

---

---

# *The Sri Lanka Monitor*

---

---

No 5 June 1988

Produced by the British Refugee Council

---

---

## Peace talks falter on the brink of a breakthrough

PERSISTENT reports that continuing ceasefire negotiations between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Indian Research and Analysis Wing of the Indian army (RAW) appeared to be on the brink of resolution, were given fresh impetus by a press communique released by the Sri Lankan Presidential Secretariat at the beginning of July.

The statement reported on an exchange of communications between the Indian Prime Minister and Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene between 24 and 27 June in which Rajiv Gandhi informed the President that the LTTE had expressed a willingness to lay down their arms in the furtherance of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord.

Keeping in view the shared objectives of India and Sri Lanka to bring an end to the continuing violence - if the LTTE agreed to surrender all arms and communications equipment under agreed procedures - the Sri Lankan government, the communique maintained, was willing to take the following steps.

All detainees would be released and all Tamil militant groups granted a general amnesty and a return to the mainstream of the democratic process. Elections to institute Provincial Councils in the North and East under one Governor, one elected Chief Minister and one judiciary would be under

preparation by the end of July.

The use of the 1982 electoral register would be reviewed and Tamil would become the joint official language of Sri Lanka.

Some observers suggest that the statement may conform to an outstanding LTTE demand allegedly reiterated by Tiger leader *Castro* in a telephone conversation with the Sri Lankan press from Madras on 16 June for a public reaffirmation by the Sri Lankan government that they are willing to guarantee the merger of the North and East before a ceasefire is agreed.

Under the terms of the secret agreement between RAW and the LTTE the Tigers will surrender 80 per cent of their weapons on a staggered basis. India will provide militant

groups with 600 million Indian Rupees for the rehabilitation of northern Sri Lanka administered through the Provincial Councils. Both these provisions may yet prove unacceptable to the Sri Lankan government.

The renewal of fierce fighting in July in the Mullaitivu and Vavuniya areas causing heavy civilian casualties, has raised serious doubts as to the success - and even the existence of any such ceasefire negotiations.

There have been false dawns before in this conflict and this may be yet another. Both parties showed equal intransigence and mutual mistrust in the drawn-out demise of the Peace Accord last year. If there is to be a breakthrough, it must be in the character of the compromise.

---

## Human rights activist kidnapped

K. Kanthasamy, a human rights activist and a former Director of the Central British Fund for Tamil Refugees Rehabilitation, was kidnapped from his Jaffna residence on 19 June by unknown persons. Some thirty human rights and refugee organisations, including International Alert, the British Refugee Council and the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka, made an immediate appeal for his release, in which Kanthasamy was described as a silent, tireless and self-effacing

worker who had made a unique contribution to the Tamil community.

Before the kidnapping, Kanthasamy had been involved, despite his poor heart condition, in establishing coordination facilities for non-governmental organisations in the implementation of refugee rehabilitation programmes in the North and East of Sri Lanka. At the time of going to press, no information was available about his safety or whereabouts.



## Amnesty report condemns Lankan militarism

Amnesty International, the London-based human rights organisation has called on the Sri Lankan government to establish independent investigations to determine the fate of persons 'disappeared' and allegations of reprisal killings by Sri Lankan security forces and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF).

In a report published in June, Amnesty catalogues grave abuses by Sri Lankan security forces such as torture and reprisal killings over several years. Referring to 'disappearances' of over 680 Tamils arrested between 1983 and August 1987 Amnesty states that no substantive attempts have been made by the government to establish their fate.

According to the Report, after the signing of the Peace Accord between India and Sri Lanka in July 1987, human rights abuses have continued in all parts of the island. Large numbers of Sinhalese alleged to be members of the People's Liberation Front (JVP) and the People's Patriotic Movement (DJV) have been arrested in the South. Parents and relatives have not been able to establish the whereabouts of many of those arrested in the face of denials of arrests by the security forces. In the North and East indiscriminate arrests have been carried out by the IPKF and some of those arrested have 'disappeared'.

The report describes several cases of torture in custody by the Sri Lankan security forces and gives details of those Sinhalese disappeared in the South. Although habeas corpus applications have been filed in

several cases, frequent government reaction has been to simply deny that the 'disappeared' person was ever arrested or otherwise to keep petitions pending before court for many months without a decision being taken.

