

# The Sri Lanka Monitor

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## Fighting breaks out over Friendship Treaty

AFTER A MONTH of political smear and stalemate Foreign Minister Ranjan Wijeratne confirmed on 28 February that Sri Lanka was unlikely to sign a new Friendship Treaty with India, until the last Indian soldier went home.

The two countries' draft proposals for the new agreement, made public earlier this month, differ widely. Observers say Article 3 of the Indian version reaffirms the annexures of the discredited Indo Sri Lankan Accord of 1987 by which India legitimised its military invasion.

Article 3 allows India to monitor the employment of foreign military and intelligence personnel in Sri Lanka, as well as agreements with foreign broadcasting corporations and to provide training facilities and military supplies for Sri Lankan security forces.

Sri Lanka's President Premadasa, as Prime Minister in 1987, was a vocal opponent of the Accord and seeks to abrogate its neo-colonial terms and conditions. Mr Premadasa will sign the Friendship Treaty, he says, only after consultation with the other political parties.

A new round of political sniping immediately broke out between the two governments. India's puppet king North-East Provincial Council (N-E PC) Chief Minister Varadaraja Perumal flown back to Trincomalee by the Indian Air Force after 26 days of fruitless discussions in New Delhi, was accused by Mr Wijeratne of entering the country illegally and of smuggling contraband.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) now in full control of the North-East, except Trincomalee, seized the opportunity to renew their call for dissolution of the N-E PC and fresh elections monitored by international observers. The prompt withdrawal of Mr Varadaraja Perumal's Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) from the N-E PC's ruling coalition Tamil National Council (TNC) was dismissed as a meaningless gesture. Details were also emerging of EPRLF's alleged embezzlement of one million dollars in *sweeteners* given to the TNC by India's CIA, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

The ebullient Mr. Wijeratne went on

the offensive. On 14 February almost 1,000 youths were rounded up in Colombo, as *chummeries* (communal youth hostels) and cheap lodgings were cleaned out. A plot engineered by RAW to assassinate key Government figures and to destabilise the country had been uncovered said the Foreign Minister, and substantial quantities of weapons seized. India dismissed Mr. Wijeratne's allegations as "unfortunate and irresponsible" as a rash of stories appeared in the Indian press of fleeing Tamil refugees attacked at sea by Sri Lankan Army helicopters - a return to the sabre rattling of the pre-Accord period. India again expressed its coded concern over the safety and security of the Tamil people.

Relations between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE remain cordial but tense. The Tiger's crackdown on the Muslim community in the East and reports of a renewed colonisation drive by the Sri Lankan Army in the Tamil areas of Amparai brought LTTE leader *Mahattaya* to a hastily convened summit in Colombo on 23 February.

Two days earlier a Defence Ministry communique announced a 1 March deadline for the unlicensed possession of arms or explosives. Whether this applies to the Tigers remains unclear, but observers say that the ordinance is more likely directed at their Tamil opponents and opposition MPs in the South. Major Army operations promised in early March to police the weapons clean-up may also be designed to checkmate the Tigers territorial ambitions in Trincomalee and other Eastern areas.

On 1 March in a last desperate throw of the dice Chief Minister Varadaraja Perumal declared a spurious independence, renaming the N-E PC the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of Eelam. If the Government met 19 demands for devolution by 1 March next year, EPRLF would abandon the secessionist path. Mr. Perumal's political life now seems to have run its natural course. If he has achieved the Eelam or Tamil homeland of his dreams, it is not the one that most Tamils have been waiting for.

## Colombo broods over journalist's killing

THE BULLET-RIDDLED BODY of Richard de Zoysa, one of Sri Lanka's leading journalists was found washed ashore on Korallawella beach south of Colombo on 19 February. Reports say he was abducted from his mother's house at Welikade at 3am two days earlier, by six gunmen led by a man in police uniform.

