

New Army offensive jolts Jaffna

THE SRI LANKAN ARMY launched a new offensive inside the Jaffna peninsula as troops flown into Palaly on 17 October pushed forward in a six-mile radius around the airbase, after fierce fighting with guerrilla forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

In a dual thrust Sri Lanka forces secured the northern port of Kankesanthurai and its cement factory, now an important LTTE munitions complex. The Tigers claim to have stemmed the Army's thrust south outside Tellipalai, leaving Vasavilan, Kadduvan, Myliddy and other towns in Government hands.

The offensive, which continues, is accompanied by widespread aerial bombing and shelling. Army Commander Maj.Gen.Denzil Kobbekaduwa admitted over 1,000 houses were destroyed in the first week of the operation and civilian casualties are said to be high. Tellipalai hospital is badly damaged and LTTE headquarters at Kondavil destroyed. St Sebastian's Church at Gurunagar, close to Jaffna town and villages in the Valikamam and Vadamaratchchi areas are in ruins after bombing raids.

Military casualties approach 100 on each side and the Tigers say they shot down a Sri Lankan helicopter and sank two naval patrol boats during the offensive. South-east of Jaffna town, Sri Lanka forces occupy Karaitivu and Kayts islands supported by cadres of the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), a splinter group of the Tamil EPRLF. There are continuing reports of looting and killing from Kayts and Mandaitivu.

Relief workers say the food situation in the peninsula has eased considerably after a ship funded by Norway carrying 3,000 tons of food aid arrived off Point

Tigers expel Muslims from the North

Pedro in early October. Two Government ships left for the north in late October and church convoys now brave the hazardous western route across Jaffna lagoon weekly. Prices of all staple items have fallen as traders build up an alternative economy of rice smuggled from Vavuniya and petrol from India.

But there is a growing cash flow crisis for farm workers and other day-wage labourers, now without work for four months. Hospital conditions remain critical, many without bandages as well as X-rays and anaesthetics. British aid officials have set aside £2 million to re-equip Jaffna General Hospital but cannot get supplies and equipment through.

When the Tigers lifted a ban on people leaving the peninsula for three days in early October, 15,000 people flooded into Vavuniya, many held for two days' screening at the Government refugee complex before proceeding to Colombo. The influx of refugees has increased tension in the capital with 200 Tamil youths rounded up by police on 10 October for suspected terrorist links.

A greater exodus was to follow on 23 October, when Tiger youths touring rural areas in pick-ups with loudspeakers announced Jaffna and Mullaitivu's 25,000 Muslims should leave the North by 28 October and 35,000 who live in Mannar District by 1 November. LTTE instructions were that all gold and valuables should be left at the nearest mosque.

By late October, Vavuniya was a boom town and its refugee camp with a modest 602 inhabitants on 6 October, filled to overflowing. Many others headed for Ikkirigollewa, a Muslim village south of

Vavuniya or for Kalpitiya at the tip of the Puttalam peninsula. At least 30,000 Muslims have left LTTE-controlled areas, observers say. Puttalam is already swollen with 10,000 Muslim refugees who fled the east after LTTE

massacres at Kattankudy and Eravur in August.

Muslims seeking sanctuary at Silavathurai, said the Tigers had expelled them because Muslim politicians continued to ask for a separate province in the East and a controlling interest in Muslim-dominated areas of Mannar and Puttalam. The Tigers' motives are unclear but many Muslims are traders and businessmen and their assets will replenish LTTE coffers.

On 1 November, Sri Lankan air, land and sea forces mounted a massive assault on Mannar island, ostensibly to allow the Muslim population to return to the District. Increased surveillance in the Palk Strait has meant fewer than 5,000 refugees escaped through Mannar to south India this month.

Growing communal violence at Ayodhya has so destabilised the Indian government, that it may not survive until 11 November when Foreign Minister IK Gujral is due in Colombo to promote peace talks. Nevertheless, Indian High Commissioner NH Jha told the press in early October that the Tigers no longer opposed a united Sri Lanka and that a negotiated settlement was possible.

