

# The Sri Lanka Monitor

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## All Party Conference offers no solutions

SRI LANKA's balance of power is more of a see-saw than a set of scales where subterfuge routinely alternates with stalemate. While a six-day ceasefire in the South briefly raised hopes of a settlement in early October, the political process remained wedged in its familiar impasse.

By 3 October, 1,120 members of the southern insurgent People's Liberation Front (JVP) had surrendered in return for guarantees of rehabilitation, said a government communique, urging the JVP to disarm and join the second All Party Conference (APC) on 12 October.

The JVP response the following day as the Sri Lankan Army resumed operations left 21 civilians dead and 17 sub-post offices burning. Despite the official optimism, over 100 government buildings were destroyed during the unilateral ceasefire and 60 people killed.

### Opposition demands dissolve in frustration and farce

At the APC consultation a week later in Colombo, Sri Lanka's President Ranasinghe Premadasa spoke of "an emerging consensus" to combat violence. The ruling United National Party (UNP) would agree to implement Opposition demands for a Provisional Government and a referendum on the power of the executive Presidency "once peace and normalcy has been restored".

Even the most cynical of political commentators evinced frustration. The task of the APC initiative was to restore peace and normalcy. How could its recommendations be dependent on such a restoration? Had we covered a lot of ground or were we back at square one?

It was Opposition spokesman C V Gooneratne from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) who high-

lighted Mr Premadasa's fulsome denial that the APC was a time-buying exercise to tide the Government over its showdown with the World Bank in Paris.

There were a few positive developments. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) would be invited to extend its monitoring and tracing activities to Sri Lanka, said Mr Premadasa - an invitation also linked in many minds to the World Bank meeting. A National Language Commission would be set up, said the President, and a National Youth Commission to probe the causes of student unrest.

The APC again adjourned until the end of October for more "individual consultations" but there is little confidence in Colombo that anything worthwhile will emerge.

Peace moves in the North face similar frustrations. The Tamil Tigers now in the third round of talks with the Government are holding out for dissolution of the Provincial Councils and the complete withdrawal of Indian forces.

The Indian-backed EPRLF administration in the North-East say there can be no fresh provincial elections until the Tigers disarm. The Tigers refuse to, while EPRLF continues to forcibly conscript thousands of Tamil youth into a surrogate force for a last-ditch stand when the Indians depart. Everything it seems comes back to the gun.

In a letter to the international press this month, noted human rights lawyer Prins Gunasekara, now in exile, drew attention to the 50,000 weapons distributed through ruling UNP MPs to their supporters in the South. To many, it is clear why the JVP and their northern counterparts will not join the democratic mainstream. Does Mr Premadasa, they ask, also plan to stockpile his armoury on the altar of peace?

*Sri Lanka's economy leaps the human rights hurdle*

### The judgment of Paris

THE WORLD BANK's prestigious Paris Aid Group pledged Sri Lanka a massive \$785 million aid package for 1990 at its annual meeting on 18 October - \$173 million more than last year's award.

After tough questioning from 21 donor countries and five aid agencies, the Sri Lankan delegation, led by Industries Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, successfully cleared the "human rights hurdle" - as the press described it - that threatened increased assistance.

Amnesty International's Annual Report released this month described Sri Lanka as a "killing ground" where summary executions by government-inspired paramilitary forces now replace trial and imprisonment by the courts.

A joint statement released by the Paris meeting acknowledged however, that the continuing insurgency

in Sri Lanka had severely curtailed economic growth and welcomed government measures to reverse the process.

In the last two months the Sri Lankan government has unofficially depreciated the rupee against all major currencies and has slashed subsidies on food, fuel and fertiliser.

The cuts were a prerequisite for the release of a long-delayed International Monetary Fund loan of \$87 million to bolster Sri Lanka's critical balance of payment position approved only a week before the World Bank meeting. Food prices spiralled in Colombo in mid-October causing widespread comment and concern.

Now that the government has been thrown a lifebelt by the international community, say the Sri Lankan press, the poor must not be left to drown in the gathering economic undertow.