Mr de Zoysa (33), a former newscaster for the *Rupavahini* television network, was deputy Asia editor for Inter Press Service, a prominent Third World news agency based in Rome. In the past he had also worked as a media consultant to the Sri Lankan Army's Joint Operations Command. Former National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali and Plantations Minister Gamini Dissanayake, sidelined in the present administration, attended his funeral.

Inside sources suggest his death is part of a long-running feud between ruling United National Party (UNP) fac-

tions. They point to de Zoysa's authorship of the stage satire *Who is he? What is he doing?* (Mr Premadasa's Presidential election slogan) produced by Lakshman Perera, a municipal councillor who disappeared four weeks ago.

Richard de Zoysa's killing has generated outrage and foreboding among Colombo's English-educated middle class and among journalists around the world. The state-owned *Daily News* published a front-page protest on 26 February from the International Press Institute saying the de Zoysa family suspected the gunmen were members of the security forces. State Information and Broadcasting Minister A.J. Ranasinghe denied any such involvement but Opposition Leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike convening a human rights conference of nine political parties in late February, blamed paramilitary groups inside the security forces controlled by prominent politicians.



## SOUTH INDIA

**Murder in the Palk Strait**

OVER 250 refugees have been killed at sea between India and Sri Lanka in the last few weeks, fleeing the LTTE ascendancy in Jaffna, sources in south India claim.

Reports say five boats carrying 135 people were attacked by high-powered speedboats fitted with rocket launchers off Point Calimere on the Tamil Nadu coast on 7 February. Two boats carrying 65 people landed safely but 70 refugees are feared drowned. Seven bodies were washed ashore and one of those rescued died later in Nagapattinam hospital.

EPRLF says the LTTE - supplied with power boats by the Sri Lankan Navy - is intent on eliminating rival cadres and their families fleeing to India. Many of those killed were women and children.

India's External Affairs Minister I.K. Gujral has blamed the fresh influx of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees - around 2,000 in two months - on the Sri Lankan Government's failure to enforce a ceasefire settlement between the warring Tamil factions in the North.

Other Indian-aligned militants such as ENDLF have appealed to New Delhi to supply ships to evacuate their families in safety. None of them, they say, will survive the LTTE hegemony.

Tension has risen in Tamil Nadu between the local population and Sri Lankan refugees after two carloads of Sri Lankan militants opened fire at a police checkpoint on the road to Mandapam

refugee camp on 18 February. One policeman and a civilian bystander were killed and another 17 police injured.

There are also reports from the Mandapam camp of militant assaults on the local population and Ramanathapuram Police Chief Dorai has warned of an impending crackdown on the refugee population.

Meanwhile in Madras, talks have continued throughout the month sponsored by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi seeking a settlement between the various Sri Lankan militant factions. The consultations have been expanded, at the suggestion of militant group PLOTE, to include the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), the unofficial opposition party in the North-East Provincial Council (N-E PC) which ruled the North-East under the Indians.

The sticking point is still dissolution of the N-E PC and conditions for fresh elections - favoured by the LTTE and the Lankan Government. EPRLF oppose this and duly submitted fresh proposals to Mr Karunanidhi on 24 February, suggesting a negotiable number of EPRLF representatives on the N-E PC be replaced by LTTE nominees as recognition of the new *realpolitik* in the North.

With the LTTE already holding the whip hand such offers are unlikely to be taken seriously and in late February Minister Gujral admitted no workable solution seemed in sight.

**Illegals**

Immigration authorities in Nepal arrested 15 Sri Lankan Tamils at Katmandu airport about to travel to London on forged passports. They were deported to Colombo in early February.

**Accused**

In Parliament on 8 February, H.R. Piyasiri, United National Party MP for Matara, accused British High Commissioner David Gladstone of consorting with drug pedlars at his Colombo residence. Recently, Mr. Gladstone has made strong representations to the Sri Lankan Government over its human rights record.

**Dismissal**

Colombo's Court of Appeal dismissed a long-running habeas corpus application against IPKF Vavuniya Commander Manjith Singh over the two-year detention of Tamil refugee worker Parameswaran Kenga (22) of Cheddikulam. The Court was told Kenga was released a few days earlier.