Defying the air-raids, at a massive political rally in Jaffna a few days later, LTTE chief political adviser Anton Balasingham said the Tigers were willing to talk to Colombo but there could be no ceasefire until the Government recognised the Tamil right to self-determination.

In a message read out to the rally, LTTE leader Prabhakaran vowed that the Tigers would fight on despite the superior fire-power arraigned against them. Bombs could destroy houses and schools but not moral courage, he said.

For the long-suffering population of Jaffna this may be a signal that there is now no settlement in sight and observers say many thousands of Jaffna's middle classes will look increasingly on exile in India or the West as the only way left to save their children's lives.

World Bank donors pledged Sri Lanka \$1 billion in aid for 1991 at a meeting in Paris on 25 October but warned that future assistance could be made conditional on Sri Lanka's human rights record. Sri Lanka has a projected budget deficit this year of \$1.5 billion and the Gulf crisis is likely to cost another \$100 million. Prime Minister D B Wijetunga moved in Parliament on 29 October to increase Government borrowing by issuing Treasury Bills worth a further \$60 million. A full report on page two.

THE WORLD BANK MEETING

A fistful of dollars

DONOR countries pledged Sri Lanka \$1 billion in aid for 1991 at their annual meeting at the World Bank offices in Paris on 25 October, but warned that future assistance could depend on Sri Lanka's human rights record.

The meeting commended Sri Lanka's careful adherence to the IMF-World Bank stabilisation programme for its economy, achieving 2.3% growth last year, the decline of fiscal deficits and an increase in foreign exchange reserves. There was concern, however, over the continuing climb in domestic inflation - officially 20%, unofficially 30% - and fears that the cost of the new war in the North and the Gulf crisis would leave Sri Lanka's economy in ruins.

Analysts say the war with the Tigers will have cost \$250 million by the end of the year. The loss of remittances from 100,000 Sri Lankan workers in the Gulf, higher oil prices and lost tea exports will cost \$100 million this year and a projected \$400 million in 1991 - 25% of Sri Lanka's export income.

Emergency surgery in the public sector coupled with a tight rein on imports is the country's only hope. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation currently loses \$365,000 a day and there is a projected budget deficit this year of \$1.5 billion.

Concern was also expressed by donor governments over possible adverse effects of the World Bank's three-year structural adjustment programme on Sri Lanka's poor and unemployed. A study on poverty in Sri Lanka conducted by the Bank earlier this year concluded that only 6% of Sri Lanka's poor are unemployed and that poverty is disproportionately concentrated among families with

many children.

How many is not clear - the national average is four - but observers say Sri Lanka's costly and controversial Poverty Alleviation Programme, *Janasaviya* which promotes saving and small business is likely to be replaced by a national infant nutrition programme to target the most vulnerable.

The removal of Government subsidies on rice, flour, fuel and fertilizer earlier this year have caused considerable hardship to many people as prices spiralled.

Two days before the Paris meeting, the 12 countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) released a statement in Brussels deploring Sri Lanka's human rights record drawing attention to the killing of journalist Richard de Zoysa in February and the seizure of documents from Opposition MP Mahinda Rajapakse on his way to Geneva to testify to the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Future aid to Sri Lanka could be conditional upon improvements in human rights the statement said, a view reiterated by European countries in the meeting. Sources in Brussels said European governments had decided that a series of private representations to the Sri Lankan Government had produced little effect and that it was time to go public.

At a news conference in Paris, lobbied by Tamil activists protesting genocide, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister DB Wijetunga said his Government had introduced constitutional reforms protecting fundamental rights and that foreign reports of atrocities in Sri Lanka were "grossly exaggerated". Diplomatic sources estimate 30,000 people were killed in Sri Lanka last year by security forces and insurgents.

Extortion

Sources in Denmark say police arrested 10 Tamils at the LTTE office in Jutland on 3 October, accusing them of extorting money from the Tamil refugee community. Police say investigations are continuing and charges will be brought against three of the arrested. Similar allegations concerning the LTTE were widely circulated in the Norwegian press this month.

Degradation

Child Care Commissioner Padma Ranasinghe said a recent survey revealed that there were over 10,000 child prostitutes in Sri Lanka, mostly young males used for pornographic or homosexual purposes.

