

## 120 MPs move to impeach the President

# Premadasa suspends Parliament

SRI LANKA's President Ranasinghe Premadasa has suspended Parliament until 24 September after 120 MPs signed an impeachment motion in late August in an attempt to remove him from office.

The motion specifies 24 allegations of corruption and abuse of power by Mr Premadasa under Article 38 of the Constitution, including illegal land deals and involvement in the murder of journalist Richard de Zoysa. Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) spokesman Anura Bandaranaike, one of five opposition leaders behind the motion said 45 MPs of the ruling United National Party (UNP) had signed the petition.

They reportedly include the Education Minister Lalith Athulathmudali and Labour Minister G M Premachandra who have resigned. Many MPs were concerned by the retention of power by the presidency and the erosion of parliamentary democracy, said Mr Athulathmudali. President Premadasa elected in December 1988 is the executive head of the state and of the Government. His ruling party controls 125 seats in the 225-seat Parliament. The rebel coalition needs another 30 MPs for the necessary two-thirds majority to impeach Mr Premadasa when Parliament reconvenes.

The President's delaying tactics are characteristically astute, observers say and the Buddhist clergy and leading businessmen have already declared their support for him. The military, more ambiguously have vowed to uphold the Constitution and preserve law and order.

The stage is now set for some spectacular political blood-letting while Mr Pre-

madasa retains considerable room for manoeuvre. If the impeachment petition is passed on 24 September it must then be approved by the Supreme Court after hearing evidence from Mr Premadasa. The petition then requires a second two-thirds majority vote in Parliament before the President can be removed.

If the rebels lose either of the votes, they will move a motion of no confidence in the Government, which they could win on a simple majority. Mr Premadasa may then dissolve Parliament and hold a General Election.

This attempted constitutional coup was originally designed by opposition parties to prevent the President calling a snap election after sweeping success in the local elections in May. The rebels now have valuable weeks to change the political climate before Mr Premadasa goes to the polls. Much of that will depend on how much of the dirt thrown at Mr Premadasa, sticks analysts say.

Inside the ruling UNP a see-saw battle for control is well-advanced with lights burning late into the night at rival caucus meetings. In his 32 months of rule Mr Premadasa sidelined the high-caste aristocracy of the old UNP elite, concentrating power in the hands of a few "Special Advisers" like Bradman Weerakoon and KN Choksy. His lower caste background and his close-fisted control of party patronage could lose him a head count in the current UNP.

Rumour says Mr Premadasa's snap election was to facilitate a further purge with the President's "new men" who won their spurs in the local elections replacing

the UNP old guard as parliamentary candidates. Suddenly it seems the cracks in the UNP could set off an avalanche. Colombo is jittery with unsigned posters appearing on street corners attacking both factions. Two people have been killed

and in a BBC interview rebel UNP leader Lalith Athulathmudali expressed fears for his own safety.

At a meeting of the UNP parliamentary group in early September 116 of the 125 Government MPs reportedly pledged loyalty to Mr Premadasa which holds out the prospect of some monumental double-dealing even by Colombo standards. It may also signal that the revolt is already quashed.

The crisis flies in the face of fresh efforts to bring peace to the Tamil North-East. On 9 August, Parliament voted unanimously to set up a Select Committee to work out a blueprint for Tamil devolution and a political solution to the war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). There was growing optimism over a new Sinhalese consensus but the 43-strong Committee chaired by the author of the initiative SLFP MP Mangala Munasinghe, now seems destined for limbo.

On the eve of the Army's relief of the strategic Elephant Pass camp, after 24 days of pitched battle, Tourism Minister S Thondaman called for a new realism in a no-win situation and said that for the Tigers a settlement must have the substance of *Eelam* - a separate state - without the name.

At a press conference at LTTE headquarters in Kondavil on 22 August, LTTE political spokesman Anton Balasingham called again for peace talks without preconditions and said Mr Thondaman was welcome in Jaffna to talk terms.

