

# The Sri Lanka Monitor

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## Talks buy time for terror tactics

IN A MONTH marked by political as well as military manoeuvres, Sri Lanka's President Ranasinghe Premadasa called an All-Party Conference (APC) on 13 September and after a 40 minute opening speech promptly dissolved it again until 12 October, ostensibly to allow a series of individual consultations with the political parties represented.

The objective was to reach a consensus that would steer the country out of its current crisis and design an effective peace settlement acceptable to the Sinhalese insurgent People's Liberation Front (JVP), the absent power at these proceedings.

Apart from ritual displays of optimism little could be divined from the opening ceremonies but a senior

### Army gains the upper hand in the South

Cabinet source was adamant that, should a consensus emerge, the JVP would respond positively.

Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne, meanwhile, had returned from the Non Aligned Summit in Belgrade with a long-awaited agreement for a ceasefire between the Indian Army and the Tamil Tigers in the North, effective from 20 September. Indian troops would now leave Sri Lanka by the end of the year, said Mr Wijeratne.

The LTTE immediately warned the Indian-backed EPRLF administration in the North-East to resign by 1 October or "face the consequences". Mr L Ketheeswaran,

leader of the APC EPRLF delegation, said a "Tamil National Army" was being prepared in the North - a reference to the forced conscription of Tamil youth currently underway - and if the military option was forced upon them, they would take it.

Away from the rarefied atmosphere of diplomatic understatement, Sri Lanka was careering rapidly downhill in a welter of blood. In a week of unprecedented violence 380 people were killed between 11 and 18 September by JVP attacks and retaliatory strikes by security forces and unidentified vigilante groups. Analysts said the death toll would again top 1,000 this month.

Political observers say, however, that the Sri Lankan Army is gaining the upper hand over the JVP. The JVP's big mistake, they say, was to target the families of security personnel who now have a very personal interest in their annihilation.

Parliamentary sources believe the JVP have already sued for peace in the last two weeks and have been turned down by the Government. Four or five senior JVP leaders are now said to be in custody including S Amarasinghe, brother-in-law of Housing Minister Sirisena Cooray.

Nevertheless, the Government launched a 72-hour unilateral ceasefire in the south on 27 September with the Sri Lankan Air Force dropping 200,000 leaflets calling for a JVP surrender.

In the confines of the All Party Conference, Mr Premadasa appears to be only too willing to work for peace, but what he really means to do is win the war.

### WHO KILLED RAJANI THIRANAGAMA?

RAJANI THIRANAGAMA, a prominent human rights campaigner and Jaffna University lecturer, was shot dead by an unidentified gunman on her way home from the university on the evening of 21 September at Tirunelveli Junction.

Mrs Thiranagama, a 35 year-old mother of two, was a leading figure in Jaffna's *University Teachers for Human Rights* (UTHR) which released two reports earlier this year cataloguing torture and extra-judicial killings by both the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and Tamil militant groups.

Recently Mrs Thiranagama and other UTHR leaders were repeatedly threatened and their homes searched by armed men who took away documents describing human rights violations.

In a letter written a few days before her death, Mrs Thiranagama

said, "The local army officer in charge is trying to trap me". Observers believe her killer was acting on instructions or information supplied by the IPKF or its covert operations group, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Shortly after Mrs Thiranagama's death, the Indian-backed EPRLF administration in the North issued a press release accusing the Tamil Tigers of her killing in a dispute over the body of LTTE martyr Thileepan, whose protest fast-unto-death two years ago touched off a dizzying spiral of violence leading to the IPKF assault on Jaffna town. His body is currently housed in Jaffna University's Anatomy Department where Mrs Thiranagama worked. The LTTE have firmly denied the charge. Mrs Thiranagama's many friends and relatives in the UK have appealed for an independent enquiry into her death.

NGOs struggle with the human cost of the war in the North

## Relief but no respite

TWO YEARS of gruelling conflict in the North and East have made it painfully obvious to local relief and development agencies that you cannot rebuild a country while so many forces are actively engaged in tearing it down.