**LTTE suspect**

Sri Lankan Inspector General of Police, Ernest Perera told the press on 22 February that *Mariyadas*, an LTTE supporter had been arrested in connection with the murder of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front leaders Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran last year.

*Land fever grips the Plantations*

**Colonisation** - the settling of landless Sinhalese peasants in traditional Tamil areas is becoming an increasingly explosive issue in the Hill Country. In Nuwara Eliya District alone, 56 tea estates have been earmarked by the Government for land redistribution, involving 1,800 hectares. Trade Unions have strongly condemned the proposals and have called for a workers' revolt.

In the past uncultivated land on Plantations was distributed to "outsiders", usually Sinhalese while Tamil workers remain landless. Communal and other tensions have also been inflamed by the redistribution of land in the Plantations to political supporters of the Government reducing the amount of land avail-

able for tea cultivation and the size of the daily pay packet.

In February application forms to acquire Plantation land were distributed. Following a meeting with a Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) delegation on 2 February, President Premadasa said that prior consultations must be held with Trade Union leaders and Estate Superintendents before any land is reallocated. A three-man Cabinet Committee has been appointed to review land redistribution proposals in the Hill Country.

Defence sources say a new militant group, the Tamil Eelam Liberation Front is now active in Plantation areas. The group is said to be based in Badulla, Bandarawela and Haputale in Uva

Province and a number of Plantation youths are currently under military training. Sources say the group has strong links with Tamil militants in the North and East who have supplied sophisticated modern weaponry, and is also rumoured to have close ties with the Sinhalese insurgent Peoples Liberation Front (JVP).

■ CWC General Secretary and Deputy Transport Minister M.S. Sellasamy expressed concern in mid-February over the large number of Tamil youths still in police custody following a large-scale round-up in Colombo. Mr. Sellasamy said 173 youths were being held at Welikade prison and another 76 at Kotahena police station.



*Tigers close in as the Indians withdraw*

## The noose tightens around Trincomalee

TWENTY-TWO cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were killed at sea in mysterious circumstances on 6 February. The LTTE's *People's Front* says a boat carrying an LTTE commando unit capsized in turbulent seas, returning from a raid on an ENDLF camp at Jamaliya, north of Trincomalee.

China Bay Police say 18 bodies were recovered and that post mortems revealed death was caused by cyanide poisoning - most likely from the suicide capsules Tiger cadres wear to prevent being taken alive. Other reports suggest the LTTE unit was overpowered at sea by an unknown militant group.

Two days earlier during Independence Day celebrations, three bombs exploded in Trincomalee town but there were no casualties. EPRLF politicians and some civil servants boycotted the ceremonies.

Over 70 LTTE members were released by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Trincomalee in early February. IPKF local commander A K Mehta said only 20,000 Indian troops remained in the District and as they withdrew, all youths in Army detention would be released. The IPKF withdrew from the Muthur, Kinniya and Thambalakamam areas in mid-February which were quickly taken over by LTTE units. There is growing confidence that the Indians will vacate Trincomalee by the 31 March deadline after IPKF Commander in Chief Lt. Gen. A S Kalkat's talks with Provincial Council (PC) ministers on 14 February.

There are still sporadic clashes however - seven Indian soldiers and three civilians were killed in a LTTE attack three days earlier, and observers say the Tigers will keep the pressure on the Indians right up to the last troop withdrawal.

Opposition MP for Trincomalee M.K.A.D.S. Gunawardena told Parliament on 9 February that 20,000 Sinhalese refugees remain in Trincomalee District forgotten amid the political wrangling between the Indians, the Government and the militants.

In Batticaloa, conflict between the LTTE and Muslim militias - notably *Jihad*, said to be the military arm of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) - eased in early February after the release of 51 Muslims from Tiger custody. Over 1,000 Muslim refugees have fled from the East said SLMC leader M.H. Ashraff on 11 February, calling on President Prema-

dasa to provide facilities to 500 refugees in Colombo. The SLMC now seeks to mobilise Muslim opinion internationally and a fund raising delegation is already in the Gulf States.