Hall of mirrors

A one-man Commission of Enquiry set up by President Premadasa to investigate claims that Israeli secret service agency MOSSAD trained both Sri Lankan soldiers and Tamil militants has been flooded with information, press reports in Colombo say. The allegations appear in a recent bestseller *By Way of Deception* by former MOSSAD agent Victor Ostrovsky. The book also claims Sri Lanka's giant Mahaweli Development Project was conceived as a front to fund covert MOSSAD activities.

Prized

Sri Lanka's Civil Rights Movement will share this year's Carter-Menil human rights prize worth £100,000 with a community organisation from Guatemala. The award is for their exemplary performance and remarkable courage in documenting human rights violations, said a statement released by the Carter Foundation.

50,000 Sri Lankans trapped in Kuwait

OVER 40,000 Sri Lankan workers in the Gulf were repatriated to Colombo by late October, official sources say and continue to arrive at the rate of 5,000 a week. The airlift is a joint initiative by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Swedish Red Cross and Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry to rescue 110,000 Sri Lankans working in Kuwait when Iraqi forces invaded in August.

The US embassy in Colombo has released \$160,000 to fund resettlement and in-country assistance for the Gulf refugees. Textiles Minister U B Wijekoon

told the press on 10 October that there were 20,000 vacancies in Sri Lanka's garment industry that could be earmarked for returnees. Training and start-up loans would be given as part of a new "Handloom Village Scheme" the Minister said.

Most of the returnees have lost everything as possessions were looted and bank accounts frozen. Foreign exchange remittances to Sri Lanka from Kuwait last year totalled \$95 million.

But sources say 50,000 Sri Lankans remain trapped in Kuwait with another 15,000 in refugee camps on the Iraq-

Jordan border. A BBC report in mid-October said over 35,000 Sri Lankan women working in Kuwait as housemaids were stranded and some had gone into hiding. There were also reports of sexual abuse and assault from women returnees in Colombo. From 27 October, the IOM says, it will run a daily flight to Colombo from Basra just inside the Iraqi border for Sri Lankans it can assist to leave Kuwait.

Leader of the Sri Lanka People's Party, Ossie Abeygunesekera flew to Kuwait in late October to investigate the plight of stranded Sri Lankans.

Special Task Force leaves its mark on Amparai
Monsoon havoc in the east

THE PLIGHT of refugees in Batticaloa and Amparai Districts has deteriorated sharply with the onset of the monsoon rains in mid-October. Most of the 50,000 refugees driven from Vantharumoolai and Sithandy camps by the Tigers last month are hiding in jungle in the Paduwankarai area and in a 30-mile stretch between Karadiyanaru and Mandur, west of Batticaloa lagoon. Commissioner of Essential Services, Charitha Ratwatte says they are beyond the reach of Government relief and has expressed fears for their safety.

Tamil group EPRLF says there are 102,697 refugees in 53 camps in Batticaloa District. In the 16 weeks since mid-June less than three weeks supply of food has reached the area. Assistant Director

of Social Services R Thiyagarajah says 1,500 families at Valaichenai and 200 families at Chenkalady have received no assistance. Many others have left the area after a crescendo of Tamil-Muslim killings in August. A further 20 Tamils were abducted by Muslim Home Guards at Valaichenai in early October. Two bodies were later found in a river.

In a meeting at Batticaloa Town Hall on 14 October, Tamil and Muslim leaders appealed to both communities to sink their differences. In Colombo Tamil and Muslim political parties proposed two ethnically based regional councils to function as a second protective tier of government beneath the Provincial Councils in the east. But observers say there is little hope of final agreement and Muslim

parties will fall back on their demand for a separate Muslim province based around Amparai District.

In Amparai 3,000 refugees at Komari Church in Pottuvil have received no food aid for the last three months, relief workers say. N Srikantha, political advisor to Tamil group TELO says 30 civilians were shot dead in Karaitivu on 12 October by the Special Task Force (STF) after six members of Muslim militant group *Jihad* escaped from a nearby Army camp.