Mr Thondaman, the godfather of Sri Lanka's Plantation Tamils and a close confidante of Mr Premadasa, summoned journalists to his 79th birthday celebrations at Bandarawela on 30 August in anticipation of a new high-level initiative but by then events in Colombo had derailed the peace train.

In the capital, there is a ferment of speculation. No one is willing to bet on the outcome but there is a gut feeling that heads will roll. After the coup, says Colombo, comes the *coup de grace*.

Establishment scions, Lalith Athulathmudali and former Mahaweli Minister Gamini Dissanayake, the leaders of the dissident United National Party faction were both tipped to succeed J R Jayewardene as Sri Lanka's President in 1988 but were outflanked for the nomination by Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa and his influence over the outgoing President. As Education Minister, Mr Athulathmudali has walked a tight rope, observers say but after a blazing row in the Cabinet a few weeks ago was prodded into open revolt.



### The quest for Gandhi's killers Death of an assassin

INDIA'S most wanted man, suspected of masterminding Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, killed himself when he was cornered by police in a Bangalore suburb on 20 August.

Sivarasan also known as *One Eyed Jack*, shot himself and six others took cyanide - a LTTE trademark. One of them was *Subha* the female accomplice of *Dhanu*, a 24 year-old Tamil girl from Kupukullai in Jaffna, who blew herself and Rajiv Gandhi apart at an election rally near Madras on 21 May.

Indian intelligence's Special Investigation Team (SIT) believes Sivarasan to be Raja Arumainayakam from Chavakachcheri, a senior LTTE operative who orchestrated the Gandhi assassination for the Tigers. The LTTE continue to deny involvement. SIT sources say new Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha and hard-line Congress(I) politician K Ramamurthy were next on the hit-list. Two would-be assassins were arrested in New Delhi in mid-August.

SIT have also arrested *Rangan* supposedly Sivarasan's driver and say they have made a breakthrough in linking the Tigers to the assassination. A SIT unit is expected in Colombo in early September.

Two days before Sivarasan died, 12 LTTE cadres killed themselves with cyanide when police surprised them in a remote Karnataka village. Many were amputees and the police may have stumbled on one of hundreds of unofficial "hospital units" set up by the Tigers for wounded from the North-East war.

The suicide of LTTE communications expert *Dixon* cornered in Coimbatore last month, has unearthed a rich seam of Tiger logistics throughout Tamil Nadu. LTTE munitions plants producing thou-

sands of *Arul-89* grenades were discovered as well as major supply depots in Tiruchi, yielding radio transmitters, bulk medical supplies and more armaments.

The Colombo *Island* insider columnist *Taraki* says Sivarasan was sacrificed by the Tigers to avoid implication in cross-border terrorism and the Gandhi killing, jeopardising their vital rear base in Tamil Nadu demonstrates their determination to de-link India from the Sri Lankan Tamil question. Others say the Tigers underestimated the political backlash that would follow Gandhi's killing. If Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi had survived the General Election, their operations would have remained secure.

A major security crackdown is now underway. Karnataka has asked all outsiders in the state to register with the police and there are night patrols in force in Kerala. Cadres from rival Tamil group PLOTE are helping Indian police to track down LTTE operatives in rural areas of Tamil Nadu.

Over 70,000 of the 220,000 Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu have refused to register with the police and 2,500 are already in custody. India plans to deport over 1,000 of the detainees described as "hard-core militants" including S Sivanayagam, editor of the English fortnightly *Tamil Nation*.

India's High Commissioner in Colombo NN Jha, says the names of 6,500 refugee families have been given to the Sri Lankan authorities to form the vanguard of a new voluntary return programme. Most of them are from Trincomalee District where already overstretched and insanitary refugee facilities like Clappenberg camp will double as "reception centres".

