, open person with a good heart who had close ties with people of all backgrounds."

Peace activist and reputed columnist Jehan Perera describes Raviraj in a manner that may very well serve as his epitaph: "Raviraj was a Tamil leader who helped to educate the non-Tamil population about the perspectives of the Tamils and their sufferings. On Tuesday November 14 he had agreed to be a speaker at a Religious-Political Dialogue organised by several civic organisations. He was friendly with all, and always prepared to engage with others, even with those of a very different political mind set. Although the Sinhala language skills at his disposal were limited, he courageously made use of them to debate the representatives of the nationalist Sinhalese political parties and provide another perspective on current and national issues. With his killing this important avenue of information is likely to close for both the general public and the international community to whom he spoke with a measure of credibility."

This then is the real Raviraj. These little narratives provide an insight as against the greater narratives of the LTTE and the anti-LTTE sections that distort reality.

Raviraj worked with all sections of the people, involved himself in many issues and helped build bridges between the Tamils and other communities. He was a connector of people and not a divider of communities. This is the difference between rhetoric and reality. The fact that a large gathering of people from diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-religious backgrounds mourned and paid their respects by marching along the streets of Colombodemonstrates that ordinary people understood that difference. Ravi's death is a loss to us all and diminishes humanity. [November 14, 2006]

'Never say, never again'

M.S.Shah Jahan

A Thai farmer who was highly worried for his two young boys who always quarreled with each other, called them one day and narrated the story of two little kittens who like them were constantly at each other's throat like them. "One day both of them had a severe fight but the fight did not produce a winner or a loser, it only exhausted the fighters. An eagle who was flying sky found that the little kittens not running away to hide. The eagle approached closer and though the kittens now realized the danger, they could not move as they were too fatigued. The result was, that the eagle carried them both away."

Geneva talks was a process to push start the car that was stalled in the garage for over eight months. The engine rotated but the car did not move out of the garage, because the A9 high way had not yet been opened, it was still closed. Of course none expected this car to win a grand prix. But, many believed it would run at least few miles on the road, unfortunately it was not able to move.

The Sri Lankan government's argument that the LTTE would financially benefit from the opening of the A9 highway is not wrong. But the proverbial quote is, that when it rains, it does not rain for the sake of a few good people, but for, all including the bad guys.

The Hindu in its editorial wrote "The Government would have done well to resolve the crisis triggered by the A9 shut-down before going to Geneva". An alternative route was talked about for weeks but never realized. Any way the Government cannot keep closed A9 highway for ever, and it is better to open it sooner than later.

More than that, Sri Lanka failed to understand that it had pushed a sector of its own citizens to starvation, possibly, expecting their suffering would turn them against the Tigers. But on the other hand it could justify and strengthen the Tiger's call for separation as a way out from Sinhala attitude. For example, if Tamils fail to possess the identity cards issued by our own Department of Registration, they are taken into custody, and their position is that, they are guilty until proven innocent.

It means we have rules governing them. If so we have a responsibility over them too. But if we refuse to address humanitarian issues and human rights concerning their day to day life, we will have no right, no power over those human beings. "You can have power over people as long as you don't take everything away from them. But when you've robbed a man of everything, he's no longer in your power." - Aleksander I Solzhenitsyn.

When Sri Lanka repeatedly said that there were no shortage of goods in Jaffna, the whole world carried the pathetic news that people of Jaffna have to eat bread as staple food, and that many things are in short supply. When Jaffna was burning with hunger and anger, how can you expect the LTTE to sit and talk about other matters in the cozy Swiss atmosphere? The Government should learn to differentiate the plight of Tamil masses from that of the militants.

One wonders whether the ruling elites in Colombo, who gives lip service, really understand the gravity of the Northern situation or do they have an ostrich type attitude guided by the anti LTTE Tamil groups who are more keen to save their own 'nine lives' than that of others? People do not seem to care very much and the TNA's shouting go unheard due to state propaganda.

It looks as if Colombo depends too much on the so called 'former terrorists turned, and turning, democrats'. A terrorist is a terrorist. People who fought against us have become 'Saints' over night, due to change of situation.

Further on the subject of food supply to Jaffna by ship, the Sri Lankan government is suspected to have a hidden agenda. It is alleged that the ships have a chance to carry other things for the armed forces. The way SL blocked the LTTE's suspected motive for opening A9 high way, the LTTE has blocked the government's unexplained interest on the shipping route. Diamond cuts diamond is the attitude.

We talk about so many legalities. But by asking the LTTE, to guarantee the safety of our ships, do we not, unconsciously, expose to the world that we

have no authority in a certain part of our country.

A presidential candidate lamented that he could go all over the world as prime minister but not to a part of his own country, the Madhu shrine. He is yet to go there even after a year. So far he has not gone beyond Anuradhapura. The present prime minister complains frequently that not an inch of the country belongs to anybody, except to the sovereign state. Legally it is true, practically it is not. This is the reality. But we switch positions according to the situation.

The pity is that over 1,000 people in Vavuniya and few thousands in Jaffna are stranded, unable to travel across to their places of residence. Undoubtedly it was the prime duty of Sri Lanka government, with the assistance of UN / NGOs, to have found some way, a temporary truce at least for a week, to send these men, women and children in the early days itself.

If Sri Lanka had considered that part of the land as belonging to it and the people living there as their brethren, regardless of the group that wages war then it would have taken a different course of action.

Creating hardship to the Northern masses in the name of LTTE would not win any support. Instead it would alienate them further and push them into the militants' net. The calamity of Jaffna where 600,000 of Sri Lankan citizens face, ever hardship, could even be termed as a crime against humanity.

Though the Tamils of the East are sympathetic towards the LTTE's call for separation, there is no civil movement as such demanding freedom. But in a time of crisis people would be virtually forced to think about the extremes to try and make possible the impossible. Read President Pervez Musharraf's quotes in his book 'In The Line Of Fire' in page 52, how former East Pakistan turned out to become Bangladesh.

"In 1970, before elections could be held, there was a devastating cyclone in East Pakistan, with winds of 120 miles an hour. It was accompanied by huge tidal wave, or tsunami, the worst of the 20th century and left 200,000 people dead.

The response of President Yahya Khan and his government was callous in the extreme. It took him quite some time to react. He did not even visit the devastated province for many days, and then only under pressure.

The people of East Pakistan felt an-

Kidnappings Return to Haunt Long Ethnic War in Sri Lanka

Somini Sengupta

Colombo, Sri Lanka - Like a returning ghost, a rash of mysterious abductions has come to haunt this country once more.

Men and women are being grabbed from their homes, sometimes after dark, sometimes in broad daylight. Ransom is demanded in some cases; in others, political intimidation seems to be the point. A few have been freed, but corpses have also turned up. With rare exceptions, the crimes remain unsolved.

The abductions are a terrifying side-show in Sri Lanka's newly revived ethnic conflict, and they contain eerie echoes of the horrors of a generation ago, when this island nation achieved notoriety for tens of thousands of disappearances.

For nearly a quarter of a century, the ethnic Sinhalese-dominated government has been locked in battle with Tamil separatist guerrillas. A new menace has come in the form of a breakaway Tamil rebel faction, widely accused of being allied

with the government and - say kidnapping victims lucky enough to tell their tales - of having a hand in the abductions.

The government denies having any link to the group, called the Karuna faction, and describes the latest abductions as a law-and-order problem that it can tackle.

It is difficult to know who is responsible, or exactly how many people have been seized.

The International Committee of the Red Cross says it received more than 350 reports of disappeared persons through late October. The National Human Rights Commission logged 419 such complaints between last December and September.

A private human rights advocacy group, called Home for Human Rights, has documented 203 cases of missing persons in the first nine months of this year, using newspaper clippings and other reports. It lists 965 more extrajudicial killings, some of whose victims might also have been abducted.

The victims come from all walks of life: a radio reporter, a university dean, a fish trader. For the most part, they are Tamil, the country's main ethnic minority. Many of the abductions have been carried out in government-controlled territory - sometimes in the heart of this highly fortified capital, at other times in the north and east, close to military installations. Some of those kidnapped have won release only after their families appealed to the highest echelons of the state.

A white van appears repeatedly in their recollections: it is the iconic symbol of the late 1980's, when white vans were used in a wave of abductions as the government fought a violent leftist insurrection.

Despite the official denials, the abductions have spread a cloud over the administration of President Mahinda Rajapakse, including a recommendation by the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, Louise Arbour, to dispatch foreign monitors to investigate rights abuses here.

Instead, on Nov. 6, Mr. Rajapakse's government announced formation of a government commission of inquiry, to be aided by foreign observers. Ms. Arbour's office cautiously welcomed the plan but warned of the need to "establish not only individual responsibility for crimes, but the broader patterns and context in which they occur."

The spike in rights abuses corresponds to the swift deterioration of a 2002 cease-fire between the Sri Lankan military and the ethnic rebels, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The rights record of the Tamil Tigers has hardly been exemplary. They have been repeatedly accused of abductions, including of children whom they draft into military service. The rebels are also implicated in a rash of assassinations, in particular attacks on ethnic Tamils who work with the state.

The terror of this war has grown ever sharper with the emergence of the Karuna faction, which broke away from the Tamil Tigers.

Sathasivam Kumararatnam, the fish trader, was packed into a white van on a Thursday morning in late September from a street corner near his house. His captors, he said, pistol-whipped him, blindfolded and gagged him, bound his wrists and took his cash.

He was beaten and interrogated about his links to the Tamil Tigers. His family

(continued from page 27)

gry, alienated, and badly let down as if they were a colony instead of part of the country. I am convinced that the government's attitude during this disaster reinforced the impression among the East Pakistanis that the western wing did not care for them, and that this brought many more voters behind Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League".

We neither want a Yahya Khan in Colombo or another Bangladesh in our territory. But the President seems to have less men of wisdom round him.

Now the present agenda of the GoSL and the LTTE seems to be to fight to a finish, where the former carries a political aim in the war, having given too much of credence to the defense forces, which if unchecked, in the long run will repeat the scenario enacted in Thailand on the 19th September.