Local sources claim almost 3,000 people have disappeared in Amparai District alone since 11 June. They point to the STF and the record of local Army Brigadier Karunatileke who commanded in Hambantota at the height of the JVP holocaust last year. His handiwork can be clearly seen, they say, on the 38 headless corpses found on Akkaraipattu beach on 28 October.

There is little harvesting of this year's rice crop in either District and public utilities remain minimal. Farmers failed to attend a crisis meeting called by Government officials in late October and it is feared that there will be no rice crop this year. A number of Sinhalese farmers have disappeared in remote areas of Amparai on their way to harvest fields. Nine hospitals in Batticaloa reopened this month only after promises of Army protection, but a Tamil doctor was abducted leaving the hospital in late October.

More than 100 youths now leave Batticaloa and Amparai for Colombo every week seeking work and safety. Some will not arrive.

Tigers target Sinhalese villages

AFTER VISITING refugee camps in Trincomalee town in mid-October President Premadasa appointed a Relief and Rehabilitation Committee comprising senior officials from ten ministries. The Committee will report in mid-November.

Although Trincomalee town has a surface normalcy with checkpoints dismantled and shops open, militant attacks continue in outlying areas of the District. Kuchchaveli Army camp was attacked by the LTTE for three days in early October and nine Tigers killed in an Army counter offensive. On 15 October, four soldiers died in a landmine explosion at Vanella and two Home Guards and four civilians were killed in an LTTE ambush at Padaviya. In another LTTE attack at Muthur an Army Lieutenant and a police Sub-Inspector were killed.

The army mounted a number of large-scale operations this month south of Koddidiyar Bay after rumours that LTTE second-in-command *Mahattaya* had arrived to direct operations in the east. In the most successful of these, soldiers captured a fortified Tiger base at Verugal after fierce fighting in late October. Three soldiers were killed.

But local reports say the LTTE has stepped up actions in Sinhalese areas of Trincomalee and Anuradhapura and in areas where they say colonisation by Sinhalese settlers is taking place.

Nine Sinhalese villagers were killed when LTTE units attacked Wahalkada in Anuradhapura District. In two separate attacks on villages in the Tantrimale area west of Medawachchiya in late October, 17 Sinhalese villagers were killed by the LTTE.

In an attack a few days later on Manal Aru Army camp on the borders of Trincomalee and Mullaitivu Districts LTTE sources say ten soldiers were killed and the camp overrun. Other reports claim a number of Sinhalese civilians were also killed. Tamil sources claim the area has a focus of Sinhalese colonisation since 1983.

Quagmire in Mannar

REFUGEE WORKERS in Mannar District on Sri Lanka's west coast say relief efforts have been badly hit by the Muslim exodus and the monsoon rains which are earlier and heavier than expected.

In the last month international relief agency UNHCR has brought 1,400 tons of food aid to the 15,000 refugees sheltering at the Catholic shrine at Madhu but heavy rains in the last week have rendered the red dirt roads impassable. There is urgent need for increased assistance, say aid workers, before the situation gets out of hand. On Mannar Island UNHCR have set up a relief centre close to St

Mary's Church at Pesalai where over 1,000 people are sheltering from the Army's November offensive.

Over 5,000 people have flooded into Mannar town which unconfirmed reports say is now in Army hands. There is no electricity at Mannar hospital where surgery and childbirth take place under impossible conditions. Fuel shortages have cut piped water supplies to 15 minutes a day.

Refugee families on Mannar receive 3 kilos of rice, 1.5 kilos of sugar 0.5 kilo of dhal, a packet of milk powder and 5 candles in a weekly package. It is a life-line that grows increasingly fragile.

THOUSANDS OF TAMILS WILL SEEK EXILE IF THE WAR CONTINUES

Forced out

Almost 10,000 Tamil asylum-seekers arrived in Europe in the first six months of this year. That was before the June war and a million people were made refugees in north-east Sri Lanka. If the Tigers mean to fight on will south India, where 120,000 Sri Lankans have fled the war in the last four months, become a staging post for a new flood of Tamil refugees to the West?

Reports submitted to this year's session of the European Consultation on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) in Geneva in late September say 10,000 Sri Lankan Tamils claimed political asylum in Europe between January and June this year.