#### Press gang

Former State Home Secretary R Nagarajan surrendered to police after a gang attacked the offices of Madras newspaper *Tharasu* on 14 August, killing two employees and injuring three others. *Tharasu* has been openly critical of the LTTE and former Chief Minister Karunanidhi.

#### Farm aid

The American government's development arm USAID says it will give \$15 million assistance for Sinhalese farmers settled in the North-East under Sri Lanka's controversial Mahaweli programme.

#### Killing ground

The decomposed bodies of 30 policemen were discovered in two mass graves south of Batticaloa in late August. They are thought to be some of the 600 police taken prisoner by the LTTE on the outbreak of war last June. Karavai Kandasamy of Tamil group PLOTE says the Tigers hold another 5,000 civilian prisoners in the North-East.

#### Task force

President Premadasa has appointed a four-man Human Rights Task Force to protect the fundamental rights of individuals detained in custody under Emergency regulations. It will make regular visits to places of detention for the next three years from 23 August.

#### Colombo alert

Police arrested Naguleswaran, a senior LTTE intelligence officer in Colombo on 24 August. They are currently seeking *Seelan*, *Prabha* and *Suda*, said to be part of a suicide bomb-squad that destroyed Colombo military headquarters in June.

## After Elephant Pass

IN THE AFTERMATH to the internecine struggle for Elephant Pass which links the Jaffna peninsula to the mainland, Sri Lankan troops are threatening Chavakachcheri 25 miles north but have been halted in a thrust on Paranthan.

After heavy bombing of Chavakachcheri, LTTE sappers strengthened fortifications in preparation for a major attack. The Sri Lankan advance south was stemmed after fierce fighting for an abandoned chemical factory outside Paranthan. Civilian casualties are unknown.

More aerial bombing has shut down the western ferry route at Sangupiddy and relief convoys will be forced through the Elephant Pass artery to consolidate Army control. East of the Pass there is still fighting around the Army's original landing point at Vetrilaikerni and curfew was declared throughout Mullaitivu on 1 August in preparation for a new offensive. Inside the Peninsula, food stocks are now critical and the Tigers are massing for an attack on Palaly after heavy shelling from the airbase injured many civilians.

Reports say the Tigers have been badly hit by the pitched battle at Elephant Pass and have launched a new recruiting drive. Tiger leader *Yogi* is seeking 50,000 recruits for the formation of the new *Charles Anthony Brigade*, named after a close comrade of Prabhakaran's killed in the early 1980s. This demonstrates their commitment to fight the Army on a conventional footing, *Yogi* says. Others believe they must replace 1,000 LTTE who died and another 2,000 who were wounded in Sri Lanka's biggest battle.



*Government backs down over plans to cut food aid to the displaced*

## A grudging reprieve

THE Sri Lankan Government has backed down over controversial plans to cut relief rations to displaced people living outside refugee camps.

Relief Commissioner Charitha Ratwatte announced that dry rations for over 500,000 people would be cut from 1 October but after a week-long storm of protest by Tamil MPs in Parliament, the order was withdrawn on 21 August.

At a meeting with Government officials in Trincomalee, Rehabilitation Minister P. Dayaratne said the ban was an attempt to end systematic misappropriation of relief to Sri Lanka's 1,640,000 refugees. The Army has already stopped relief convoys to many parts of Trincomalee District, fearing the food will fall into the hands of the Tigers. Government

Agent W. Godawela said 100,000 people in Trincomalee were destitute and called for an accelerated relief programme. Since June 1990 almost \$1 million of relief has been supplied to Trincomalee. Officials say it needs \$3 million a month.

The credibility gap extends throughout the East. According to Department of Social Services Circular no. 396, refugees in Batticaloa by the end of July should have received 55 issues of dry rations. Those in camps have received 20 and those outside 16. North of Batticaloa in the Vaharai area, thought to be a Tiger stronghold, they have received only seven rounds of relief. The Army clearly mean to squeeze the civilian population of Tiger-controlled areas to turn them into free-fire zones.