Sri Lanka is the one and only Buddhist country in the world with an unmarred democratic rule. Let us keep it

up without becoming another Burma. Further Sri Lanka should realize this is not a conventional war where all the troops are lined up, face to face, and start shooting at the shout "Fire". The opponents are guerillas. As long as even two cadres are left behind, the King cannot have a sound sleep.!

And the militants also should understand, with limited resources and material, no terrorists have ever fought a state for ever, and won.

The suffering of the people, for whose benefit these fighters say they fight, should not go uncompensated. The euphoric masses whether from the South or Northeast will soon get disillusioned react against it like the Americans now feel over Iraq.

Therefore there is no other way. Never say, never again, for talks. Otherwise as was related in the story, the eagle will land in Dhammadeepa to take away the fatigued kittens. Is that what we want finally? [Daily Mirror, 8.11.2006]

was then pressed for nearly \$10,000 for his release. The Kumararatnams bargained his captors down to half that amount, and when a courier came to pick up the ransom, Mr. Kumararatnam's first-born son, Ravindran, beat him to a pulp. He also forced a confession out of him. "I'm with the Karuna faction," Ravindran said he heard him say.

The police confirmed that a man arrested in connection with Mr. Kumararatnam's kidnapping had confessed to links to the rebel faction. They gave no further details. His captors have since released Mr. Kumararatnam. But he is not yet free. He still receives threatening phone calls, he says. "This time, we will kill you," the callers tell him.

The political nature of many of the abductions, even in cases where the kidnappers' identities are hard to pin down, seems clear.

Nadaraja Kuruparan, a Tamil radio reporter, said he was not asked for a single rupee after he was yanked from his car one early morning in August. He was held overnight at what appeared to be a private house, he said, and told he would have to "clarify" some of his reports. He was released on the outskirts of Colombo the following day, and given taxi money to return home.

The government had previously warned the station about Mr. Kuruparan's popular talk show, on which he had interviewed a Tamil Tiger leader this year. Since his kidnapping, he has decided to take the talk show off the air.

In another case, Balasingam Sugumar, the dean of arts at the main public university in Batticaloa, in the east, was plucked from his house and detained for 10 days, despite his family's quiet efforts to buy off his captors, the family said.

In exchange for his release, his abductors demanded the resignation of a senior university administrator, whom they accused of having links to the Tamil Tiger rebels. It remains a mystery how the white van that came to get him on a Saturday night in late September managed to pass through the military checkpoints that sit on both ends of his road.

His family says they do not know what ultimately led to Mr. Sugumar's release, only that they reached out to representatives of each of the warring parties, including President Rajapakse, who promised to investigate.

Mr. Sugumar refused to be interviewed. [He has since fled the country, his family said.]

Commission to probe rights violations with international oversight

Nov 6 - In response to a sustained campaign by international human rights organisations for the appointment of an independent international human rights monitoring mechanism under the auspices of the United Nations, the Sri Lankan government has agreed, as an alternative, to the appointment of a hybrid mechanism, composed of domestic and international elements.

The domestic element comprises the appointment on 3 November 2006 by the President a Commission of Inquiry headed by the Supreme Court Justice Mr. Nissanka Udalgama. The other Members of the Commission comprise of highly recognized academic personnel on legal and human rights fields, representing a cross section of the society, namely Mr. Upawansa Yapa, Mrs. Manori Mutthutuwegama, Mr. S. Wijeratne, Dr. Devanesan Nesaiah, Mrs. Jesima Ismail, Mr. K.C. Logeswaran and Mr. Javid Yusuf.

The Commission of Inquiry has been vested with a specific mandate to inquire into fifteen specific incidents which includes,

- * Assassination of the late Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadiragamar;
- * Murder of MP Joseph Pararajasinghem;
- * Murder of Peace Secretariat deputy chief Mr. Ketheshwaran Loganathan;
- * Killing of five youth in Trincomalee on 2nd of January 2006;
- * Killing of seventeen workers of the French Non Governmental Organisation in Muttur during early August 2006;
- * Killing of thirteen persons in Kayts on 13th May 2006;
- * Disappearance of Rev. Nihal Jim Brown on 28th August 2006;
- * Death of 51 people in Mullaitivu in a bombing raid in August 2006;
- * Killing of 68 persons in Kebithigollewa;
- * Killing of 98 security personnel in Digampathaha on 16th October 2006 etc.

Apart from these specific cases the Commission is to have terms of

For now, there seems to be little consensus within the government on who is behind the abductions, let alone what to do about them.

A senior negotiator for the government, Palitha T. B. Kohona, said the kidnappings represented a law-and-order challenge for the state. "We would like to get to the bottom of this," he said. "We will intensify investigations if necessary."

Gotabaya Rajapakse, the president's brother, who also serves as defense secretary, said in late October that "lots of people" had been apprehended in connection with the abductions. But he did not have details on how many and in what period.

His claim was contradicted by a retired judge whom the president appointed to look into the abductions. The judge, Mahanama Tilakaratne, said the police had made virtually no arrests. He also said he believed many of the recent abductions were a result of personal grudges

and had little to do with the ethnic conflict.

By way of example, he took out the file of one victim and pointed out that he was suspected of an extramarital affair. The judge said he could not share details of any other cases.

Many of those who disappeared a generation ago are still unaccounted for. Their faces stare out from a simple memorial erected on the outskirts of Colombo. Once a year, their families come to lay flowers.

In late October came a weeping father, W. A. W. Weerasinghe, to remember his son, Krishantha, who was stuffed into a white van one afternoon more than 16 years ago and has not been heard from since.

Along with dozens of other parents, Mr. Weerasinghe, 68, laid flowers and wept. "Disappearance is a crime against humanity," reads a tablet at the base of the memorial. "Let us not allow it to happen again."

[Courtesy of New York Times, November 7, 2006]

reference to broaden their investigations on cases arising during the inquiries and on complaints received by the Commission from public on other serious violations of human rights.

The aim of the Commission, which will be in operation for one year, is to encourage fresh witnesses to come forward and give evidence before it in respect of the cases under investigation.

The international element comprises the appointment by the President of an 'International Independent Group of Eminent Persons' (IIGEP) headed by the former Chief Justice of India P.N. Bhagawathie, to observe the investigations and inquiries conducted by this Commission of Inquiry. The IIGEP is authorised to oversee and ensure that the Commission's inquiries conform to the international norms and standards. However, "The international observers do not possess a mandate to conduct investigations or inquire into alleged human rights violations either parallel or alternative to those of the Commission of inquiry."

The IIGEP will consist of foreign observers from Governments of Australia, Canada, European Union, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States. In addition nominees from the UN Human rights Commission and Inter-Parliamentary Union will also be appointed. The IIGEP will have the liberty of making public statements containing their views and provide advice when such advice is sought by the Commission. The IIGEP will have its own Secretariat and it will be operating from the BMICH premises.

Human Rights Minister Mihinda Samarasinghe explained that the delay of over two months in creating the mechanism was due to the "extended consultation process" with the International Human Right Com-

mission in Geneva, Amnesty International UK and prominent civil society groups to decide on the structure of the Commission. It will be at least another 6-8 weeks before the Commission begins to function.

The members of the IIGEP have been chosen by President Rajapakse from recommendations sent by the governments of USA, UK, Canada, Japan, Netherlands and the EU. Other candidates will be selected from lists provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Inter-Parliamentary Union as well as through the direct invitation of the Sri Lanka government. Former Chief Justice of India P.N. Bhagawathie has been invited to chair the group.

Deputy Solicitor General Yasantha Kodagoda insisted that other investigations presently being conducted by separate parties would continue "without prejudice" and any other human rights violations that come into light during the Commission's investigations might also be included into the mandate of the Commission.

On 6 November 2006, a press release from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, "welcomed the Sri Lankan President's establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into extrajudicial killings and disappearances, expressing hope that it will see the perpetrators of serious human rights violations brought to justice."

The press release added, "The High Commissioner underlined the significance of this initiative in addressing impunity for human rights violations related to the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka. She noted that the Government has also invited a group of international observers in the form of an International Independent Group of Eminent Persons to monitor, provide advice

as requested, and report on the Commission's work.

"The High Commissioner thanked the Government for inviting her to provide advice on the terms of reference for the Commission of Inquiry and the observer group, in line with international standards. She expressed satisfaction that many of the comments by her Office had been taken into account in establishing the Commission, including the need for witness protection and measures to increase the transparency of the inquiry.

"The High Commissioner expressed concern, however, over several shortcomings in the national legal system that could potentially hamper the effectiveness of the Commission of Inquiry, particularly the absence of any legal tradition of establishing command responsibility for human rights violations. She also noted that many recommendations of past commissions of inquiry, including into disappearances, had not yet been fully implemented.

"It will be critically important for the Commission to establish not only individual responsibility for crimes, but the broader patterns and context in which they occur.

"The High Commissioner also noted that any commission of inquiry can only investigate a selection of cases, and that a broader international mechanism is still needed to monitor, ultimately prevent, human rights violations in the longer term.

"At the invitation of the Government, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has submitted a list of names of suitable candidates who could potentially serve as observers to the inquiry. These persons, if selected, would serve in their personal capacities and would not represent the High Commissioner or OHCHR." □



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Home guard killed: Nov 1 - A Sinhala home guard was shot dead by a group of unknown gunmen who attacked a home guard checkpoint at Neelapola in Serunuwara police division in Trincomalee district on Tuesday (Oct 31) early morning around 12.40 am by suspected Tamil Tigers, Sri Lanka security sources said. Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers retaliated but the gunmen escaped.

Claymore attack kills civilian woman: Nov 1 - Suspected Tamil Tigers triggered a claymore bomb on Wednesday (1) afternoon killing one civilian woman, injuring two Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and a policeman at Thekankaadu in Vavuniya. The attack was targeted towards a SLA road checkpoint located 1 km from Vavuniya town. The dead civilian woman was identified as Kovinthatasamy Jegathambal. The two injured SLA troopers and the policeman were first rushed to Vavuniya hospital and later transferred to Anuradapura hospital for intensive treatment.