No quarter given in Sri Lanka's "dirty war"

## The killers of Kandy

THE GREEN and beautiful hills of Sri Lanka's Central Province are now witness to unprecedented violence and blood-letting. Killings by the Sinhalese insurgent People's Liberation Front (JVP) and reprisal massacres by security forces and pro-Government vigilante groups have irrevocably transformed these once-peaceful highlands.

On 4 October, 22 youths were killed and their bodies strewn across the streets of the hill capital, Kandy. The previous day, Peradeniya University Assistant Registrar, Edward Nagahawatta, was murdered, reportedly by the JVP and a soldier also killed. Kandy residents say the atrocity was in reprisal for the death of Nagahawatta, a part-time soldier.

A day later, the bodies of 18 young men were found on the Peradeniya campus. They had been beheaded or shot. On 6 October the bodies of 11 more youths were found on roadsides around Gampola, 12 miles from Kandy. Another 13 bodies, partly burnt, were found at Matugama on 12 October.

On 25 October, after the killing of seven members of a police officer's family at Katugastota, three miles from Kandy, the bodies of 24 youths were found with their throats cut. The pro-Government vigilante group *The Eagles of the Central Hills* claimed responsibility.

The mass killing of youths has continued in the Hill Country since early August when the JVP urged members of the security forces to resign or face attacks on their families. Kandy residents say posters currently cover town walls warning that for every family of the security forces who are attacked, twelve families of JVP sympathisers will be wiped out.

The question widely asked, is "To what extent is the Government involved in the killings?". Human rights organisations believe the Government is turning a blind eye to the murders. It is said that certain individuals in the security forces have been given the task of wiping

out the JVP "at any cost". One of them is Premadasa Udugampola, Deputy Inspector General of Police in Kandy, alleged to be responsible for hundreds of deaths. DIG Udugampola admits to "resorting to tough tactics" but denies involvement in vigilante killings. Hit squads from Udugampola's unit have recently strayed into other districts and have been detained by soldiers, unaware of their identity.

The Government announced on 16 October that an Independent Investigation Unit (IIU) would be set up to "collect and assess information on the identity of and acts committed by any illegal paramilitary organisations". Following Sri Lanka's invitation to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Foreign Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said the totality of human rights violations should also be investigated, including those of the JVP.

Some observers say the ICRC should also be involved in the IIU's work. Otherwise, they say it will be just another of Sri Lanka's powerless committees of enquiry.

In the Plantations, a series of factories were burnt by suspected JVP members. Two security guards were shot dead on Alupolla Estate in Ratnapura on 4 October. The Superintendent of Meddecombra Estate in Talawakelle, T.Ramakrishnan, was killed by unknown gunmen on 17 October. The total damage to factories, machinery and produce has been estimated at Rs.1 billion (US\$25 million).

The continuing violence forced the government to appoint yet another team comprising four ministers in mid-October to make an "on the spot" study of the security requirement of the Estate sector.

Trade unions have accused security forces of escalating the violence and harassing workers throughout the Plantation districts. National Union of Workers President, T. Aiyadurai, condemned the security forces for a series of assaults on workers who failed to report for work following death threats by the JVP.

### Janasaviya

In a low-key launch of President Premadasa's Poverty Alleviation Programme, *Janasaviya*, on 2 October, 190,000 of Sri Lanka's poorest families received the first instalment of a two-year stipend of Rs2,500 (\$65) a month.

### Another lawyer slain

In the latest of a series of killings of human rights lawyers, Neville Nissanka was abducted by four armed men on his way to Gampaha Land Registry on 3 October. His body was recovered later the same day, riddled with gunshot wounds.

### Asylum-seekers return

Four Tamil asylum-seekers, whose deportation by the British government in February 1988 was subsequently ruled illegal by the Immigration Appeals Tribunal, returned to the UK on 4 October. They were again refused asylum but granted *Exceptional Leave to Remain* in Britain on compassionate grounds.

### Election challenge

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced in mid-October that India's forthcoming General Election would take place on 22 November. Mr Gandhi, grandson of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, will be opposed in his Uttar Pradesh constituency by Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi.

### Death toll

Moving a motion in late October to continue Sri Lanka's State of Emergency, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vincent Perera, said 916 people died in violent incidents between 16 September and 14 October. Unofficial sources estimate the death toll at around 2,000 for the same period.

