

## SRI LANKAN FORCES REACH KILINOCHCHI

Fighting in the North-East between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan forces continues with no sign of a ceasefire. By the end of July government troops had reached the strategic northern town of Kilinochchi.

Security sources say that the LTTE base at Kanchikudicharu in the Amparai District was overrun on 11 July in an operation involving 7000 troops. Although Eastern Commander Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa was appointed on the same day to direct operations in the North, the fighting in the East was far from over. Clashes continued throughout the month even though attention now focussed on the North. The statement by General Kobbekaduwa that the next ten days would be crucial, evoked concern and fear in the North.

In early July the Eelavar Democratic Front (EDF), the political wing of the LTTE ally Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) urged President Premadasa to initiate a ceasefire and resume talks with the LTTE. Ceasefire was ruled out unless the LTTE laid down arms. All eleven MPs of the EDF resigned their seats in Parliament on 23 July protesting against the 'military offensive and restrictions on supply of amenities' to the North-East.

The North-East Provincial Council was dissolved on 7 July following amendments to the Provincial Councils Act. Fresh elections were announced, but a week later the government retracted saying that conditions in the North-East were not conducive to hold elections.

In a surprise statement on 8th July President Premadasa said that future negotiations with the LTTE would only be conducted with the involvement of the international community in a manner acceptable to Sri Lanka. Although encouraging, observers say, the statement amounted to nought, because of the precondition that arms should be laid down.

As concern for the plight of civilians in the North mounted, the Sri Lankan government allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to organise food convoys to Jaffna. ICRC confirmed that the first convoy reached Jaffna on 13th July.

India expressed its concern over developments in Sri Lanka on several occasions and Prime Minister V P Singh, who faced a split in his own government, said in mid July that India would apply diplomatic pressure on Sri Lanka. The parliamentary delegation lead by Speaker M.H.Mohamed, visiting countries in the region to explain the government position in the conflict, arrived in India to face a hartal (general strike) in Tamil Nadu and Pondicheri on 20 July as a protest against 'attacks on Tamils'. Earlier the Sri Lankan Tamil parties and the Ceylon Workers Congress had declined to be part of the delegation. India urged the delegation to ensure the safety of Tamil civilians. Pressure on India grew as the number of refugees arriving in Tamil Nadu exceeded 50,000. According to reports LTTE's international representative Kittu had also called for Indian intervention.

As battles in the North continued the Sri Lankan government faced increasing JVP hostilities in the South. Some observers doubted that the Army would withdraw from the northern front, even if President Premadasa accepted a ceasefire.

In late July, urged by doctors from Jaffna, the Sri Lanka government agreed to establish a demilitarised zone around the Jaffna Fort extending to the Jaffna hospital. But observers believe the LTTE is unlikely to agree to such a proposal.

## REFUGEES DIE OF STARVATION AND DISEASE

Four persons, died of starvation in refugee camps at Pesalai and Vidataltivu in Mannar in mid-July. Sri Lanka Red Cross says four more persons died of cholera in camps at Komari in Amparai.

As the refugee situation in the North-East deteriorated, national and international relief agencies were experiencing difficulty in bringing relief to remote areas of the North because of the fighting.

M Abubakar, the MP for Vanni, after visiting Mannar and Vavuniya said in early July that refugees from the North were being held in the Mylavi jungle by the Army. He urged the government to airdrop food and medicine for the refugees.

Reports say that many people in the Mannar area sold their possessions to make the hazardous journey to India. In mid-July the Sri Lanka Navy attacked boats carrying 35 refugees killing 28 of them. Thousands of persons treked through jungle from Mannar and Ilavanchikulam to reach Puttalam. Two refugees were killed by a landmine.

In Batticaloa thousands of refugees in temples and schools in Mandur, Ambilanturai and Vellaveli had not received any assistance. Relief efforts were hampered by Army operations as some social workers fled the area fearing attacks. According to reports refugees were seen begging. Refugee women in a school were raped.

In mid-July reports said that some 17,000 refugees in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya from Trincomalee were not receiving assistance from the government. In Vavuniya the refugees suffered without food. The food stores are under the control of the Army, who have imposed a restriction to prevent food supplies reaching the LTTE. On 5 July three persons were killed when they visited their home in Kurumankadu from a refugee camp.

The number of refugees in the whole of North-East has exceeded 600,000. Local relief workers say that there is an acute shortage of food and medicine in most of the refugee camps and only a massive relief effort would prevent further deaths.

Three thousand refugees on the average are arriving in Tamil Nadu every day. They are accommodated in the various districts in cyclone shelters and temples. In late July a proposal by the Sri Lankan and Indian governments to turn the Talaimannar island into a huge refugee camp with the assistance of the UNHCR was rejected by the LTTE.

## HUMANITARIAN AID

Britain donated Rupees 24 million (\$600,000) in humanitarian assistance to civilians affected in the North-East. United States agreed to provide \$10 million additional food aid. UNICEF handed over Rs 2.4 million (\$60,000) worth drugs and medical equipment. NORAD donated Rs 2.2 million (\$55,000) and Canada gave Sarvodaya Rs 25 million (\$625,000). Japan has provided Rs 20 million (\$500,000) for the refugees.

According to the National Development Bank, Sri Lanka would seek Rs 6 billion (\$150 million) in credit from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to finance industrial development as existing lines of credit are expected to run out ahead of the 1992 schedule. The European Economic Community is expected to grant Rs 250 million (\$6.25 million) for the Janasaviya programme.