The major receiving countries continue to be Germany with 2,503 applications and Switzerland with 2,400. The Swiss have a tough new policy towards Tamils and have forcibly returned 30 asylum-seekers to Colombo this year for abuse of asylum procedures and criminal offences.

In France, where there were 1,304 applications, the recognition rate for Tamils has fallen from 67% to 41% this year reflecting a hardening of attitudes as refugee figures continue to climb. Britain received 1,321 Tamil applications - close to last year's annual figure - and Holland's 1,404 were another significant increase.

There are now 130,000 Sri Lankan

asylum-seekers in Europe. Outside France, less than 5% have full refugee status, but many others may try to join them, the ECRE meeting was told. If the war in northern Sri Lanka continues.

Increased surveillance by Indian and Sri Lankan naval patrols in the Palk Strait cut the refugee flow to south India this month to 5,000. Over 70 refugees drowned in two separate incidents off the Tamil Nadu coast on 6 October, when overcrowded boats capsized after being challenged by the Indian navy.

Sri Lankan naval patrols detained an Indian trawler carrying 3,000 litres of diesel destined for the LTTE off Talaimannar two days later, and observers say the escape route across the Palk Strait is increasingly hazardous.

Over 120,000 Sri Lankan Tamils have arrived in south India since 11 June and there are another 100,000 who fled between 1985 and 1987. Tamil Nadu now has

a policy of distributing Lankan refugees to a network of camps throughout the rural areas to diffuse the growing political and economic pressures in areas where arrivals are concentrated.

Mandapam camp near Rameswaram is a pressure point. After police arrested several refugees on 28 October, two refugees were wounded when police fired on a crowd gathered outside Mandapam police station. A number of policemen were also injured.

Middle class refugees avoid the camps, many of which are said to be under militant control, and after registration slip away to Madras or to family or friends. Many of those with assets or relatives in the West will inevitably seek sanctuary for their children away from the vortex of militant politics which has decimated a generation. They will not be put off, refugee workers say, by "Country of First Asylum" regulations in Western countries where their transit through India will invalidate refugee claims.

Hundreds now queue daily outside the Indian High Commission in Colombo for a visa. For some it will only be the first leg of a longer journey.

The missing 60,000 in the South

A EUROPEAN human rights delegation visiting Sri Lanka in late October say that 60,000 people have "disappeared" in southern Sri Lanka since 1978 as a result of the conflict between security forces and the Marxist insurgent People's Liberation Front (JVP).

The delegation, comprising two British Members of the European Parliament and two lawyers, spent a week in the island compiling a report on human rights violations which it will present to the European Parliament on 6 November.

Although Sri Lankan authorities deny responsibility for killings and disappearances, the report says, the scale is such that the Government cannot be absolved from responsibility.

The delegation visited the South and Kandy, where 20 to 50 people still disappear every week, says Dutch lawyer Cor-Jan Schoorl.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) has called on the Government to set up an independent Commission of Enquiry to investigate disappearances since 1 January 1983. The Commission should have full powers, BASL say, to

summon and examine witnesses and make recommendations.

Meanwhile, Police Chief Ernest Perera warned banks of a new JVP threat after robberies at Dalugama and Gampaha this month. Police shot dead a JVP suspect in Nugegoda on 10 October but

members of the security forces continue to be indicted for robbery and violent crime. Nine people including two reserve policemen were arrested in Gampola in connection with a robbery.

Random killings and disappearances continue in the Plantations. Three burned bodies were found at Kandakade in Dolosbage and at Badulla, Perumal Kandasamy of Spring Valley Estate was shot dead by police, allegedly while trying to escape from custody.

Heart patient HD Andreas disappeared from Tangalle hospital in mysterious circumstances in early October and labourer Jude Marcus Fernando was abducted by uniformed men later recognised as police officers from Kochchikade in Gampaha.

Dr Chandra Fernando, brother-in-law of JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera is suing the State for Rs 1 million. In a fundamental rights petition, Dr Fernando alleges he was illegally arrested, detained and tortured. The Supreme Court has ordered the Commissioner of Prisons to produce Dr Fernando at a hearing on 20 November.

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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