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UNP secures hold on Provincial Councils

AS WAS WIDELY PREDICTED, the United National Party (UNP) led by President Jayewardene captured a controlling majority of seats in all four of the Provincial Council elections held in Uva, Sabaragamuwa, North Western and North Central Provinces on 28 April.

The UNP won 88 seats in the new councils with 57 per cent of the votes, while the United Socialist Alliance (USA) - a left-wing coalition which came to prominence after the assassination of film-star politician Vijaya Kumaranatunga in February - won 64 of the 155 seats contested and a 40 per cent share of the ballot.

Muslim Congress candidates gained three seats and a two-seat bonus went to the winning party in each province making a total of 163 seats in all.

The electoral turn-out however remained low. Only 56 per cent of the 2.8 million registered voters appeared at the 118 polling stations.

Many stayed away, it is thought, because of threats by the banned Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) to disrupt voting, and others because they were supporters of the opposition Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) led by Mrs Bandaranaike, which boycotted the election.

Apart from sporadic cases of arson and a number of unconfirmed shootings in Kurunegala

and Kandy the widely-feared show of force by the JVP did not materialise.

Many observers feel the SLFP boycott has proved itself to be a grave misjudgement as it effectively excludes the party from an important new tier of local government. They believe the USA who performed prom-

isingly in their first election outing will continue to gain support in subsequent polls.

The election of Provincial Councils for the Central, Western and Southern Provinces will take place on 2 June, official sources announced. The UNP will field some 240 candidates across the ten districts.

Deadlock in Jaffna

A SENSE OF STALEMATE underlies the uneasy peace that hangs over Jaffna Peninsula. Local government offices remain closed, transport is paralysed and curfew a daily occurrence. Food shortages continue to affect the local population.

Suspected militants are identified at checkpoints by masked informers and there are rumours of widespread undercover operations by the Indian intelligence Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Cordon-and-search operations by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) have continued throughout Jaffna town, Chavakachcheri, Vadamarachchi and surrounding areas during April, as well as a significant intensification of military activity south of Elephant Pass.

Local sources maintain over 24 LTTE suspects were killed and 26 injured in these operations in the last few weeks. A further 400 were arrested, bringing the number of de-

tainees in Jaffna to over 1,000 - some 400 of them having been in custody since the October offensive.

The cholera outbreak in the peninsula continues to give cause for concern especially in the coastal fishing villages where medical resources are minimal. The number of confirmed cases has reached 121 resulting in 11 known deaths.

Two separate delegations of medical officers from Jaffna hospitals met government officials in Colombo in mid-April to brief them on the continuing deterioration of medical services in the north.

Transport to and from the peninsula continues to be difficult and often dangerous. Reports indicate that despite the presence of IPKF troops on the Jaffna-Vavuniya trunk road, members of the Tamil "Tri Star" group are using unofficial checkpoints to entrap suspected sympathisers of rival groups and to extort money from travellers.

Kalmunai: counting the cost of communalism

THE TROUBLED EASTERN PROVINCE was further torn by communal violence this month when suspected Tamil militants - reportedly clad in Indian army uniforms - launched a series of attacks on Muslim villages south of Batticaloa.

The flashpoint was Kalmunai where the murder of Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) leader and Citizens Committee President A Velmurugu on 20 March, touched off a 17-day-spiral of kidnappings, killings and fire-bombings that left 30 people dead, over 3,000 homeless and damage to property officially estimated at Rs. 150 million.

Kalmunai's two-storey supermarket complex was completely gutted by fire and hundreds of Muslim homes in the villages of Malligaikadu and Sainthamarathur were razed to the ground during the terrorist attacks.

Some 7,500 Muslim refugees from the two villages crowded into Zahira College, Kalmunai at the height of the crisis and a further 2,000 abandoned "Islamabad", a village close to Kalmunai Rest House - despite the presence of an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) unit.

Muslim MPs in the area attributed the attacks to "Tri Star", Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and other Tamil militant groups in favour of the Peace Accord, who - the MPs say - are being encouraged to destabilise the situation by the IPKF - each for their own ends.

A number of first-hand reports allege that IPKF troops were aware of the attacks but deliberately took no action and on a number of occasions blocked Sri Lankan police units

attempting to reach the affected areas.

Following representations made by a Muslim MP at a top-level meeting held at Kalmunai on 2 April between senior government representatives and Sri Lankan and Indian officials, Kalmunai IPKF commander Ram Singh was transferred out of the district.