## CIVILIANS SUFFER IN ARMY OPERATIONS IN THE EAST

'Mopping up' operations and arrests by the Army continued in Batticaloa and Amparai Districts. On 5th July around 500 people were taken from Pandiruppu and Maruthamunai to a public place. After interrogation, 30 youths were arrested and taken to the Karaitivu Camp. Hooded men believed to be members of rival groups assisted the Army in 'identifying the Tigers'. According to Batticaloa MP Prins Casinader the whereabouts of 200 people arrested from Kalmunai and Karaitivu were not known.

In the 4th Colony in Amparai most homes had been demolished and 38 civilians killed in early July. Shops and temples had been looted and damaged. Refugees say that in Sinnawattai, Malayarkattu and other colonies more than 100 persons had been killed. In Ondachimadam 24 houses were burned.

Bodies were found dumped in public places in Batticaloa. In Kaluvanchikudi four bodies were found on 9 July. In Batticaloa town five bodies were recovered on 6 July and two days later six bodies were found. Residents say they saw bodies floating in the lagoon. On 14 July ten bodies were recovered in the town. Sources in Colombo say that the Army was carrying out a terror campaign similar to that in the South.

In Karaitivu most of the houses have been looted and damaged. Bodies of 14 civilians were found in the village. Planes attacked Paduwankarai on 16 July causing damage to buildings.

According to reports from Batticaloa 27 youths were burned with tyres on Lake Road on 17 July by the security forces. In late July during an Army search operation in Palukamam, People's Bank Manager Sivarajasingham and four others were shot dead.

Security sources said that in July 160 bodies believed to be those of policemen abducted by the LTTE, had been recovered in Amparai.

In Morawewa in the Trincomalee District 13 soldiers were killed on 5 July in a land mine explosion. According to security sources twelve LTTE members were killed in a search operation in Trincomalee. On Anuradhapura Road 16 soldiers and 10 Tigers died in a clash on 7 July. Defence sources say that in mid July 38 LTTE cadres in hideouts in the beach were found and killed.

In Trincomalee the government has announced that State employees failing to report for work would be dismissed. Trincomalee residents say that many people are still in the jungle because of fear and homes of others had been destroyed. They complain that the Government Agent was attempting to replace Tamil officers.

## MUSLIMS MASSACRED

The Tigers are accused of harassing members of the Muslim Community in the East. In early July LTTE abducted two prominent Muslims. In mid-July 168 Muslims were abducted, allegedly by the LTTE. Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) says majority of those abducted were killed. On 28 July LTTE killed five Muslims in Sammanthurai and on 31 July 14 Muslims were shot dead at Akkaraipatru.

The bodies of ten Muslims arrested by the security forces from Neynakadu in Amparai were found in a well in late July. According to reports in early August, persons believed to be LTTE members entered a mosque in the East and sprayed bullets killing at least 50 Muslims.

## THE RISE OF THE JVP

Thirteen vigilant committee members at Siyambalangoda village in Matara District were shot and hacked to death on 25 July by fifty armed men alleged to be JVP members. Increased activity by the JVP was reported in the South, prompting Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne to urge President Premadasa to stop releasing JVP members from custody.

In early July security sources said 15 JVP members from Weligama had been arrested in Colombo. On 4 July the manager of the Kintota Plywood Corporation in Galle District was killed. His son, who is a soldier and wife escaped with injuries. The JVP damaged power lines in Akkuressa on 21 July and a few days later bombed two electricity transmitters in Kandy.

Two soldiers from the Wellawa camp were arrested by the police in connection with robberies in Siyambalanduwa. SLFP's chief organiser for the same area, Upali Bandara was killed by unknown persons at Athimale on 24 July. Army Lieutenant Dharmapriya de Silva was shot dead in a Colombo restaurant the previous day by unknown persons.

Around 100 hill country youths are reported to be held in Boossa and Pelawatte Army camps. According to trade union sources harassment of plantation workers in the Uva province continued. Fourteen Tamils arrested in Colombo and held at the Mahara camp were released in early July. Others are still held after being 'identified' by hooded men.

Alleged LTTE cadres shot dead eight Sinhalese villagers at Damminna in Polannaruwa District and nine persons at Wan ELA in Trincomalee District on 24 July. Twenty persons were killed in another attack on Elawaka village in Medawachchiya two days later.

## IN BRIEF

\* LTTE destroyed the Rupawahini TV relay station and a fuel storage tank at Kokkavil in Mullaitivu District on 11 July. At least 70 soldiers are believed killed in the attack. On the same day a suicide squad of 'Black Tigers' rammed their boat with explosives into a naval vessel, near Valvai in the North, causing severe damage.

\* Defence sources say that in battles for the LTTE eastern base at Kanjikudicharu 90 guerillas and 60 soldiers were killed. In clashes at Murunkan in Mannar District on 21 July six soldiers and eight Tigers died. Nine soldiers were killed and 35 injured in heavy fighting in Kilinochchi on 22 July. Eighteen LTTE cadres were also killed.

\* According to the Member of Parliament for Vanni, K R Kuganeswaran over 2500 civilians have been killed in the North-East, including 50 people in Vavuniya District.

\* Sri Lanka Air Force bombed Gurunagar in Jaffna on 13 July damaging thirty houses and injuring three persons. Six civilians were killed in the bombing on 14 July near the Jaffna Fort and Nallur.

\* In the Jaffna peninsula 68,000 displaced families were accommodated in 344 camps. According to the Jaffna Government Agent Anton Alfred, all food stocks were exhausted by mid-July. Sources in Colombo say that the food supplied through the ICRC was insufficient as the peninsula needed 50,000 tonnes of food every month.