Fisherman dies in Navy attack: Nov 1 - A fisherman fishing in Silavattai Sea in Mullaithivu district was killed and another injured when Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) attacked them around 6:00 am. Sunday Oct 29), according to LTTE sources. Ariveeran Murugappan, 66, father of two, who was displaced from Udappu in Mannar district and presently living at Selvapuram in Mullaithivu, died in the incident. Veerapathiran Nagarasa, 49, father of six, who was operating the engine at the time of attack and escaped with injuries, is a resident of Selvapuram in Mullaithivu. He is admitted to Mullaithivu hospital for treatment.

Two traders shot dead in Jaffna: Nov 1 - A pavement trader near Muneeswaram Road in front of Jaffna Teaching Hospital in the Jaffna central business district was shot dead by unknown gunmen who came in a motorbike at 8:30 am on Wednesday (1). The victim was identified as Thiruchelvam Surendrakumar, 34, from Navanthurai. He was opening his pavement business when he was shot. Very near the scene of this incident, two days earlier on Monday (Oct 30), Navaratnam Mahinthan 17, another street vendor was shot dead around 11:00 at Muneeswaram road in Jaffna town by unknown gunmen.

Woman shot dead in Colombo: Nov 1 - Two unidentified armed men on motor cycle shot dead a seamstress in her tailor shop at Manning Place in Wellawatte, Colombo on Wednesday (1) around 6:50 pm. The victim was identified as Thambipillai Atputharanee, 48. Atputharanee, originally from Madduvil Jaffna, was living in Wellawatte for the last 10 years with her 20 year old son, Manning place residents said.

New Mullaithivu hospital opened: Nov 2 - Dr. T. W. Jeyakularajah, Mullaithivu District Deputy Provincial Director of Health Services, presided over the opening ceremony of a section of the Mullaithivu hospital complex constructed at a cost Rs.110m funded by the Northeast Community Restoration and Development (NECORD), held on Wednesday (1) at Maanthottam area along the Mullaithiyu-Mulliyawalai road in northeastern Sri Lanka. Mullaithivu district Political Head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Chemmanan, hoisted the National Flag, and Hospital official Mr. Arunasalam lit the Common Flame. This was followed by the unveiling of the name board by S. Kanagaratnam TNA parliamentarian for Vanni. Mullaithivu Government Agent (GA) Imelda Sukumar opened the Hospital by cutting the ribbon. Additional GA K. Parthipan un-

veiled the NECORD plaque on the building. TNA parliamentarian for Jaffna S. Gajendran opened the rest of the building complex. The opening of the first stage buildings of the new Mullaithivu hospital complex fulfills the long term need of medical facility in the under developed Mullaithivu district, said Dr. Jeyakularajah in his welcome address.

Protest by Jaffna residents stranded in Vavuniya: Nov 2 - Stranded Jaffna peninsula residents, trapped in Vavuniya since the closure of the A9 road, the only land route from the mainland to Jaffna peninsula from August 11, staged a demonstration on

Wednesday at the Vavuniya Secretariat demanding the authorities to send them to their homes and submitted an appeal to Ms. Charles, the Additional Government Agent of

Vavuniya.

So far more than 2500 stranded Jaffna residents in Vavuniya have been taken by the Sri Lankan authorities in buses to Trincomalee harbour and from there shipped to Jaffna. The rest of the stranded Jaffna residents are facing hardships and inconvenience in their temporary places of stay in Vavuniya. In addition to running into financial difficulties in meeting their daily expenses, families have also been affected with illness and have suffered from inadequate medical care, civil society sources said.

Four abductions in 12 hours: Nov 2 - It has been reported that four youths have been abducted in Jaffna district within twelve hours from 6:00 pm on Wednesday (1), according to complaints registered by the relatives and parents of the victims at the Jaffna Human Rights Commission offices. It is reported that a group of army men in association with an anti-LTTE Tamil group have been responsible for these abductions.

Baskaran Pirathaban, 23, an Auto rickshaw owner, was abducted on Wednesday (1) midnight at his home at Manipay Road in Inuvil west. Pirathaban's mother, Kamalavathy, 52, was allegedly shot and seriously injured by the SLA troopers. She was rushed to Tellipalai Government hospital, her relatives said. Nadarasa Narmathan, 20, a technical college student was arrested at his home in Chunnakam east on the same day around 7:30 pm reportedly by soldiers on field bikes. In the third abduction, Sivananthan Sritharan 30, a carpenter of Kerniyady in Kokuvil was arrested by soldiers on Wednesday night at his house in Kerniyady area. In the fourth case, Sivasubramaniam Tharmenthira, 25, was arrested on Thursday (2) around 5:00 am at Fifth street on Brown Road in Jaffna town by soldiers.

In a separate case Thirugnanasampanthar Ramanan, 23, a recent returnee from Malaysia, disappeared on Wednesday around 4:00 p.m after being last seen being interrogated at the SLA check post at Inuvil when he was on his way to Mallakam. He did not return from the SLA check post and no information is available about his whereabouts, his relatives said.

'Ellalan force' kills young woman: Nov 2 - A young woman from Odai area, Point Pedro, in Vadamarachchy region in Jaffna district was shot dead by suspected Tamil Tigers near Pandaary Amman Temple in Thambachetty, 1 km west of Point Pedro town, at 3:30 pm on Thursday (2). Yasothiny Narayanamoorthy, 25, was riding a bicycle near the Amman Temple when two unidentified gunmen followed her in a motorbike, shot her in point blank range and escaped, according to "Ellalan Force", which is normally identified as a Tamil Tiger front, claimed responsibility for the killing in a press release issued to the media stating that she was punished because of her 'involvement in anti-social activities'.

NEWS TRACK

Jaffna Bishop calls for a land route to Jaffna: Nov 3 - Jaffna Bishop, Rt. Rev. Thomas Savundaranayagam, has sent an urgent telegram on Thursday (2) to Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse requesting him to immediately open a land route to Jaffna peninsula to allow the flow of desperately needed food and other essential materials to Jaffna residents.

The Bishop criticised the Sri Lanka government (GoSL) refusal to open the A9 land route at the last Geneva Talks and faulted Non-governmental organisations in the Jaffna peninsula, both foreign and local, for having failed to anticipate and be prepared for grave ground situation now facing Jaffna residents.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop has been insisting on both the GoSL and the Tamil Tigers to enable the reopening of the A9 route because the supply by sea alone is hardly sufficient to meet the much needed food, medicine and other essential commodities for the people of Jaffna.

Man shot dead in Vavuniya: Nov 3 - A 36-year old man was shot dead by unidentified men inside his house at Aachikulam in Samalankulam in northern Vavuniya, around 3:30 am on Friday (3). The victim was identified as Marimuthu Chandrasegaram from Kilinochchi, the according to the police. He fled Kilinochchi due to military operations and was living at Sithamparapuram Welwafre Centre. He was later resettled at Samalankulam. He lost his one leg in an earlier mine explosion.

SLA mortar attack kills father and son: Nov 3 - A father and son were killed on the spot in a mortar attack launched by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) from its Mankerny camp in Batticaloa on Vaharai, a village in the LTTE controlled area in Batticaloa, on Friday (2) around 8:30 am. Nallathamby Thiyagarajah and his son Thiyagaraja Rajanikanth, 28 were killed while they were riding on a bicycle when the shell fell and burst near them. The shells launched continuously by the SLA on and around the temporary shelters of the internally displaced people (IDP) in this area fall and explode causing the IDPs to flee in fear in all directions, said sources from Vaharai.

Patient dies due to blast shock: Nov 3 - A heart patient in the Kilinochchi General Hospital died on Thursday (2) around 3:00 pm at the hospital due to shock related complications caused by the aerial bombing in the vicinity of the hospital, according to Dr. Sathanandan, Director of Kilinochchi General Hospital at Anandapuram. The deceased, Mary Theresa Antony, 49, a mother of four children of Jeyanthi Nagar in Kilinochchi, was a heart patient under treatment at the hospital for three days.

Father of five shot dead in Mannar: Nov 3 - A 39-year old resident of Periyamurippu village in Mannar district, and a father of five children, was shot dead by unidentified persons on Friday (3) morning, sources in Mannar said. The victim's body was found near the suspension bridge along Madhu Road to Kunchukulam road. The victim has been identified as Sivalingam Krishnan, a fisherman. Reportedly, the deceased had been earlier a member of the LTTE and later left the movement and was living in the village with his family, sources said.

EPDP members attacked: Nov 4 - Suspected Tamil Tiger assailants hurled hand grenades at the cadres of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) selling "Thinamurasu", a weekly paper printed by EPDP, at Kanagaretnam road junction in Valaichchenai Police division in Batticaloa district, around 10:30 am on Friday (3). No one was injured in the attack.

To Colombo for interrogation: Nov 4 - Five young men ar-

rested by SLA troops and handed over to Chunnakam Police on Thursday (2) night are being held at the Special Detention camp in KKS. Reportedly arrangements are being made to transfer these men to Colombo for further inquiries by CID police personnel of the Terrorist Investigation Division. Parents and relatives who gathered at Mallakam courts on Friday (3) expecting the men to be produced for preliminary inquiry failed to see them. Eight young men including Jaffna University student leader Baheerathan arrested the previous week by SLA troops and transferred to Colombo are being kept in various prisons in the South reportedly for further inquiries.

Former LTTE member killed: Nov 4 - A former member of the Tamil Tigers who was abducted from his home, on Friday (3) night, was found hacked to death, on Saturday (4) morning, Vavuniya police said. Nadarasa Sivamoorthy, 26, was abducted from his home at Iluppaikulam by six unidentified persons, around midnight. His body was found with cut injuries, on Saturday morning, according to the police. He reportedly left the LTTE in 2000 and had been living in Vavuniya. He is a father of three month old child.