### Undercover

Sri Lankan Army identity cards were found on the bodies of two men, shot dead by police, following an attempted robbery by a gang of five in Kiribathgoda on 22 October.



*Fears of a three-way war as ethnic tensions rise in the East*

## Indian troops withdraw from Amparai District

TWO HUNDRED trucks carrying Indian troops and equipment pulled out of Batticaloa at dawn on 16 October signalling the first phase of an accelerated IPKF withdrawal from Sri Lanka.

Security sources said 5,000 Indian troops stationed in Amparai District were being recalled and would leave for India, from the port of Trincomalee in the next few days.

It was also the first stage in a delicate transfer of power. Security in Amparai will be provided by the Provincial Police force and the controversial Civilian Volunteer Force (CVF), part of the Indian-backed "private army" unwillingly conscripted by North-East Chief Minister Varatharaja Perumal.

A large number of youths were reported missing in Batticaloa town in mid-October, following a second round of CVF conscription. Large numbers of sophisticated weapons are also said to be entering the East under EPRLF's aegis.

A bitter wrangle for control of the North-East is now underway between Mr Perumal's EPRLF Provincial Council administration and the central government.

In Colombo, Sri Lankan Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said CVF cadres would be absorbed into volunteer and reserve battalions of the army and a further 5,400 National police would be recruited in the North-East. Mr Perumal had agreed to disband the EPRLF mili-

tias, said Mr Wijeratne, but if he has, he has not said so in public.

The East's ethnic powder keg has a short fuse with a 1.3 million population made up of 42% Tamil, 32% Muslim, 25% Sinhalese and a history of explosive conflict. Observers say the CVF will not patrol in Sinhalese hamlets while EPRLF have called for the removal of the feared Special Task Force (STF) police commandos from Amparai District.

Muslim sensitivities have also been inflamed by the arrest of Mr Cegu Issadeen, Opposition leader in the North-East Provincial Council (N-E PC) for the possession of arms.

Since the killing of Muslim Provincial Councillor Mr M.I.Ali Uthuman by ENDLF cadres on 1 August, Sri Lankan Muslim Congress Councillors have boycotted the N-E PC, demanding weapons for their personal security.

Attacks by Tamil militants on Muslim colonists in the Sammanthurai area of Amparai continue unabated. Food lorries, bound for Batticaloa now have a Sri Lankan Army escort following a series of hijacks last month, also by Tamil militants. The robberies created serious shortages of flour, sugar and milk powder in the area and local sources say the prices of staple foods continue to rise.

## *Kidnapping curtails aid to Trincomalee*

FOLLOWING the kidnapping of Dental Surgeon Dr Gnanasekaran in Trincomalee by unidentified persons, the Canadian High Commission announced in early October that they would re-examine their funding of welfare projects throughout the District. Dr Gnanasekaran was the co-ordinator of poultry keeping and water supply projects and was a well known human rights activist.

Demonstrations were held in Trincomalee in protest against his kidnapping and Tamil groups, EROS and ENDLF issued statements pleading for his release. The reasons for his disappearance are obscure although some observers say he may have come under pressure to divert project funds into political coffers.

Despite this setback, four international agencies have come forward this month, to fund projects for displaced youth and war widows in the Trincomalee area. International refugee agency, UNHCR, Canada University Services, CARE and the International Development Agency will contribute US\$6.5 mil-

lion to the scheme and the Indian government is said to favour a contribution.

Although on the surface, the IPKF/LTTE ceasefire appears to be effective in Trincomalee, the militants have accused the Indians of a number of violations, including attacks on the civilian population of Eechilamtivu in mid-October.

■ AN URGENT APPEAL in the Sri Lankan press has been made by Mr. K. Rasiyah, asking international human rights organisations to intervene on behalf of 139 Tamil youths held by the IPKF at the Palaly army camp in Jaffna for the past twelve months.

Over 150 youths were arrested in Tamil Nadu in August 1988 and brought to Jaffna two months later in October 1988, after a protest fast in a Madras prison. Only 18 of them who were disabled were released shortly afterwards. Mr Rasiyah says that many of the others have been tortured and urgently require medical treatment. Parents of the detained youths say they have been refused access to their children.