West of Batticaloa lagoon, relief does not move without an international NGO escort and services are badly overstretched. For most of the population, food aid is the only option. Less than 50% of Batticaloa's rich rice lands have been planted this year and disobeying Tiger bans on harvesting in many areas brings swift retribution. Six Muslim farmers were shot dead while on the way to their fields near Sammanthurai on 11 August.

Tamil-Muslim tensions throughout the East remain high. Muslim merchants travel in convoy between Batticaloa and Valaichenai every second day when the road is picketed by the Army. Five Muslims died and 24 were injured when a LTTE car-bomb penetrated Kattankudy on 31 August. Kattankudy, the scene of gruesome LTTE massacre last August, is virtually a fortress with 50,000 frightened Muslims crammed into a village with the highest population density in Sri Lanka.

For all those in the East, destitution brings the threat of disease. Doctors report malaria and associated anaemia, respiratory tract infections, worms, vitamin deficiencies and growing malnutrition. Mobile clinics are viewed with suspicion by the Army and hospitals starved of drugs and supplies. There is still an urgent need for emergency shelter materials, clothes and basic household goods as families flee empty-handed from their villages, in the wake of Tiger ambushes or Army reprisals like Kakkaddicholai.

## *Exodus from Jaffna*

MORE and more people are fleeing Jaffna, say NGOs as conditions deteriorate inside the peninsula. Over 60,000 people are in 157 refugee camps in the District and another estimated 100,000 sheltering with friends and relatives. Refugee figures remain volatile as waves of civilians flee regular shelling from three military complexes inside the peninsula at Karainagar, Palaly and Kankesanthurai. The Government plans to channel future relief ships through Kankesanthurai to force hungry civilians back inside the slender cordon of Army-controlled territory.

Increasing numbers are fleeing south after paying anything from Rs 10,000-100,000 for a gold-embossed Tiger "Exit Visa" signed by leader Prabhakaran. Young males are refused exit as the Tigers' conscription drive intensifies. The journey to the Government-controlled checkpoint north of Vavuniya at Thandikulam takes ten days by bicycle or on foot and there they face another gauntlet of suspicious questioning and more demands for bribes.

West of Vavuniya at Madhu, 27,000 refugees from Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Mannar survive on a lifeline of two food convoys a week supplied by international refugee agency UNHCR. Most of them are farmers, too poor or too frightened to risk the journey to Colombo where there are now over 100,000 Tamil refugees from the North-East in cheap lodgings or staying with friends.

Control of Mannar District is still fiercely contested by the Tigers and nine soldiers were killed in an LTTE ambush between Vankalai and Thalady on 28 August. After such attacks there is grave risk of Army reprisals and the red-dirt country roads are full of frightened villagers fleeing to temporary safety at the UNHCR camp.

## Tiger grip

THERE IS growing tension in the East, say reports as the Tigers tighten their grip on outlying areas of Batticaloa and Amparai. Three officers and 21 soldiers were killed in an LTTE ambush on the Welikande road on 2 August. The other route out of Batticaloa towards Badulla is already controlled by the Tigers.

LTTE Batticaloa commander *Karuna* is ranging deep into Amparai in a series of hit-and-run attacks against Sinhalese civilians. A family of five were hacked to death at 11th Colony on 12 August and five soldiers died in a landmine ambush a week later. Amparai SLFP MP T. Thevaraperuma says many Sinhalese villagers have fled their homes. The Army has repeatedly failed to penetrate *Karuna's* headquarters deep in the Thoppigala jungles in a series of operations in the last four months.

Rival group EPRLF says 19 Tamil farmers from Savalakadai were abducted on 14 August and hacked to death in front of the Pillaiyar Temple in Central Cam in reprisal for the LTTE killings. The attackers were led by a policeman.