Soldier killed in claymore attack: Nov 4 - A Sri Lanka Navy (SLA) personnel was killed and another injured in a claymore mine attack by suspected Tamil Tigers at Allesgarden in the Uppuveli police division, about 3 km north of Trincomalee town, around 9:45 am on Saturday (4). The SLN soldiers were on a road clearing operation. The injured soldier was taken to the Trincomalee general hospital, the police said.

Co-Chairs' on air force bombing: Nov 4 - The Ambassadors representing the Co-Chairs - the US, EU, Japan and Norway - in a statement regarding the bombing raid in Kilinochchi on 2 November expressed "their deep regret over the bombing of a house in Kilinochchi on 2 November 2006 that resulted in the death of five civilians," adding that "The explosion also damaged the Kilinochchi District Hospital and caused patients to flee." The statement went on to say: "the Co-Chairs expect both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to refrain from military action. This latest attack comes at a delicate time when both sides should seek to build confidence and compromise to ensure further rounds of talks can soon be agreed, and an escalation of the conflict can be avoided."

One PC killed, two STF troopers injured: Nov 5 - Suspected Tamil Tigers triggered a claymore land mine on Saturday (4) around 7:45 pm targeting a truck carrying Special Task Force (STF) troopers and police at Pottuvil in Amparai district, killing a police constable and seriously injuring two STF troopers. The dead policeman was identified as T. N. Jayawardene, 35. L. Nanthasri, 33 and U. Ranatunge 38 were the two STF troopers seriously injured in the blast. The injured men were rushed to Pothuvil hospital. Pottuvil is located 50 km south east of Amparai.

Ex-EPDP woman staffer shot dead: Nov 5 - A former worker at the Jaffna offices of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) was shot dead on Saturday 7:00 pm by suspected LTTE gunmen at her residence in Puttur, Valigamam East, sources in Jaffna said. Gunmen who went to Ms Nagamani Rajinithi's house in Puttur North, called her to the front door, before shooting her at point blank range and escaping. Ms Rajinithi was 31 years old.

Auto-rickshaw driver shot dead: Nov 5 - An auto-rickshaw driver from Rajakiramam village in Karaveddy West, Vadamardchy in Jaffna was shot dead by unknown gunmen on

Sunday (5) morning. This was the third killing involving youths from Rajakiraman travelling-in or owning auto-rickshaws in the last six months. Ponnuchamy Ramesh, 30, from Mattakuliya in Colombo, married in the Rajakiraman, and has been driving auto-rickshaw for a living. He is a father of two children.

Ex-PLOTE cadre shot dead in Kayts: Nov 5 - A former senior member of the paramilitary Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) was abducted from his home in Puliyanakudal, Kayts on Friday (3) and his body was found with gunshot wounds on Saturday (4). Kumaravelu Suthaharan, alias Appan, 33, left PLOTE less than 5 years ago, got married and was living in Puliyanakudal in the Jaffna islet when he was killed. Suthaharan's body was dumped in shrub jungles surrounding the Kaattu Vairavar Temple in Puliyanakudal.

According to a TamilNet report, Suthaharan was widely believed to be behind the abduction and beheading of a Karaveddy youth, Rajaratnam Rajeswaran, 23, at the PLOTE offices in Nelliady, located 5 km southwest of Point-Pedro. The decapitated body was recovered in from a cess pit behind the office of the PLOTE at Puthuthottam, Nelliady. The victim's head was recovered inside a drain near Kasturiar Road in Jaffna town. Suthaharan appeared in court proceedings in Point Pedro courts in the murder case, and later absconded, went into hiding, and started a family in Puliyanakudal, the TamilNet report said.

A9 closure is 'breach of CFA': Nov 5 - International monitors overseeing Sri Lanka's truce have said that the government was in breach of the ceasefire agreement in closing the A9 highway at Muhamalai in northern Sri Lanka, The Sunday Leader reported. "The government is clearly violating the Ceasefire Agreement and they have trapped more than half a million civilians within the Jaffna Peninsula. The A9 should be opened immediately" acting spokesperson for the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), Helen Olafsdottir, said. "We do not know what the government's intentions are by keeping the A9 closed," she said. "We were expecting the government to discuss the opening of the A9 highway at the Geneva talks." The SLMM last week informed relief agencies that the opening of the highway was one of their current top most priorities, the paper said. The paper quoted SLMM as saying while the government continued to ignore the pleas of aid agencies to open the A9, it would continue to mount pressure and hold discussions.

Jaffna University to admit only Tamil students: Nov 6 - Sinhalese and Muslim students will not be admitted to the University of Jaffna for the Academic Year 2006-2007 due to prevailing unstable security situation, and only Tamil students will be admitted, University Grant Commission sources said on Monday (6). Muslim and Sinhalese students admitted in Jaffna University for the Academic Year 2004-2005 left Jaffna following alleged intimidation and threat to their lives, and had been enrolled in the universities in the south of the country due to security situation. Sinhalese and Muslims would be admitted in the Jaffna University once the peace environment in the North East is ensured, UGC sources said.

This academic year 1905 Tamil students would be admitted to the Jaffna University to follow 20 disciplines. 100 seats are allocated for Medicine, 60 for Agriculture, 100 for Biology, 250 for Physical Science, 150 for Management Studies and rest for other disciplines, UGC sources said.

Shop assistant shot dead: Nov 6 - Unidentified armed men shot dead a shop assistant on his way home on bicycle on Sunday (5) around 7:00 pm at Puthukudirrupu in Valaichenai Police divi-

sion in Batticaloa, said Valaichenai police who recovered the dead body and handed over to Valaichenai hospital. The dead man was identified as Selvam Raju, 29, father of one, employed in a Video shop in Valaichenai town. Raju was shot at close range on his head, chest and stomach while going to his house in Kalikovil street in Puthukudirrupu after closing the shop around 6:45 pm Sunday.

Three civilians killed in Jaffna: Nov 6 - Three Tamil civilians including two women were killed in Jaffna peninsula within the 24 hour period between 6:00 pm Sunday (5) and 6:00 pm Monday (6), sources in Jaffna said. In a shooting incident on Sunday night in Sirupiddy in Valikamam East, a 29 year old woman, Thavasi Rasenthini, was killed at her home by unidentified assailants. The body of the victim has been taken to Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

In a separate incident, Alfred Charles, 16, a student from Chunnakam residing with his uncle in Kayts was shot dead reportedly by soldiers at 6:10 pm on Sunday. Charles reportedly fell victim when soldiers fired at a group of youths who tried to flee when asked to stop during curfew hours.

A woman was shot dead by unknown gunman at about 10:00 am on Monday (6) at her home in North West Alvai in Vadamaradchi area, sources in Point Pedro said. The victim has been identified as Kathirgamanathan Lalitha, 45, mother of seven children. Her body has been taken to Manthikai Government Hospital. The deceased also had deep cut wounds on her face suggesting that she had struggled with the assailants before being shot, hospital sources said.

Fisherman shot dead: Nov 7 - According to police sources, suspected Tamil Tigers took away a fisherman from his home at Kinaiyadi Nagathambiran temple street in Valaichenai police division in Batticaloa and shot him dead on Monday (6) around 11:00 pm. The dead fisherman was identified as Thambipillai Karunakaran, 34, father of 2 children of Kinaiyadi Nagathambiran Temple street near Kinaiyadi Murugan Temple road in Valaichenai. He was shot with a 9mm pistol. The dead body with three bullet wounds on its head is kept at the Valaichenai hospital morgue pending inquest into death, the police said. Karunakaran normally catches fish in the Kinaiyadi river and sells them to people living in the LTTE control areas across the river. Police alleged that he might have been shot dead by the Tigers on suspicion that he provided information on the LTTE.

Three youths shot dead: Nov 7 - Bodies of two young men were recovered on Tuesday (7) morning by the Uppuveli Police at Kanniya about eight km off northwest of Trincomalee town and the body of one young man at Allesgarden, about five km off north of east port town. The bodies have not yet been identified. All three men are reported to have been shot dead by unidentified persons on Monday (6) night, police. The bodies of the dead men were brought to the Trincomalee general hospital for identification and post-mortem examination.

Two suspected Tigers shot dead: Nov 7 - Soldiers shot dead two men in Thirunelveli area in Jaffna at 8:30 pm on Monday (6), according to local reports. The Army said that the men were cadres of the LTTE and that they recovered weapons which were in their possession. Thirunelveli residents said they heard gunfire and grenade explosions behind Palay Road, near Kaali Kovil (Temple) Monday evening. Bodies of the two men were taken to the Jaffna Teaching Hospital as directed by Jaffna Magistrate at 11:00 p.m. for identification. No one has yet claimed the bodies, according to hospital sources.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, Mathiyaparanam

Nimalchandran, 38, was shot dead by unknown gunmen who arrived at his home in motorbikes on Monday afternoon. In another separate incident, a civilian was shot dead in Araly at 5:30 pm on Monday by unknown gunmen.

Intelligence officer shot: Nov 7 - A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Intelligence officer was seriously injured near Nelliady junction in Vadamaradchy when suspected LTTE gunmen shot at two SLA officers riding in a motorbike at 4:30 pm on Tuesday (7). The injured officer was first taken to Manthikai Government Hospital, located 3 km northeast of Nelliady, and was later taken to Palaly Military Hospital. The SLA Intelligence officers were riding along Jaffna, Point Pedro road after inspecting SLA patrols in several areas in Vadamaradchy when the gunmen emerged from the Vathiry-Kodikamam road, sprayed gunfire towards the SLA officers, and escaped.

Artillery duel injures four women: Nov 8 - Four women were injured when a mortar shell launched from LTTE area targeting the Murkodanchenai Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camp fell and exploded on a house near the SLA camp on Tuesday (7) around 9:30 am. Meanwhile, hundreds of families from LTTE-controlled Kudumbimalai area sought shelter in adjoining jungles seeking safety from SLA fire from Valaichenai Brigade camp on Tuesday night, LTTE sources said.