As the unrest continued, his successor Colonel Nanjappa quickly set up a peace meeting between Muslim and Tamil youths on 11 April at Karativu, a Tamil stronghold in the patchwork of warring settlements south of Kalmunai.

Karativu was one of a number of villages attacked and burned out in 1985 - reportedly by groups of Muslims led by the Special Task Force.

A semblance of stability was returning to Kalmunai by mid-April but the situation remains tense and uncertain.

The violence has unleashed widespread protest and a flurry of political initiatives from organisations representing the islands 1.2 million Muslim population.

Parliament immediately adopted a motion to appoint a Select Committee to report on the Kalmunai violence but many Muslims - who reject the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces as leaving them vulnerable - are not satisfied.

They fear that terror tactics will continue to be used to drive them out of areas in the east where they enjoy ethnic and economic dominance.

While offers of relief aid for the displaced Muslims poured into Colombo from Middle Eastern countries, former Education Minister Dr

Badiudin Mahmud left for Madras on 15 April with a ten-man delegation from the newly formed Muslim United Liberation Front (MULF) to hold talks with the leaders of all the major Tamil political groupings.

A joint communique issued by the delegation and the LTTE on 22 April said that a broad understanding had been reached on a number of issues concerning Muslim-Tamil relations.

PLOTE vs EPRLF

The Indian army sealed off the offices of the EPRLF and the Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) in Vavuniya town on 7 April after continued fighting between the two groups. Some eight unarmed EPRLF members were killed on 4 April allegedly by a PLOTE hit unit from Mannar.

Dawn Round-Up

Indian troops rounded up over 150 youths in a dawn search-and-sweep operation through Kallady and Manchathuduvai in Batticaloa District on 14 April. This followed alleged intelligence reports that several high-ranking LTTE leaders had entered the area to reorganise local resistance.

JVP raid

In a full-scale assault on Katunayake Air Force Base on 22 April, suspected JVP subversives killed five military personnel and escaped with a substantial quantity of arms and ammunition. Seven of the attackers were killed and 11 captured in what was the second attack on the Base in ten months.

Poopathy Kanapathipillai aged 48, of the Mothers Front died in Batticaloa on 19 April at 10.30am after a 30 day protest fast at the Manmangam temple.

Around 150 people watched silently as Mrs

Kanapathipillai lay on a makeshift wooden bed in the temple courtyard.

She began her fast on 19 March to press Front demands for an immediate ceasefire and a negotiated

settlement to the conflict.

Local residents said Mrs Kanapathipillai's son was killed by Sri Lankan police three years

A hunger for peace

ago and a second son was currently in detention in the south for alleged guerilla activity.

Over 2000 people joined her funeral procession on 22 April and many more were kept away by the high IPKF presence.

The same day, a *hartal* called by the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS) following the loss of one of their cadres in Mutur near Trincomalee, brought most of Batticaloa and Ampara Districts to a complete standstill.

The LTTE later announced that the kachcheri and other civil administration in Batticaloa would open from 29 April until 9 May.

The south: *whereabouts unknown*

THE BRUTAL KILLING of two students at Tangalle in late March has attracted national attention to the creeping militarisation and arbitrary violence that now pervades the south of the island.

Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) MP Lakshman Jayakody speaking in Parliament in early April on the appointment of a Select Committee of Enquiry into the murders, maintained that a policy of State terrorism was clearly in evidence.

In the *so-called* "dirty war" against the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) paramilitary groups such as the Special Task Force (STF) were responsible for the growing number of disappearances throughout the southern districts, he alleged.

In a number of cases people apprehended by security forces had been officially released after questioning but their whereabouts still remained unknown.

The two boys in question, Wasantha Weerasinghe and Prasanna Wanigasinghe, had been picked up by armed men in uniforms at about 9.45pm and driven off in a jeep. Their

bodies were found the following morning at Kivula about 14 miles away.

Police sources hold the JVP responsible but local observers discount this theory pointing out that the area is extensively covered by government troops who maintain patrols and military checkpoints - making it difficult for a group of armed men in a jeep to make such a journey.

In the Tangalle, Beliatte and Hambantota areas armed camps and military road-blocks continue to appear overnight in the uneasy aftermath of the killings. Few people venture out after dark.

A growing number of arson attacks, assaults, arrests and sudden disappearances has hardened the attitude of southern youth.

Former JVP party workers are said to be particularly at risk. In a recent and well-publicised case of "disappearance" Ruhunu University lecturer and political activist Sathyapala Wannigagama was reportedly arrested by Middeniya police on 13 November last year.

On enquiring as to his whereabouts the University Lecturers Association was told that there

was no record of his arrest. He is still missing today.