While the Sri Lankan government has been pushing an ambitious programme of house building to aid thousands of destitute families, privately many relief agencies see the Government initiative as mistimed and misplaced.

There is a growing need for income-generating projects to put people back on their feet, say a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The housing programme looks good on paper, they say, but is stranded in a wilderness of logistical problems. Many of the beneficiaries are reduced to selling the roof tiles from their new homes, in the absence of regular employment or integrated assistance.

Since 13 July, there has been no electricity in the North following a JVP attack on Sri Lanka's national grid system, further south. The Kankasanturai Cement Factory as well as a host of small-scale industries in Jaffna now stands idle. While there is food in the shops people lack the regular income to buy it. Many have gone back to subsistence agriculture in the absence of employment but a shortage of seed paddy following the drought in the North

earlier this year, will reach crisis proportions shortly, observers believe.

In Batticaloa where there was a bumper harvest, militants are now forcibly 'leasing' land from farmers as part of their own income generation activities. Grain leaves the Batticaloa rice-bowl only after a Rs10,000 (\$300) "tax" on each lorry-load is paid by Muslim merchants at militant checkpoints.

Relief work rather than rehabilitation is the staple requirement where people are still regularly displaced by Indian army operations. There are now many pockets of refugees in Jaffna town, sheltering in churches and schools after the IPKF attack on Valvettiturai last month which claimed 60 civilian lives. Six weeks later, they still fear to return and survive on dry rations provided by the Church or the Sri Lankan Red Cross.

The Jaffna Branch of the Red Cross is only halfway through the distribution of 10,000 clothing packs and 19,000 family food packs to those already widowed or displaced, and their numbers continue to grow. In isolated Mullaitivu District over 1,000 families, who fled from Kokkilai after Sri Lankan Army operations in 1984, remain in welfare centres neither allowed to return nor given land to resettle. Relief in the remoter areas of the North still has a long way to go.

## Killings continue

Former UNP MP and head of the Rubber Research Institute, Merrill Kariyawasam was shot dead by two men at Thelawala near Colombo on 5 September. Six days later Moratuwa University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Chandraratne Patuwathavithana was gunned down in his office. The University Chief Security Officer was also killed in the attack.

## Dr Gladys Jayawardene

Dr (Mrs) Gladys Jayewardene, Chairman of the Sri Lanka State Pharmaceuticals Corporation, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Colombo on 12 September. Dr Jayewardene was a recipient of the World Health Organisation medal for her contribution to the 'Health for all by the year 2000' programme. She was the sister-in-law of former President J.R. Jayewardene.

## Reprieve

Death sentences passed on 12 Sri Lankans for their part in the abortive coup in the Maldives in late 1988, were commuted to life imprisonment in mid-September by Maldives President Gayoom. The reprieve followed appeals from a number of human rights and other Tamil organisations in several countries.

## Mr Wijetunge goes to Washington

### THE ECONOMY

PRIME MINISTER D B Wijetunge took a 25-strong team to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' meeting in Kingston, Jamaica in late September where he was to give the keynote speech on present World Bank policy. Following the meeting Mr Wijetunge and key Finance officials flew to Washington for the annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The visits are part of an

intensive lobbying strategy by Sri Lanka to convince the World Bank to disburse over \$750 million in much-needed aid as the second instalment of its Structural Adjustment Facility.

In return, analysts believe World Bank officials will demand devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee, withdrawal of Government subsidies on essential food items such as bread, flour and sugar, and the liberalisation of imports. But with import growth already outpacing exports, Sri Lanka's three main overseas

assets - tea, textiles and tourism - continue to crumble and the balance of payments deficit is likely to increase.

Privatisation of State-owned business, another IMF requirement for continued assistance, may be revamped after the disastrous flotation of Rs100 million (\$3 million) worth of shares in United Motors Limited. Despite a heavy advertising campaign only Rs30 million worth of shares were sold - most of them purchased by the State-owned Insurance Corporation.