SLA officials allege that the LTTE shell, intended to strike Karuna paramilitary group newly opened office on Tuesday at Murakodanchenai, had missed its target injuring civilians. The injured women were identified as Chandramathy 28, Indira 40, Kanagamma, 48 and Saraswathy, 50, were rushed to Chenkaladi hospital.

S. Seeralan, Batticaloa district deputy head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said mortar attacks and artillery fire were launched since Monday night on the LTTE held areas from the SLA camps in Valaichenai and Murkodanchenai. He also said that the LTTE retaliated with artillery fire on Tuesday morning on the SLA camps from where the LTTE was attacked.

Meanwhile several hundred residents belonging to more than 100 families, fled from Thihilivettai, Illupaiyadi Mummari and Siruthenkal villages in the Kudumbimalai area in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) held area in the Batticaloa district, and sought shelter in the neighbouring jungle to save their lives from the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) mortar fire from the Valaichenai Brigade camp which lasted from Tuesday 9:30 a.m until 9:30 p.m., said Seeralan. Around 1:30 pm on Tuesday, 3 Sri Lanka Air Force Kfir jets bombed Karadyanaru, Illupaiyadi chenai and Tharavai areas in the LTTE held territory while an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) was engaged in reconnaissance mission over the LTTE area.

One home guard killed; two seriously injured: Nov 8 - Suspected Tamil Tiger armed men in military fatigues opened fire on a home guard road patrol unit, killing one on the spot and seriously injuring two, on Wednesday (8) around 2:00 am at Thirvagama in Vavuniya district. Sunil Jayanth was killed on the spot while the two injured home guards were rushed to Vavuniya hospital and later transferred to Anuradapura hospital for intensive treatment.

TNA meets UNP leader: Nov 8 - Nineteen of the twenty two Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians on Tuesday (7) met with Ranil Wickremasinghe, leader of the main opposition United National Party (UNP), at the latter's request and held discussions on the urgency of bringing normalcy in the North East, legalising the merger of the two provinces, and the opening

of the land route A9 to Jaffna peninsula, political sources in Colombo said.

This is the first time TNA parliamentarians had met with Mr. Wickremasinghe after he signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP), main constituent of the ruling United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government.

TNA reportedly told Ranil Wickremasinghe that legislation for the merger of two provinces could be passed in parliament with two-third majority with the support of SLMC, SLFP, TNA and UNP. Mr. Wickremasinghe is reported to have assured TNA parliamentarians that he would take up these matters with Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse.

Abducted man found dead: Nov 9 - The body of an elderly disabled man, who was abducted by three unidentified armed men on Tuesday (7) around 11:00 pm from his house near Kanthaswamy Temple in Kopay north, was recovered on Wednesday morning at Thirunelveli Dairy Farm area in Jaffna, with bullet wounds. The victim, identified as Kathiravelu Selvarasa, father of seven children, had lost his leg in a mine explosion and moved about with a prosthetic leg. The relatives of Selvarasa said that the abductors took him away saying they wanted to interrogate him.

Woman shot dead in Eravur: Nov 9 - Unidentified armed men shot dead a woman on Wednesday (8) around 7:00 pm at her house on Barathi road at Arumugathan Kudirippu in Eravur police division in Batticaloa. The dead woman was identified as Kathirgamathamby Gowri 31, husband employed in a Middle East country and mother of two children.

Ex-SLA trooper killed in bomb explosion: Nov 9 - A former Sri Lanka Army (SLA) trooper was killed in a bomb blast on Wednesday (8) at 8:30 pm in his house at Illayavan Podi road in Eravur police division in Batticaloa. The dead man was identified as Ibrahim Mohamed Nazeer, 37, a trader by profession. Nazeer, a father of three children, was alone at his house when the bomb exploded. The explosion completely destroyed Nazeer's house while causing some damage to neighbouring houses.

2 Sri Lankan gunboats destroyed: Nov 9 - A Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) Dvora Fast Attac Craft (FAC) was sunk by a Sea Tiger flotilla around 5:30 pm on Thursday (9) in the seas off Point Pedro and another SLN gunboat was damaged around 6:00 pm off Valvettithurai by the same flotilla which chased the SLN vessels into Kankesanthurai harbour, according to LTTE sources. Meanwhile, Liberation Tigers Military Spokesman Irasiah Ilanthirayan told media that the ongoing sea clash erupted when the Sea Tigers were provoked by Sri Lanka Navy vessels in the seas off Nagarkovil in LTTE territorial waters. At least 18 SLN sailors were reported missing in the clash. Meanwhile, a military official reportedly in Colombo that more than 18 SLN troopers were missing in the seas off Point Pedro. The military officials also claimed that a Sea Tiger boat had sustained damage in the clashes.

Three SLA troopers killed in Jaffna: Nov 9 - Suspected Tamil Tigers detonated a claymore mine hidden along the Jaffna-Pt. Pedro road between Nallur temple and Anaipanthi junction in Jaffna, killing two Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Intelligence Officers riding a motor cycle on Thursday (9) around 5:00 pm. A sixteen year old girl, riding bicycle along the same road was seriously injured in the explosion and admitted to the Emergency Unit of the Jaffna Teaching hospital. The names of the two dead SLA Intelligence officers are not yet made public. The injured girl is identified as Y. Panuja of Arasady in Jaffna, hospital sources said.

In a separate attack against the SLA around 5:30 pm gunmen shot and seriously injured a trooper at Madathady junction SLA mini camp near the Water Tank area on the Jaffna Main Street. The SLA trooper succumbed to his injuries while being rushed to Jaffna Teaching hospital.

One killed, another injured in Jaffna: Nov 10 – LTTE sources alleged that Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers and collaborating paramilitaries shot dead a fisheries official in Vadamardchy, and wounded another seriously in Valigamam East on Thursday (9).. Both were described as Tamil activists involved in organizing protests against SLA harassment and violence in Jaffna district. Arumugam Vignarajah, 50, the President of Koddady Fisheries Society, was shot dead around 10:00 am while returning home from a nearby Temple in a bicycle. Koddady is located in the boarder of the High Security Zone. He was one of the key organizers of protest marches carried out by the students of Hartly College and Methodist Girls College demanding the removal of the educational institutions out of High Security Zone in Point Pedro. Participants in the protests destroyed some sentry points of the SLA. Vignarajah was arrested by the Police under the charges of arranging demonstrations against the SLA and causing damage to their properties, and was remanded in the Jaffna Prison. He was later released on bail and the case against him still pending, legal sources said. Vignarajah was also involved in coordinating the unloading of food shipment at the Point Pedro harbor, relatives said.

Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen shot and injured Sinnathurai Baskaran, 36, from Avarangal, in Valikamam East region, in front of the Jaffna branch office of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) located close to the SLA's Civil Administration Office around 10:30 am. HRC staffers took Mr Baskaran to the Jaffna Teaching hospital where he was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit. Local residents said Mr Baskaran may have earned SLA's ire because of his involvement in exposing the recent SLA's killing of five youths travelling in an auto-rickshaw in Puththur area. Baskaran led the HRC officials to the site of the killing and also openly took part in the agitation against SLA. Mr Baskaran was health worker at the Jaffna Municipal Council,

Family man shot dead: Nov 10 - Two unidentified gun men shot dead on Thursday (9) a family man at his house in Alavetty area in front of Alavetty Arunothaya College. The dead body was recovered on Friday morning and handed over to Jaffna Teaching hospital by the police. The victim was identified as Kanthaiah Sivanesan 48, a father of two, who happened to be alone home as his wife and children had gone out.

Two killed, two including soldier injured: Nov 11 - A trader in Jaffna town and a civilian in the Jaffna Islet of Kayts were shot dead by unknown gunmen in the last 24 hours from Friday (10) 6:00 pm in Jaffna district. A Sri Lanka Army (SLA) trooper and a worker-assistant of the slain trader were also injured during the same period. Jesudas Sabaratnam, 35, a civilian from Nalanthanai in Kayts, was shot dead by unknown gunmen on Friday evening. Gunmen who arrived at Jesudas's Nalanthanai house, shot him at close range and escaped.

Meanwhile, Alaharsamy Saravanakumar, 35 a trader who owned a business near Sathirai Santhi (junction) along KKS road, within the High Security Zone in Jaffna, was shot dead by gunmen riding in a motorbike at 1:30 pm on Saturday (11). In the same incident, Nadarasa Nishanthan, 24, from Vannarpannai, working as an assistant at the same business was seriously injured and was taken to Jaffna Teaching Hospital.

In a third incident, a Sri Lanka Army trooper on guard duty at the

sentry point located close to Malisanthi in Vadamardchy along Jaffna-Point Pedro road was shot and seriously injured by gunmen at 7:30 am on Saturday.

Man shot dead in Akaraipattu: Nov 11 - Unidentified armed men shot dead a man on Friday (10) around 8:30 pm at Alaiyadivembu area in Akaraipattu in Amparai district, residents of the area said. Akaraipattu police recovered the body on Saturday around 8:00 am and handed it over to Akaraipattu District hospital for identification and post mortem examinations, hospital sources said. The victim is around 35 years old and is yet to be identified, police said.

Tractor driver shot dead: Nov 11 - Three unidentified gunmen took away a tractor driver from his home reportedly for interrogation on Friday (10) around 8:00 pm at Vinayagapuram Kalmadu road in Marutha Nagar in Valichenai, and later shot him dead near a refugee camp on the Vinayagapuram School road. Bullet wounds in the victim's head indicated a T-56 gun was used in the killing. The victim, a father of two, was identified as Subramaniam Chandrebose, 31. Displaced from Vadamanai, a village on the Batticaloa district border, Chandrebose was living at Vinayagapuram along Kalmadu road, the police added.