■ FIGURES released by Sri Lanka's Department of Social Services this month, say 492,604 families have been affected by violence in the eight districts of the North and East.

Districts	No. of families
Amparai	52,000
Batticaloa	90,221
Trincomalee	52,000
Vavuniya	23,500
Mullaitivu	24,252
Jaffna	196,874
Kilinochchi	27,485
Mannar	26,472

The Department said that some relief provision had been extended to all families affected but relief and development agencies say there are an overwhelming number of cases where little or no assistance has been provided.



*Jaffna newspapers fall victim to the phoney peace*

## Ceasefire violations continue in the North

ACCUSATIONS of ceasefire violations in northern Sri Lanka by Indian troops and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continued to surface this month. A report submitted by an observer group on 6 October to President Premadasa recorded 44 violations since the ceasefire on 20 September.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo, accused the LTTE of ambushing an IPKF routine patrol in Polikandy on 8 October, in which an IPKF non-commissioned officer was killed and six other soldiers were wounded. The LTTE was also blamed for an attack on the same day on an IPKF post at Point Pedro.

In counter-accusations the LTTE said that the IPKF had launched a major search and destroy operation in the Chunnakam area on 4 October. In an attack on 6 October by the ENDLF at Uruthirapuram in the

Kilinochchi District, three LTTE militants were killed.

On 16 October the bodies of two civilians, N. Santhanantharatnam and K. Prabakaran, were found with gunshot wounds at Vallaiveli, by French doctors working at the Manthikai hospital. It was alleged that these bodies had been dumped outside the IPKF camp. In Atchuveli a trader named R. Thurairajasingham was shot dead by unidentified persons on 22 October. Four days later, two other civilians Kumarasamy and Arunasalam were killed by armed gunmen in Kilinochchi. Electricity was restored to Jaffna on 6 October after a lapse of some four months and industries which had come to a standstill resumed work. Despite the reconnection of power and light, a score of night-time robberies were reported throughout the Jaffna peninsula.

The three Tamil daily newspapers, *Eelanadu*, *Murasoli* and *Uthayan*, had been banned by EPRLF since 21 September. The ban, said to be temporary, was imposed to prevent newspapers from publishing any material on the second anniversary of the death of LTTE martyr *Thileepan*. On 6 October militants belonging to EPRLF raided the three newspaper offices. From 9 October EPRLF began publishing its own daily newspaper, ironically entitled *Viduthalai* (Freedom). This now gives EPRLF monopoly of publication in the North-East. The added ban on the Southern Tamil paper *Virakesari* and on all English newspapers from Colombo in the North-East, guarantees Indian forces and the EPRLF administration absolute control over the written word in the North.

## *The South lies smouldering by the roadside*

THE RESUMPTION of Sri Lankan Army operations in the South in early October against the JVP saw a familiar pattern of strike and counter-strike.

Security forces launched a series of cordon-and-search operations on 9 October in Moneragala, Matale, Kurunegala and Kegalle, recovering large hauls of arms and ammunition. At least 13 suspected "subversives" - Government shorthand for JVP members - were killed in the offensive, said an official communique.

Twenty bullet-riddled bodies were discovered a mile from Kelaniya police station on the outskirts of Colombo on 13 October.

In Matara, unknown youths abducted Siresena Gunatilleka, an active UNP supporter and hacked him to death. Rural post offices in Ratnapura and Hambantota were gutted on 15 October as the JVP's campaign of civil destruction con-

tinued unabated.

Justice Minister Vincent Perera told Parliament on 19 October that in the last four weeks, 678 government buildings had been set on fire or

destroyed, including 324 post offices and 242 Grama Sevaka (Rural Administration) offices.

Over 30 armed youth stormed Poddala police station in Galle District in the early hours of 19 October armed with grenades and rifles. Roads were blocked by burning buses to prevent the arrival of police reinforcements. A few days later 13 smouldering bodies were found in the surrounding area, said to be the work of pro-Government vigilante groups.

The partially burnt bodies of 18 men and women were discovered in a remote village near Udawalawe on 21 October. Similar incidents were reported from Gintota in Galle and again in Kelaniya.

In a statement in Colombo on 26 October Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said the security situation in the South was improving and now under control but, as one observer remarked, it depends how you define control.

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.

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