*Death squads who deal out terror while the Plantations burn*

## "Corruption and pillage" plague the Hill Country

AN ESTIMATED 200 persons were killed in various parts of Kandy District on 16 September, by unidentified members of an anti-JVP vigilante group believed to be from the security forces. Most of the bodies were found in Menikhinne, Mahawatte and Kundasale. Around 70 houses were also set on fire.

These attacks, according to several reports, were carried out in reprisal for the killing of 16 relatives of security personnel by the JVP in Menikhinne on 13 September. Security forces had earlier indicated that 2 families would be destroyed for every one of theirs killed, in response to a JVP campaign against Police and Army families.

Speaking to the BBC on 18 September, Kandy District Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Premadasa Udugampola, said that reports of the killings had been "blown out of proportion" and that less than 20 people had died. He denied security personnel involvement and blamed a hitherto unknown organisation "*The Eagles of the Central Hills*" for the murders.

Many observers believe, however, that DIG Udugampola was directly involved. Similar massacres have taken place at a number of his previous commands. They point to the fact that five members of his family were killed by the JVP in Galle in July 1988.

The continuing violence in the Hill Country has sharply affected tea production, according to official sources. Over 100,000 Plantation workers in the Ratnapura and Badulla areas have staged a JVP-enforced strike since mid-September for better conditions and higher wages. Over 200,000 kilos of tea have been burnt in several areas, including Madulkelle, Pussellawa and Bandarawela, during September after the JVP burned down eight factories managed by the Sri Lanka State Plantation Corporation (SLSPC). The coordinating office of the Janatha Estates Development Board (JEDB) serving 53 tea estates in Badulla was also destroyed on 17 September. As many as 17 Estate Superintendents have been killed in recent attacks by the JVP.

In an outspoken address to the Plantation Management Executive Association in early September, Plantation Industries Minister Gamini Dissanayake said the SLSPC and the JEDB were currently running at a loss of Rs 2 billion (\$55 million) per year and that corruption and pillage were rampant. Recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports cite Sri Lanka's tea production costs as the highest in the world and have urged drastic cutbacks. With violence now an ever-present factor in the Plantation areas, the Government has a tough task ahead.

## Fear and hunger in Batticaloa

SHORTAGES created by the looting of transport lorries carrying vital food supplies to the Batticaloa area have caused hardship and growing concern amongst the local population. Robberies have taken place at Mannampitiya and Arantalawa this month and lorries carrying rice from Batticaloa to Colombo have also been ransacked. Goods worth Rs 5 million (\$140,000) were stolen during September. Sources in Batticaloa say traders are now reluctant to sell current food stocks, causing prices to spiral.

There is now an acute shortage of fuel in the District. Despite a Petroleum Corporation announcement that transport permits were available for private traders plying between Colombo and Batticaloa, no one has come forward. Postal services are now also badly affected.

Three months of savage electricity cuts have further weakened Batticaloa's social fabric. Residents say many armed gangs now operate after dark. Rice mills are unable to function, the price of kerosene has soared and the water supply is seriously disrupted.

K Somasundaram, Regional Education Director, told a meeting of Citizens' Committee members and religious organisations in early September that Batticaloa schools were unable to function because of the large-scale forcible conscription of students, by Indian-backed militant groups.

The continuing abduction of Muslim traders held to militant ransom has also caused widespread anger and resentment amongst the Muslim community.

## IPKF reprisal killings in Trincomalee school

FIFTEEN civilians were shot dead by Indian soldiers at Kattaiparichan in Trincomalee District on 13 September, following a clash with the LTTE in which four IPKF and two militants were killed. According to an LTTE statement, the villagers were herded into the local school by Indian soldiers and gunned down.

The IPKF are said to have held hostage over 800 local people in the school to discourage further LTTE attacks. In a subsequent attack, however, on IPKF units by the LTTE in the Vilankulam area on 14 September, six Indian soldiers were killed.