Two bodies found dumped: Nov 12 - The bodies of two civilians, including a 14-year old school boy who was abducted by men in white van, were found dumped near Anaippanthy junction, a suburb of Jaffna town, on Sunday (12) morning. The victims were identified as Ravi Rajeevan, 14 and Thangaroopan Jeeva, 21, of Vellaipanthi, Kondavil East. Ravi Rajeevan was a grade-7 student at Kondavil Paramsothi Vidyalayam. He was abducted from his home around 11:30 pm on Saturday. Reportedly, Thangaroopan Jeeva was interrogated by Sri Lanka Army soldiers during a cordon and search operation in Kondavil, Saturday mornig. He was reportedly arrested by the soldiers later on the day. Thangaroopan returned from UAE about 2 months ago and he was to get married in two days, according to the sources.

One youth shot dead, another injured: Nov 12 - Two unidentified armed men on motor cycle shot two youths on Saturday (11) around 7:35 pm at a bus stop at Araiampathy in Kathankudy police division in Batticaloa district seriously injuring both, Kathankudy police said. One of the youths succumbed to his injuries while being rushed to Batticaloa hospital and the other is being treated at the hospital. The dead youth was identified as Krishnapillai Mohanadas, 24 and the injured is Amirthalingam Thineshkar, 22, both cousins and residents of Selavnagar in Araiampathy. The cousins, after finishing work at Mohanadas' father's hotel on Araiampathy Main street, sat talking at the bus stop close to their house as they usually do, when the gunmen shot at them at close range, the police said.

Body with gunshot wounds recovered: Nov 13 - The body of a youth with hands bound and gun shot wounds was recovered by Eravur Police in Sithandy in Murkodanchenai on Monday (13) morning. Bullet wounds in the victim's head indicated a T-56 gun was used in the killing. The victim was identified as Selvam Ravichandran, 25, of Sithandy Murugan temple road, a father of one child. Armed men abducted Ravichandran on Friday (10) at Chenkalady where he had gone to meet a sub-agent regarding his travel abroad, his relatives said. The body was transferred to Eravur district hospital for post-mortem examinations. The body was later handed over to Ravichandran's relatives after inquest into the death was held.

Three men abducted: Nov 13 - Armed men arriving in white van abducted three youths in Chunnakam, Jaffna on Sunday (12) night, officials of the Human Rights Commission in Jaffna said. Relatives of the abducted say that Sri Lanka Army (SLA) operating from the Atchelu Army camp were responsible for the abductions. Chelliah Kumarasooriar, 30, a day laborer from Ikkiran, Kantharodai in Chunnakam was abducted by armed men who arrived in a white van on Monday early morning at 1:15 am. Reportedly, the men assaulted Kumarasooriar's wife and children before driving off with the victim.

Saravanapavananthan Hariharan, 24, an employee at the private airline operator Aero Lanka, was abducted by armed men in Chunnakam junction at midnight Sunday (12), according to a complaint lodged with the HRC. Meanwhile, another youth, Balasundarampillai Kamalraj, 23, was abducted by a similar armed group at 11:45 pm Saturday (11) from his residence in Kantharodai Road, Chunnakam, HRC sources said.

Two youths found dead in Jaffna: Nov 13 - An unidentified burnt body of a youth, was recovered on Monday (13) near Urumpirai junction, residents of Urumpirai said. Sounds of gunfire were heard on Sunday (12) around midnight from the place where the dead body was found. The body is kept at the Jaffna Teaching hospital morgue for identification, hospital sources said. Another body of a youth with gunshot wounds was found on Monday near the Jaffna Hindu College playground.

Meanwhile, a mother from Kondavil area registered complaints with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in Jaffna on Monday (13) that her son Thambyaiah Jegan, 26, was abducted by persons in a White Van and that her two younger school going sons, aged 14 and 17 had escaped and fled from the abductors, HRC officials said. The mother also said that she can identify the abductors who are from Atchelu Sri Lanka Army (SLA) camp and that they told her policemen were taking her son to Kopay police station, sources added.

Bodies of Navy men and Tiger cadre washed ashore: Four bodies believed to be those of Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) soldiers killed during Thursday's (9) clashes in the seas off Point Pedro were discovered floating along the coast in the area between Supparamadam and Inparuddy on Sunday (12), sources in Point Pedro said. Two more bodies of SLN personnel were found washed ashore on Monday (13) in Valvettithurai near Sivaguru Maha Vidyalayam. Five of the bodies have been accepted by SLN and the unidentified sixth body is believed to be that of a LTTE Sea Tiger cadre. Based on the information from a document found in his pocket, the suspected Sea Tiger cadre, dressed in black shirt and black jeans is estimated to be in his thirties, and is believed to be from Kattakaddu Mulliyar area in Vadamaradachy East. Point Pedro Magistrate, K. Ariyanayagam and District Medical Officer, C. Kathiravetpillai rushed to the scene, and after performing post mortem and autopsy ordered the body be buried at Sri Lanka government's expense.

Navy destroys weapons boat: Nov 14 - The Navy on Tuesday (14) destroyed a boat suspected of ferrying arms to the LTTE in Sri Lanka's north, along with eight men aboard, the military said. Navy patrol boats spotted a fishing boat off the western shore close to Indian waters and when the naval boats drew close, the

men on the other vessel opened fire and threw grenades, navy spokesman Commander D. K. P. Dassanayake said. "Then the navy opened fire. The boat sunk after a huge explosion," Dassanayake said, adding that the big blast suggested the boat may have been carrying arms and explosives for the Tamil Tigers.

One soldier killed, another injured: Nov 14 - Suspected LTTE men triggered a claymore mine device on Tuesday (14) around 8:30 am on the Jaffna-Pt. Pedro road at Sirupitty in Valligamam east, killing a Sri Lanka Army (SLA) trooper on the spot and seriously injuring another of the SLA Road patrol unit going along the road.

Three SLA troopers killed: Nov 14 - Suspected Tamil Tigers detonated a claymore land mine device on Tuesday (14) afternoon killing three Sri Lanka Army (SLA) troopers at Mathottam area in Uylankulam Murungan in Mannar district. Details of the identity of the SLA troopers killed and other information of the attack is not available.

5 teenagers abducted in Batticaloa: Nov 14 - Unidentified armed men abducted four students from Vipulananthapuram, Mylambavely and another youth from Savukkady, Thalavai in Eravur Police division in Batticaloa district around 7:30 am on Tuesday (14) while they were unloading stones for road works. Thayaparan Alphons, 14, Arulanantham Mathan, 16, Thambirasa Sugumar, 16, and Santhiran Pirasath, 18, who are studying for G.C.E. O/L the second time work as labourers to supplement the income of their parents. All are from families living below the poverty line, civil sources said. The fifth youth, a friend who had visited the site in a bicycle to talk, was also abducted. Unidentified persons carrying weapons had come to the site in a van where the students were working along the Savukkady road, and abducted the youths. Parents of the abducted youths have lodged complaints at Eravur Police and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Soldier injured in grenade attack: Nov 15 - A Sri Lankan Army (SLA) soldier was injured when two suspected Tamil Tigers came in a motorbike threw a hand grenade at the group of soldiers on guard duty at Uma Mill junction, Kommathura, in Eravur Police division in Batticaloa district around 4:30 pm on Tuesday (14). The injured trooper, Soosai Ariyathasa, 35, was one of a group of soldiers stationed along the Batticaloa-Polannaruwa road to provide protection for the military convey that brings soldiers returning from leave.

India trains SL airforce crews: Nov 15 - India is training a third batch of six Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) personnel at Chandigarh, Punjab to support Colombo's plans to expand its jet bomber fleet, the Times of India reported this week. Sri Lanka plans to purchase four more jet bombers from Russia and, in preparation, SLAF personnel are being put through three months of instruction. The latest group began training on October 14. "We are a group of six and are undergoing electrical first line course for MiG-27s here," SLAF Sergeant Perera told the paper in at Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab. They started their training programme on October 14 and would end on January 5, 2007, he and another sergeant Srigunasinghe said, adding that theirs was the third batch from Sri Lanka to receive training here.

DIY General Insurance

www.armassociates.co.uk - useful links - ARM Online Insurance

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CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

MATRIMONIAL

These advertisements appear regularly, also on our website: www.tamiltimes.org

Tamil Hindu parents seek bride, age 26-29, for their son, 32, 5'11", specialised Bio-Medical Scientist - Quality & Development Manager-working for NHS, mild Mars affliction. Please send details to

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M 1496 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu Medical Doctor, 35 years, slim, good looking British citizen, inno-

cent divorcee without commitments seeks a professional groom. Please email: with details to:

charliedon_50@hotmail.com

Jaffna Hindu parents living in Australia seek a professionally qualified partner for their daughter, 28, Master in Law, well employed in Australia. Please send personal details to

M 1498 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional bride for their tall and handsome 31 year old son, UK qualified doctor working in London. Please send details to

M 1499 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek suitable bride for son, US permanent resident, IT Consultant in International Firm, 33, 5' 7". Please send horoscope details to

M 1500, c/o Tamil Times.

membered for her charming personality and smiling disposition by her relatives and friends. Her grieving nine children, 18 grandchildren and close relatives will always remember her deep care, love and affection. Vadivu had the profound wisdom of not criticising anyone's actions and opinions. Her in-laws always cherished her company for her non-interfering nature and will sadly miss her. She attracted people like a magnet;

friends and relatives in London and abroad always made it a point to visit her. Vadivu has left fond memories and we will always have a special place in our hearts for her.

**May her soul
rest in Peace!**

- For further information, please contact
Rathy Nithiananthan,
16 Milton Crescent,
Gans Hill, Ilford, Essex IG2
6DN.

Tel: 0208 518 3668



Mr. A. Mahadeva, Former Production Manager of the Eastern Paper Corporation in Valaichenai, has passed away on Friday, 10th November 2006 in Toronto, Canada. He is the eldest son of the late Mr & Mrs. Arunas-

alam of Potpathy Road, Kokuvil East and son-in-law of the late Mr. & Mrs. Saravanamuthu, Kaladdy, Jaffna. He is the beloved husband of Buvanashwary; loving father of Rajani (Jeeva), Sivani (Ruba), Malini (Bama) Mathini (Baby); father-in-law of Velthasan, Sivakumar, Kugathasan, Kaetheeswaran and precious grandfather of Vithukka, Denokka, Shagitha, Akshanna, Thaareka, Jathushan and Lahisha. May his soul rest in peace.