The JVP offshoot Deshapremi Janatha Vyaparaya (DJV) continues to grow in support and influence.

It is widely believed that the JVP - proscribed since 1983 - uses the DJV as a front to carry out assassinations and collect funds, leaving them unaccountable in the event of their return to mainstream politics.

DJV cadres whose ranks have been strengthened by some of the 2,200 deserters from the Sri Lankan armed forces last year, are said to be levying a monthly tax of Rs 50 on all government employees in the south.

And as the civilian population becomes increasingly polarised so the number of disappearances has continued to grow.

Former SLFP MP for Beliatte, Attorney-at-Law Mahinda Rajapakse estimates 250-300 youths are missing after being detained by unidentified paramilitary groups. A list of 183 names was recently submitted to President Jayewardene by human rights groups in Colombo.

Eastern corridor claims more lives

SUDDEN AND DEVASTATING outbreaks of terrorist violence in the Sinhalese-settled corridor that runs between the Anuradhapura and Trincomalee districts continued throughout April despite the large-scale deployment of Home Guards and Sri Lankan Army troops in the districts of the North Central Province.

After the killings at Kantalai and Horowupotana last month, Home Guard units - disarmed shortly after the July Peace Accord - were reinstated in predominantly Sinhalese areas

Prisoners released

SOME 18 members of an alleged conspiracy of 44 leftist politicians were released by the High Court in Colombo on 20 April after giving a written understanding that they would not indulge in subversive activities.

In the case 44 persons - including a number of JVP members - were indicted on 13 counts under the Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with conspiring to overthrow the Government of Sri Lanka, committing robberies, training persons in military activities and incitement to armed revolution.

Seven of the 44 accused who pleaded guilty to amended charges under the PTA were sentenced to three months in jail on 18 March.

In a second conspiracy case 13 of the 23 accused - who included Kelaniya University lecturer Pulsara Liyanage, in custody for over a year - were acquitted by the Colombo High Court on 22 April when the Attorney-General declined to proceed against them.

while the Sri Lankan Army was deployed across Anuradhapura District, sweeping tracts of dense jungle area thought to contain base-camps for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Morewewa High Priest Venerable Kalutarasoma Thera travelled to Colombo in early April to draw government attention to the continuing lack of supplies security and civil administration in the Sinhalese villages isolated on this unofficial frontier.

Trouble was to strike in the next few days at Meegaswewa when alleged LTTE militants ambushed and killed 16 Sinhalese civilians returning from Diyangawewa on 8 April.

As attacks on civilian targets continued throughout the month, a land-mine explosion which killed 26 bus passengers at Sittaru, near Kantalai on 1 May tragically underscored the demands of Sinhalese community leaders in the area.

Further north in Vavuniya, as the IPKF's Operation Vajra continued into April, six alleged LTTE members were killed and 40 captured - along with a substantial quantity of arms - in a seven-day security sweep mounted throughout the district. At least 2,000 Indian Army personnel took part in the operation, security sources said.

After a meeting with Sri Lankan and Indian army leaders on 11 April, Vavuniya District Citizens Committee sent a memorandum to the Indian Prime Minister and to President Jayewardene, alleging indiscriminate assault, arrests and molestation of women by IPKF troops during the course of the operation.

The SRI LANKA MONITOR is part of an information processing service set up by the British Refugee Council to keep Sri Lankan refugees in Britain, Europe and elsewhere, informed about the current situation in their home areas. If you have any information you wish to share, or any enquiries you wish to make regarding developments in Sri Lanka, contact:

The Sri Lanka Project
The British Refugee Council
3/9 Bondway
London SW8 1SJ
Tel: (01) 582 6922.

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Permit appeal

THE continuing disturbances on the eastern seaboard are causing considerable hardship to Sri Lankan fishermen MP A Mansoor maintained, at a meeting between the fishing community government officials and IPKF representatives on 16 April in Kalmunai.

Speaking on behalf of some 300 fishermen with mechanised craft, the Kalmunai MP asked for permits allowing deep-sea fishing to be reinstated as soon as possible.

Many families were having to rely on relief supplies provided for the thousands of refugees crowding into Kalmunai as a result of the communal disturbances, Mr Mansoor maintained.

Fishing is now subject to strict supervision and close curfew throughout the north and east of Sri Lanka.

A new in-shore security patrol - the Sea Guards - equipped with high-powered speed boats capable of pursuing the fibre-glass fishing boats allegedly used by terrorists was recently deployed in the Trincomalee area, defence officials announced this month.