The LTTE has continued its confidence-building efforts throughout Batticaloa and Amparai districts, arranging meetings and seminars where *People's Front* policies are explained. At a meeting of *People's Front* organisers from across the North and East on 21 February, Batticaloa LTTE commander *Karikalan* called on local and international voluntary organisations to get involved in rehabilitation work in the two districts. The LTTE would guarantee the safety and the success of such projects, he said.

Sri Lankan Police took up duties in Batticaloa on 19 February for the first time in six years. Local sources say they are mostly Tamil, all unarmed and mostly confined to traffic duties. An LTTE cadre, said to have taken cyanide at Walathapitiya police station, died the same day, in suspicious circumstances after he was challenged over carrying arms in Amparai town.

Unconfirmed reports say a major clash took place between the LTTE and the N-E PC's Tamil National Army (TNA) in early February at Unnichchai - the only remaining military stronghold of the Indian-backed militants. Over 40 were killed including 22 LTTE soldiers.

The scattered remnants of the TNA were reported to be regrouping in the Siyabalamduwa area of Moneragala District in mid-month. Tiger cadres were said to be in hot pursuit and Defence Minister Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne visited the area on 18 February to inspect security camps set up by the elite police commando *Special Task Force*.

Observers say large numbers of Sri Lankan Army personnel have also arrived at camps in Batticaloa and Amparai in the last weeks. They are setting up road blocks in outlying areas and carrying out cordon-and-search operations. Unconfirmed reports say forcible relocation of both Tamil and Sinhalese populations in areas of Amparai has already begun and over 100 people are feared dead.

## Jaffna awaits an Indian farewell

INDIAN FORCES continued to withdraw from a number of areas in the Jaffna peninsula this month, including Vadamaratchchi. LTTE cadres moving into the area, warned civilians to stay away from areas still occupied by the IPKF - an arc of fortifications around Palaly airport and the port of Kankesanthurai.

Despite tension, there are growing signs of good will as the Indians prepare to withdraw from the peninsula by the end of the month. On 9 February the LTTE released two captured Indian soldiers and Jaffna IPKF commander R N Bhalla reciprocated with the release of two militants.

Stanley Dominic, leader of the LTTE's political wing in Jaffna warned however, that the Tigers would attack any Indian troops remaining after the 31 March deadline.

Jaffna residents say that something approaching normalcy has been restored with banks and Government offices open five days a week and police on duty. Three Tamil newspapers banned

last October by the EPRLF-led administration have resumed publication. Youths who fled to Colombo in the wake of reprisal killings and forcible conscription into the EPRLF's Tamil National Army (TNA) are also returning.

Other reports say forcible conscription is continuing under the LTTE as well as extortion and the levying of taxes. The militants say they have launched a major recruiting drive throughout the North and East and many young people, including women, are joining them voluntarily.

The LTTE released over 300 TNA cadres into the custody of their parents at high-profile ceremonies in Jaffna and Mannar in mid-February. There are others, the Tigers say, that the people have asked them not to release.

The IPKF also released 150 of the estimated 1,000 Tamil youth still held at the Kankesanthurai army camp. The others will remain as a guarantee of the Indians' continuing safety, local sources say until the last IPKF soldier ships out.



## COLOMBO AND THE SOUTH

## Premadasa promises action on Youth Commission report

SRI LANKA'S President Premadasa, reconvening the All Party Conference (APC) on 14 February, said that the Government would accept 43 of 51 recommendations of a Presidential Youth Affairs Commission set up three months ago to resolve the crisis of youth revolt and militarism throughout the country. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and other smaller opposition groupings boycotted the proceedings.

Mr Premadasa said that implementation of the recommendations would receive priority. One of them observers say - the appointment of a Surrender Committee to which youths suspected of involvement in violence can submit themselves in safety - is increasingly urgent. This is borne out by continuing indiscriminate killings allegedly by security forces and paramilitary groupings.