Amnesty states that while there are many allegations of killings by the IPKF, no investigations have been carried out - although the IPKF have followed up a number of rape allegations and found soldiers guilty.

The Indian government described as 'fabricated' and 'unfair' the charges of rape and brutalities levelled against the IPKF. A spokesman for the Indian External Affairs Ministry said that every specific complaint had been investigated. He added, "Most of the charges have been found to be baseless. Wherever such charges have been proved, quick and salutary action has been taken against the guilty."

Although the Amnesty Report is a timely initiative and describes a variety of human rights abuses by the IPKF, some on-the-spot observers allege that such reported cases are merely a fraction of those occurring in the Tamil areas. Another report published in June by the Coordinating Committee of the Citizens Committees of the North and East maintains that since the Accord the human rights situation has deteriorated significantly. Citizens Committee representatives investigating alleged human rights abuses have themselves been subjected to intimidation and serious assault.

### Community leader killed

Father S. Chandra Fernando, President of the Batticaloa Citizens Committee was shot dead by two unidentified men on the evening of 6 June in the mission house near St. Mary's Church. Batticaloa was brought to a standstill three days later, as thousands of people took part in the funeral procession.

### Detained

Replying to a parliamentary question in early June, National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali said that 971 persons were presently detained under emergency regulations. Action was being taken to either charge them or release them soon, he added.

### Food aid appeal

Kalkudah fishing community have asked the Batticaloa Assistant Government Agent to extend food relief to their families for a further six months in the face of the continuing IPKF ban on fishing at Valaichenai, Oddamavadi and Meeravodai.

### Unlawful actions

Government sources say Sri Lanka will shortly introduce legislation giving immunity to members of the security forces and others for any unlawful action carried out between 1983 and 1987 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

### Returned from Holland

Eleven Tamils refused asylum lost an appeal to remain in Holland in early June. Five were immediately deported and four escaped from custody. The five boarded the aircraft at 14.30hrs, the decision made public at 14.50hrs and the plane left at 15.03hrs.



## THE NORTH-EAST

## MULLAITIVU DISTRICT

## IPKF close in on Tiger strongholds

**W**HILE report and rumour ran wild this month over an imminent political settlement between the Indian Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the announcement of a ceasefire was expected daily, the Indian army suddenly launched a dramatic series of military operations in the North and East designed to corner the remaining Tigers and their leaders in the jungles of Mullaitivu.

After a week of cordon-and-search operations by 6,000 troops, IPKF forces reportedly surrounded a brigade including LTTE deputy leader *Mahattaya* at Thanaikerny Variya Vayal on 31 May.

During an outbreak of heavy fighting *Mahattaya*, supposedly wounded, broke through the IPKF cordon along with a number of Indian army hostages towards Kurunthumalai and the IPKF response was immediate.

Convoy after convoy of troops saturated the area as surrounding villages were repeatedly swept by some 15,000 IPKF personnel with sophisticated air and artillery support.

Press reports say 47 Tigers, 32 Indian soldiers and 25 civilians were killed in the first two weeks of the operation.

After a lull in the fighting, on 22 June villages in the Alampil area came under heavy air bombardment and nearby jungle areas were set on fire as IPKF forces attempted to flush the Tigers from the safety of their secret bases.

Tamil organisations allege Lankan Air force Maschettis participated in the air-strikes taking a heavy toll of civilian lives and property. Hundreds of houses were completely destroyed in the attack although IPKF troops had ordered people not to leave their homes. There were also allegations that napalm and chemical weapons were employed as the IPKF cordon tightened.

At the end of June *Mahattaya* still eluded his pursuers and the jungles of Mullaitivu continued to burn.

Much seems now to depend on how large a triumph and how total a victory the Indians will demand before they listen to peace overtures. Will they attempt to annihilate the LTTE military command structure before they are willing to accept a surrender of arms? There is strong pressure from political parties in Tamil Nadu for a peace with honour. For the people of Mullaitivu it cannot come too soon.

### The Welioya Scheme: blurring the boundaries between war and peace

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) has submitted a memorandum to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi drawing attention to the Lankan government's continuing policy of state-aided Sinhalese colonisation of the North and East. TULF has forwarded a list of Tamil areas where they allege Sinhalese will be resettled under special legislation and hurriedly-created statutory bodies.