Contact numbers:

Mrs Mahadeva:
(416) 431-2025 (Canada)

Rajini Velthasan:
020-8646-6483 (UK).

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Mr. P.V. Nadarajah** on the eighteenth anniversary of his passing away on 16th November 1988. Fondly remembered by his beloved wife Thilagavathy; loving children Usha, Varathan, Nalini and Nanthini; sons-in-law Sivanathah, Rajkumar and Vathsayan; daughter-in-law Savithiri; grandchildren Bairavi, Luxmi, Uruthiran, Abhirami, Sabastian and Isabel.

-Flat 15, Girtin House,
44 Brighton Road, Sutton SM2 5JQ.
Tel: 0208 404 6541

OBITUARY



Vadivambal Kailasapillai, beloved wife of late Ethirnayagam Kailasapillai passed away on the 9th of November 2006 at the age of 85 and was cremated on Sunday, 12th

November 2006. Her late husband Kailasapillai was a well known ayurvedic physician from Pannakam, Srilanka; and devoted his entire life and resources to treating and helping the sick, the needy and the poor.

Vadivambal, like her husband, was an experienced ayurvedic physician and upon her husband's death in 1969, followed his foot steps in practicing medicine to treat the sick and needy until she settled in London in 1990.

Vadivambal known as Vadivu to many, will be re-

Seventh Year Remembrance

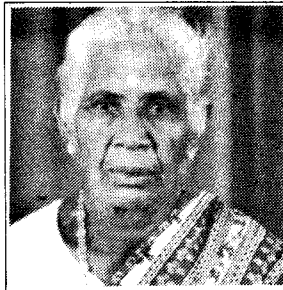
In ever loving memory of **Viranjani Rajika Malalgoda** on the Seventh anniversary of her passing away under tragic circumstances on the 7th of November 1999.

*Remembering our precious Daughter and Sister,
We knew little that morning God was going
to call your name,
In life we loved you dearly, in death
we do the same;
It broke our hearts to lose you, you did not go
alone, for part of us went with you,
The day that God called you home.
You left us peaceful memories,
your love is still our guide,
And though we cannot see you, you are always
at our side,
Our family chain is broken,
And nothing seems the same.*

Love you forever
Missing you lots by Mum and Dad, Rajeev Aiya & Saloni
Mahinda & Indra Malalgoda
96 Celeborn Street, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex, CM3 7AF
Tel: 01245 322852

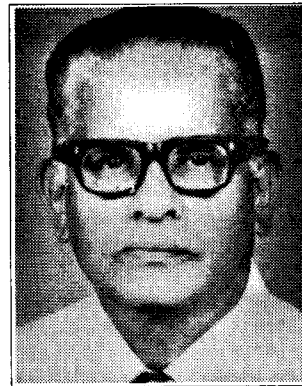
Fifth Year Remembrance

In ever loving memory of **Mrs Pavalam Ramasamy** who passed away on 29th November 2001.



Dear Amma,
Everyone says that you left us, but to us you continue to live with us everyday. Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your loving children, in laws and grandchildren.

-11 Bulstrode Avenue,
Hounslow, Middlesex
TW3 3AA.
Tel: 020 8577 6377.

**In Memory of Our Father
The Late Mr. Richards Jeyarajasingam**

BORN: 20.11.1928 CALLED TO GLORY: 27.11.1990
"Stable on the throne of self respect, you possessed the purity, integrity and authority to honour that which is most noble. The trail you left behind speaks for itself"

Always in our hearts our dearest appa
Rani and children

Eighth Year Remembrance

In Loving memory of **Miss Daisy Selvaranee** on the eighth anniversary of her passing away on 10th November 1998.

*Treasured memories keep you near
As time unfolds another year.*

Affectionately remembered and profoundly missed
by your loving sister Thevaranee.
- 64 Jessup Close, London SE 18

Mrs Chandra Ragupathy

In ever loving memory of my wife **Chandra** on the eleventh anniversary of her passing away on 28th November 1995.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered always by her loving husband Ragupathy
- 262 Wicklemarch Road,
London SE3 8DW.

**SRI LANKA
INFORMATION
SITE**

WWW.srilankans.com

Vocal and Veena Arangetram of Nathikka Kugapala

At the Logan Hall - London , 14.10.2006



Nathikka is young – barely sixteen, normally speaks English, being born and bred in the UK and to present a debut not only in Carnatic vocal but in veena as well is something of a rare occasion. A petite figure sitting rather nervously in the middle of the stage surrounded by very talented back up artists is enough to make anyone anxious if not frightened. Nathikka barely surprised the audience by singing in her lovely uniquely husky voice the very difficult vocal repertoire which consisted of some of the most difficult songs and words which she pronounced meticulously and accurately. Her Guru would have been very proud of her. Nathikka did much better than her compere who mispronounced the beautiful orthodox traditional words in Tamil and five other languages. His English diction was not all that "versatile" either.

Nathikka did not compromise in her vocal repertoire by taking any shortcuts. Started with the Varnam and sang 'Moolatharamurthy' piously. She went on to sing beautiful Kanada, Thelugu and Malayalam songs and did it with ease. Then she went on to sing some of the Tamil old favourites. 'Thunbam Nergayil, Yari eduthu nee'... which was her grandfather's favourite and mine too. The audience loved it, especially as she sang with great emotions. Next was the melodious 'Kaatrinilae varum geetham' which she sang her divine talent. Next was Bharathiya's 'Chinnanchiru Kiliye Kannamah' superbly sung in Ragamalika. The audience demonstrated their appreciation with prolonged applause. She then sang the Sai Bajan as a Baba devotee and went on to Thillana which concluded the first part – the vocal repertoire. During the short intermission we heard a comment "She is singing like a child", she is a child, her voice will mellow with age and variations in her singing will be noticeable.

The Veena Arangetram started promptly. Nathikka dressed

in off-white saree with a maroon coloured border sitting behind that beautiful veena gave the appearance of goddess Saraswathy herself. She looked very relaxed and happy (who wouldn't be?) She has just completed her vocal debut. Again it must be said this young girl has enormous stamina, determination and the will power to perform an arduous task. The repertoire had equally ambitious selections of songs.

Starter 'Manaviyala' composed by Saint Thyagaraja was played effortlessly. For such a tiny girl she has extremely strong hands and played beautifully the rest of the songs. 'Devi Sree Tripura Sundari' was my favourite, delightful piece to listen to and we were happy to see the expressions which proved she was very relaxed. The long hours of practice were evident, the way Nathikka performed. I don't know what her future plans are but she has a great future in the music world.

Nathikka had two very eminent Gurus, her vocal teacher 'Isaimani' Manikam Yogeswaran is a well known classical singer and is a very versatile artist. The veena teacher is well qualified and an experienced teacher whose coaching resulted in an excellent veena performance.



Accompanying artists all supported and complemented the young performer. The audience absolutely enjoyed the musical interludes. I felt that the acoustics at Logan Hall was not up to the standard. This should have been tried and tested before the programme.

We all enjoyed the presence of Dr. K.J. Yesudas, our all time favourite singer. My congratulations to Mr Kugapala and Dr. (Mrs) Girija Kugapala for the tremendous support, dedication and sacrifices they have made to present such a great Arangetram. With parents like them, we have no fear of losing our identity. More and more parents should get involved in promoting our culture.

Mrs. Mano Ananthanathan
B.A (Cey) – Dip in Ed (Lon) M.A (Lon)

Forthcoming Events

December

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 01. Eekathasi | 09. Feast of the Immaculate |
| 02. Sani Prathosam | onception of Virgin Mary |
| 03. Kartigai; Feast of St. | 10. Sri Arumuga Navalar |
| Francis, Xavier | Guru Poojah |
| 04. Full Moon; Karthigai; | 11. Karthigai Somavaram(4) |
| Somavaram (3); | 13. Feast of St. Lucy |
| Sarvalaya Deepam; | 14. Feast of St. John of the |
| Feast of St. Damascus | Cross |
| 06. Feast of Nicholas | 16. Eekathasi |
| 07. Feast of Ambrose | 17. Pirathosam |
| 08. Sankadakara Sathurthi | 20. Amavasai |
| | 23. Sathurthi |

25. Christmas; Vinayagar
Shathurthi;
Thiruvembavai Starts
26. Boxing Day; Feast of St.
Stephens
27. Feast of St. John
28. Feast of Holy Innocents
29. Feast of St. Thomas
Beecker
30. Vaikunda Eekathasi
31. Karthigai
- At Bhavan Centre, 4A
Castletown, London W14**

9HQ. Tel: 020 7381 3089/
4608

Website: www.bhavan.net

2nd December: 6.30 p.m.

**Gazals, Bhajans & Semi
Classical Music by
Nashid Kamal**

17th December: 3.00 p.m.

Christmas Celebrations –
Christmas carols performed
by young students under
the direction of **Mr. James
Marr.**

Unique Chola Exhibition in London by Ram Sanjayan Perinparaja

A special exhibition is being held at the Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly Circus, London from 11th November '06 to 25th February '07. It is the first exhibition of its kind to focus specifically on South Indian Tamil bronze statues. It incorporates over 30 different works of art. They have been loaned from private collections and museums from India, United States, and U.K.

Ancient Dravidian history featured dynastic struggles such as Chera, Pallava, and Pandya. After 850 AD a new dynasty arose under Vijayalaya Chola. His kingdom expanded over the next 400 years. The most famous of his descendants were Rajaraja Chola I who reigned from 985 -1014 AD, and Rajendra Chola I who reigned from 1012 - 1044 AD. The Cholas extended their conquests to the North and the East of Sri Lanka, and are reputed to have ruled the whole island for a period of 80 years. Their supremacy over the seas extended to trade in Malaysia, and Java. They sent trade missions to China.