A statement released by the Indian High Commission in Colombo on 13 September said seven LTTE militants had been killed by IPKF forces near Muthur.

## Jaffna: after the ceasefire the war goes underground

FOLLOWING the ceasefire between Indian soldiers and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which came into effect at 6am on 20 September, unacknowledged clashes have continued between all parties to the conflict, say Tamil sources in the North and East.

Tension was evident in Jaffna town in the run-up to the ceasefire and there was little optimism that the peace would hold. Before the 6am deadline Indian-backed cadres of EPRLF and ENDLF attacked LTTE units at Neerveli and Achchuveli and suffered heavy losses according to LTTE leaflets distributed the following day.

The LTTE also allege five civilians were killed and a number seriously injured on 25 September when Indian troops opened fire on a crowd at Pandatharippu, 20 kms from Jaffna town. A number of LTTE cadres said to be released by the Indians following the ceasefire have been attacked and killed by

EPRLF forces. The Indian army and EPRLF further implicated themselves in the murder of Jaffna human rights worker, Mrs Rajani Thiranyagama, in the eyes of many observers, by trying to enforce a hartal (general strike) on 26 September, to protest against her killing.

*Tension was evident in Jaffna town in the run-up to the ceasefire and there was little optimism that the peace would hold.*

The forcible conscription of young males in the North by EPRLF and other Indian-backed militants continues to gain momentum and many youths have gone into hiding or have escaped further south. In the wake of protests by parents and concerned Jaffna citizens, EPRLF say the conscription is not forced but is a kind of "National Service".

It is clear that they foresee a major

confrontation with the LTTE if and when the Indians leave and will expropriate whatever human resources remain in the peninsula.

Wealthy Jaffna families are said to be paying large sums to have their sons released or get them through the EPRLF checkpoint, a mile from Palaly Airport, and the morning flight to Colombo is usually packed tight with young sombre-faced young men under 20.

No one yet knows whether the three Indian-backed groups EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO will hold together in the face of an LTTE onslaught. Some say it is as likely that they will attack each other first. Each has its own training camps - at Paranthan, Urumpirai and Chavakachcheri - each with 500-1,000 detained youth and a clutch of Indian Army instructors.

What is certain, says local opinion, is that there will be a reckoning between some or all of these groups and many will die before it is over.

## THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE: TWO WARS TEARING SRI LANKA APART

### The South numbed by violence

SOUTHERN Sri Lanka has been numbed by the sheer scale of violence throughout September. Brutal murders and reprisal killings have become part of everyday life.

On 4 September H P Wijesekera, an SLFP organiser was shot dead in Dompe, 20km from Colombo. Local sources blamed security forces of the killing and said that hundreds of youths in the area had recently disappeared after being arrested by armed men under cover of darkness.

On 8 September, 41 bodies of youths were found at Bellanwila and Kadugannawa and human rights organisations accused security forces of the summary execution of JVP suspects. Around 28 other bodies were recovered on 11 September at Kottawa in the Galle District and 52 bodies on 12 September in Moratuwa, Walana and Pitiyegedera.

In Colombo, H G Perera, a director of marketing organisation

MARKFED was shot dead at Grandpass on 12 September allegedly by the JVP. The body of Independent Television Network

presenter Sagarika Gomez was found at Mount Lavinia beach on 14 September. She had been abducted from her Dehiwela home the previous evening.

Buddhist monks have continued to come under attack. Ven. Wellatota Pannadarsi was shot dead in the Southern Province in early September and a week later, the Chief Incumbent of the Anuradhapura Temple, Ven. Kahawe Wimalasiri Thera was killed. Police sources blame the JVP.

Several Government statements say over 500 JVP members have surrendered in the North West Province in the last two weeks. Thousands of youths, it is said, have also been taken in custody in these last weeks by security forces and it is thought that there are now 3,500 in Boossa Detention Camp alone. There is little sign that they will have the benefit of a trial.

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,

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