The memorandum cites the example of the Welioya Colonisation Scheme in Mullaitivu District where 25,000 Sinhalese were resettled recently. The area - traditionally Tamil speaking - appears on Government Survey Department maps as 'Manal-Aaru' (Tamil: sandy river). Tamil refugee organisations say large numbers of Tamils were forcibly removed from the area by the Sri Lankan army in 1984. Subsequent IPKF operations have further depopulated the surrounding villages.

People removed from settlements such as Kokkuthoduvai and Karunalukerni, remain in makeshift refugee camps some three years later without prospects or adequate provisions.

Some 10,000 Tamils are said to have been dislocated by Lankan army or IPKF operations in Mullaitivu since 1984. Many recently removed were told not to return to their homes without IPKF permission.

Mullaitivu Citizens Committee believe the aim is to erect a Sinhalese barrier between the Northern and Eastern Provinces secretly undermining the provisions of the July Peace Accord and have made direct representations to the Indian High Command questioning the IPKF's role in such a programme.

As a fresh wave of Tamil refugees fleeing from the IPKF fire-storm in Mullaitivu streamed into Vavuniya town at the end of June, in the eyes of local observers they seemed already destined to join the ranks of the long-term displaced.



## Return programme reaches a critical phase

A TOTAL OF 17,670 Sri Lankan Tamils were officially repatriated from India in 33 batches by naval vessels and chartered ships between December 1987 and June of this year, an Indian government spokesman announced earlier this month.

Another 17,595 of the 39,918 refugees registered as resident

in 164 camps throughout Tamil Nadu were said to have voluntarily left and 'possibly gone back to their homes' since the beginning of last year.

Over 150 of the camps have now closed as the few thousand remaining inhabitants are funnelled south to the Mandapam transit facility. Only 75 people are left at one of the largest camps at Trichy and around 1,000 at Madurai.

But a further 94,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees - many of whom are unwilling to return to the island in its present turmoil - live outside the camps amid the local population. And it is in addressing them - many observers believe - that the repatriation programme has now reached a critical phase.

Only 12,675 so far have responded to the Indian government's directive last year to register for return to Sri Lanka. District Collectors have now been instructed to conduct immediate surveys to identify and register the refugee population in their areas.

A Government Order discontinuing refugee children's school and university education after July was postponed for a year - only after widespread protests from refugee and community organisations in both India and Sri Lanka.

In the sensitive political climate of a State under President's Rule it is difficult to predict what kinds of pressures central government can employ in order to expel a kindred community who seem so disinclined to depart.

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.

Supported by the London  
Boroughs Grants Scheme  
and British voluntary agencies.

## Plantation Tamils' plight

SRI LANKA must not go back on its commitment to grant citizenship to nearly half a million Plantation Tamils, Rural Industrial Development Minister Mr S.Thondaman told the Sri Lankan press earlier this month. Speaking on his return from a private visit to India Mr Thondaman said that both governments had failed so far to fully implement long-standing agreements to integrate Tamils of Indian origin.

Since the Indo-Ceylon Agreement of 1964 (Srimavo - Shastri Pact), Sri Lanka has given citizenship to only 220,000 out of an agreed 469,000. India, who agreed to take 506,000 Plantation Tamils, still has an obligation to admit a further 160,000 - some of whom may not now wish to emigrate, it is alleged. The fate of a large number of stateless persons also remains unsettled despite recent legislation.

A package must be developed, said the Minister, that would serve the interests of all concerned. Plantation Tamils must not be returned to India if those who remained in Sri Lanka were not being given citizenship.

## PC elections

THE ruling United National Party (UNP) won a decisive victory in Provincial Council (PC) elections in the troubled Southern Province on 9 June but was immediately assailed by allegations of widespread vote-rigging.

After the UNP captured 36 seats to the United Socialist Alliance (USA)'s 15 with two going to Independents, President Jayewardene was forced to accede to opposition party demands for a full-scale public enquiry into alleged intimidation and multiple voting.

The turnout was not encouraging - eight per cent in Hambantota, 20 per cent in Matara and an almost respectable 40 per cent in Galle District. Only 24 per cent of the total number of registered voters cast their vote. Many were kept away by threats of violence from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP).

PC elections in the Central and Western Provinces held a week earlier brought similar allegations of corrupt practices, sporadic violence, and a low electoral turnout. The UNP won 87 seats to the USA's 60.