The Cholas were reputed for their artistic excellence. A key area was the production of bronze statues known as 'utsavamurti' (festival images). Traditionally, many images had

been cast in stone and were intended for veneration mainly inside the temples. These bronze statues however, were generally made for the purpose of carrying in processions outside the temples on special occasions.

The two largest statues are of Lord Shiva in his manifestation as Nataraja (Lord of the dance). These images are recognised in the West by non-Tamils. This exhibition includes the Somaskanda version - depicting the holy family - Shiva, Parvati and Skanda. There are figures of the Tamil Saints such as Sambandar, and the female Saint Karaikkal Ammaiyar. The castors of the Chola bronze statues created these as examples of the famous 64 'Nayanmars' who were followers of Lord Shiva. The Hindu revival of the 6th to 9th centuries is owed to these saints who contributed to prolific Tamil Literature.

A series of lectures during the exhibition includes one by historian Michael Wood titled, 'South India: The last classical civilisation'. I strongly recommend a visit for those interested in Tamil art, culture, and history. I urge young Tamils to take pride in the achievement of people from their own cultural heritage by visiting this exhibition.

The Mail Train from Colombo to Jaffna

Here comes the mail train, pulling everything harder
Whistling and jerking and stops at the next station in order.
It screeches and stops grinding to a halt huffing and puffing.
The vendors come running, puffing and huffing.

The 'vada' man shouts at the top of his voice and
The tea person's advert drowns every other noise.

The juicy talk and the inquisitive look in the eyes
Take a rest in sleep and the pilfering hands work like spies.

Some lose a wallet, while some lose a suitcase;
Some do lose nothing in any in their case.

Pleasant journey does turn unpleasant
When incidents like these are often and constant.

Travellers are awake and through the windows peep.
They better not to go back to such deep sleep.

The sound of the churning wheels their relatives can hear
Even though some destinations are far not near.

The mail train in the North glides along the paddy fields
With their golden grains and promises of rich yields.

One or two heads pop on the verandhas
To look at the mail train that runs and meanders.

Jaffna station is warm and alive while the mailmen receive
The bags of letters, parcels, cards and salary cheques I perceive.

Do I yearn for a mail train journey in my land?
My yearning is only for permanent peace at hand.

Peace in the land is devoured
The railroad alas is sand-covered.
The links are all broken.

The compartments are all taken.
The dreams are all horrible.

Life has become so insensible
To the men, women and children,
Whose lives are in ruins

Varatha Shanmuganathan

Australian Newsletter

Australia is experiencing a severe drought in just over hundred years, while torrential rain in some parts of Queensland and raging bushfires in Victoria are altering economic life in some parts of the continent. Below average rainfall, driest August and hottest September on record and scorching temperatures have combined to add environmental havoc in the country.

Melbourne is celebrating "50 years on" since the 1956 Olympic Games that thrust her on to the world stage with boosting tourism and city's confidence. Since then Melbourne has moved forward to become a world city rather than just an Australian city. Melbourne is not just the second biggest city in Australia, but also home to the second largest number of Tamils in the country next to Sydney. Melbourne, a city in the banks of Yarra is also home to a sizable number of Hindus and boasts large numbers of temple of varied sizes in any Australian city. Melbourne is also home to one of the biggest temples in the southern hemisphere with 1500 square meters of roofed area with 39+ deities enshrined within it.

New Zealand ranked the eighteenth happiest country on earth in an international survey, eight places ahead of her gigantic neighbour Australia, while Canada, US and UK ranked tenth, twenty third and twenty sixth position respectively. The survey made its findings on long established principles that a nation's level of happiness is closely associated with health, wealth and provision of education. Sydney, one of the most dynamic cities in the Asia-Pacific region is dubbed as materialistic and pretentious, but far from sophistication. The Survey findings indicate working in Sydney was competitive, challenging and stressful, with the beaches and multiculturalism tying for best promotional feature.

Kanthashashdi was commemorated in temples across Australia. Tamil language learning centres in Australia are gearing up their efforts to encourage children at tender ages to speak in Tamil and it is indeed pleasing that concerted initiatives are being undertaken across most major centres. Australia's Victoria is on election mode for state parliament and it is worthy of note that Labour currently governs all six states in the country while Liberal-National coalition is at the helm in Canberra.

Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

Wedding Bells

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Selvi: Gayatri, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. M. T. Manikkavasan, 7 Manning Gardens, Keinton, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 0PF and **Selvan. Vyas**, son of Dr. & Mrs. S. Amirthalingam, Govyl 1 Canon Woo-

ds Way, Kennington, Ashford, Kent TN24 9QY. on 2nd November 2006 at Sri R. V. Janaki Ramiah Kalyana Mandapam, Puttārparthy

Kumuthan, son of Dr. T. & Mrs. S. Srisankarajah, 'Pergola', Carlton Road, New Maldon, Surrey KT3 3AJ and **Arani**, daughter of Dr. M & Mrs. L. K. Chandrakumar 33A Castle Road, Hythe, Kent CT21 5HB on 4th November

at the Riverbank Park Plaza-The Ballroom, 18 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TJ. A 605 page book on **Splendorous Shrines of Siva** including several pages of multicoloured pictures of Shrines of Siva was presented to the couple and to those who graced the happy occasion to celebrate the wedding.

Mathivannan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pathmanabhan of 5 Martin House, Falmouth Road, London SE1 6QP, U.K. Tel: 0207 378 8518 and **Sharmilee**, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mohan Raja of 14 Alabaster Place, Eagle Vale, New South Wales 2558, Australia, Tel: (02) 4620 4404 on 11th November 2006 at the Shri Shiva Mandir, 201 Eagleview Road, Minto, NSW, Australia

(continued from page 12)

water reservoirs in southern Sri Lanka in retaliation against military strikes on rebel areas.

The "High Security Zone Residents' Liberation Force", which claimed responsibility for a rash of deadly attacks on troops in the north earlier this year, said it was giving the military a final warning to halt attacks on LTTE controlled territory.

The military and the LTTE have been accusing each other of provoking near-daily artillery and mortar bomb duels in the north and east.

"Purposeful destruction of Tamil civilian lives and infrastructure would lead to Sinhala civilian lives and infrastructure becoming inevitable targets," the suspected outfit said in a message faxed to Reuters.

"We are sure that the people of the south are fully aware of the sort of humanitarian catastrophe they will have to face if one of the dams in the south is to burst," it added. "Our retaliation may be at anywhere and at any time. We urge civilians and the international community to take due care."

The group referred to an air raid near a hospital in the LTTE's northern stronghold of Kilinochchi on Thursday (2), an attack which killed five civilians in a nearby house and which the island's main donors - Japan, Norway, the United States and the European Union - have condemned.

"Every action has an equal and opposite reaction," the group said. "There are several hospitals in southern Sri Lanka. Not all are guarded by barbed wire and special forces."

It said it could also disrupt schools in the south if Tamil students' exams were delayed in the army-held Jaffna peninsula.

The Tigers say suspected fronts like the High Security Zone Residents' Liberation Force have been formed by dis-

gruntled Tamils who have decided to take up arms, and are not part of their movement.

Analysts said the threats should be taken seriously, and fear that the Tigers could turn to guerrilla attack tactics from the more conventional warfare which the foes have been fighting in the north and east since renewed civil war flared in late July. (Source: Reuters)

Sri Lanka unsafe for journalists

Nov 15 - Reporters Without Borders (RSF), an international media monitoring organisation has deemed Sri Lanka extremely unsafe for journalists in its 2006 Annual Report.

"The dormant war between security forces and the LTTE has had harmful consequences for the safety of journalists, particularly Tamils. Murders, arrests, threats and bombings have again become the daily lot for many reporters, particularly in the North and East," the report said.

Citing the murder of journalist Dharma-retnan Sivaram and TV Presenter Relangi Selvarajah as prime examples, the report stated following the arrest of just one 'suspect' the Sivaram case had been swept under the carpet.

"Violence between Tamil factions, sometimes manipulated by the security forces, has had particularly bloody results. The renowned Tamil journalist Dharma-retnam Sivaram 'Taraki,' head of the news website TamilNet and editorialist in the Daily Mirror, was gunned down in Colombo in April. After arresting one suspect, police abandoned the investigation," the report said.

RSF further highlighted the burning of the Leader press in October last year and the labeling of The Sunday Leader Editor Lasantha Wickremetunga as a "Terrorist" by extremist elements.

"The most independent media have

not been spared. In October, arsonists attacked the printers of the press group publishing The Sunday Leader and Irudina, near Colombo. A few weeks earlier, an ultra-nationalist leftist deputy, a member of the coalition government, called the editor of The Sunday Leader, Lasantha Wickremetunga a 'terrorist,'" the report said.

Maldives marks failed coup

Nov 3 - The Maldives on Friday (3) marked the 18th anniversary of the attempted coup by Sri Lanka's PLOTE backed by some Maldivian businessmen to violently overthrow the Gayoom Government.

The siege on the capital Male' on November 3, 1988 was thwarted by the country's military with the help of Indian security forces. 19 Maldivian servicemen and civilians were killed by the mercenaries in the 12-hour gun battle. The incident has been marked by Maldivians as Martyrs' Day, honouring the brave patriots who lost their lives for the country on that day.

Nearly 100 PLOTE operatives and the Maldivians who masterminded the failed coup were arrested and handed life sentences. The PLOTE cadres were later deported back to Sri Lanka. Most of the Maldivians sentenced in connection with the coup attempt have since been pardoned by President Gayoom and released.

One of the key financiers of the coup attempt, Sikka Ahmed Ismail Maniku, now resides in Sri Lanka with his family. Human rights activists in the Maldives have planned peaceful protests outside the Male home of MDP chairperson Mohamed Nasheed, as well as the family home of Sikka Maniku in Male. A number of protestors were expected to converge on Sikka's Sri Lankan estate with wreaths and photographs of those slain on November 3, 1988. □

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