Another recommendation urges the establishment of a ten-member Nomination Commission comprising representatives from all political parties to make major appointments to State corporations.

Following Mr Premadasa's speech, six Emergency Regulations were rescinded on 16 February. These included the notorious 55FF which allows security forces to dispose of corpses without post mortem or inquest. Restrictions on publications and bans on certain political parties were also lifted. In a further measure a Bill on Tertiary and Vocational Education was tabled in Parliament on 20 February by Youth Affairs Minister Nanda Mathew. The Bill aims to streamline vocational education.

Killings in the South and the Central Highlands have continued to evoke disgust and disgust. At the beginning of the month, police recovered 20 bodies in Kandy and a further 15 at Watagoda, believed killed by vigilantes. On 2 February ten burning bodies were found at Polannaruwa. Another 15 young men were shot and hacked to death by a vigilante group at Malwana a day later.

Eight charred bodies were found at Gampola on 9 February and a further six in Anuradhapura. The following day, two students and two others were burned to death at Habarana. On 15 February five trainee teachers were abducted by vig-

ilantes at Ockampitiya in Uva Province.

The security forces are said to have made hundreds of arrests throughout the month. Some 27 alleged JVP members were arrested in Moneragala in mid-February and 117 were taken into custody in Tangalle. Other arrests were made in Kegalle, Balangoda, Anuradhapura, Warakapola and Dehiowita. A security forces spokesman said large quantities of arms were recovered.

In a statement on 16 February, the Government said 6,757 suspected subversives were in custody in seven camps and 2,544 in eleven rehabilitation centres controlled by security forces. Over 400 school children were also promised amnesty on Independence Day on 4 February, but so far only 19 have been released.

Two JVP leaders Meepalage Ranjit Perera and Hewahettige Jayatissa were killed on 1 February in a confrontation with the police at Halgaswatte in the Colombo suburb of Kirillapona, police sources said. A number of robberies and attacks on the Kirillapona police station and the Panagoda Army Camp in the last two years were attributed to them. Police also alleged that University student leader Daya Pathirana was murdered by Jayatissa. Reports also say that the JVP leader for Moneragala was arrested by the Special Task Force on 13 February.

According to sources in Weligama twelve persons were killed by the security forces and thrown off a bridge on 6 February. Buddhist priests in the area say that at least 20 temples in Matara District were empty, as priests fled for their lives. A number of Buddhist temples in Tangalle are also deserted.

Two persons including a lawyer named D. Wickramasinghe were hacked to death by unknown men at the lawyer's residence in Embilipitiya in the Ratnapura District on 31 January.

Five soldiers and two civilians were shot dead in an ambush on 8 February in Udapussellawa by unidentified gunmen. In Maturata, JVP suspects shot dead two United National Party supporters. Five JVP cadres were killed in a bomb explosion at Sedawatte on 16 February and a further five killed in a jungle shoot-out with police in the Thalagoda area, two days later.

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

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## Jaffna students condemn State killings

JAFFNA University Students' Union (JUSU) have called on the Sri Lankan Government to hold a public inquiry into the killings and disappearance of University students throughout the island. In a recently published report JUSA says that universities reopened in January cannot function properly unless large numbers of students still held in custody are released. They have asked the Government to publish a list of students arrested by security forces.

The growth of State terrorism in the South is a direct result JUSA says of the silence of political parties and student organisations, years earlier when Sri Lankan forces unleashed an orgy of violence on the people of the North and East.

The Jaffna-based University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) who released their third report at the beginning of this year have been instrumental in drawing attention to killings and disappearances in the North-East carried out by IPKF forces and Tamil militants since the Indian occupation.

Last November, representatives from Universities throughout Sri Lanka gathered in Jaffna for a two-day series of meetings and seminars on education and human rights, dedicated to the memory of Dr. Rajani Thiranagama, a leading figure in UTHR who was killed by a militant gunman at Thirunelveli Junction in Jaffna town two months earlier.