The Tigers continue to target another rival group TELO who work with the Army as scouts and interpreters. The LTTE ambushed a van three miles south of Batticaloa at Arayampathy, killing *Ravi* and *Murugan* and injuring two others. Army sweeps of Batticaloa continue and three LTTE cadres were killed on 20 August.

Special identity cards are to be issued to Trincomalee town residents after a police demand for a new census register to be completed by 15 August. At Upuveli, north of the town, five policemen were killed and two injured a day later.



# Kittu joins the diplomatic corps

SWITZERLAND will offer sanctuary to LTTE leader *Kittu*, say diplomatic sources in Geneva, in a bid to broker a solution to Sri Lanka's North-East war and stem the flow of Tamil refugees to Europe.

*Kittu*, the nom de guerre of Sathasivam Krishnakumar, 31, former military commander of Jaffna and head of the Tiger's International Wing, was refused political asylum in Britain and served with a deportation order in late July, which accused him of attempting to buy arms and of raising money from the Tamil community by "threats and coercion".

Sources say *Kittu* entered France clandestinely in mid-July and after a period in hiding, slipped across the border to Switzerland where LTTE Paris representative Lawrence Thilagar negotiated a haven for the guerrilla leader with the Swiss government and international refugee agency UNHCR. It remains unclear what immigration status he will be accorded.

Swiss Minister for Refugees Peter Arbenz visited Colombo in July and in wide-ranging discussions with the Gov-

ernment and Tamil groups, offered to supply the infrastructure for peace talks in Geneva.

Mr Arbenz is seeking to create conditions for the speedy repatriation of Tamil refugees in Europe and clearly believes that *Kittu* as an LTTE Central Committee member with a hot-line to Commander-in-Chief Prabhakaran can increase outside pressure for a negotiated settlement.

Mr Premadasa's international troubleshooter Bradman Weerakoon on a private visit to Europe this month, held a wide variety of consultations which included talks with Lawrence Thilagar and plans are now well advanced for higher-level exchanges between the warring parties.

Mr Arbenz may also seek *Kittu*'s help in keeping Switzerland's increasingly unruly 10,000 Tamil refugees in line. A Sri Lankan refugee died in a stabbing accident as rival Tamil groups clashed in Zurich in June.

There is a growing backlash against Tamils in Switzerland who have become a symbol of the new wave of Third World

refugees, most of whom are regarded as "economic migrants". There have been 25 firebomb attacks by right-wing groups this year on refugee hostels, many of them Tamil houses.

Over 25,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees a year arrive in Europe to join the 200,000-strong exile community and there is now growing pressure to reverse the flow.

Germany says it will exempt Sri Lankan Tamil refugees from tough new asylum laws that allow federal authorities to expel refused asylum-seekers. Less than 1% of Germany's 50,000 Sri Lankan asylum-seekers gain refugee status and most are denied work permits and free movement.

In France, there is a new wave of revulsion over a series of forcible expulsions of Tamil asylum-seekers. A 55 year-old Sri Lankan, Aramugam Sivasambu Eesan died of a heart attack after manhandling by French police at Charles de Gaulle airport in a second attempt to deport him on 24 August. He was refused asylum on his arrival two weeks earlier.

## Conjuring with the Commission

PROCEEDINGS in the gaggle of Presidential Commissions of Enquiry currently restructuring reality in Sri Lanka continued this month with the first public hearings by the Commission on Involuntary Disappearances.

Hundreds of women in white saris, mourning missing sons and husbands stood in the blazing sun outside the Bandaranaike Memorial Hall while Mrs Piyaseeli Samaraweera told the Commission how a Tangalle police inspector assaulted her and demanded Rs 200,000 (\$5,000) for her son's release. After paying Rs 10,000 for her own release, the mutilated body of her son - a suspected leader of the Marxist insurgent People's Liberation Front (JVP) in Trincomalee - was found burning on rubber tyres, two months later.

Human right NGOs have little faith in the Commission which has no mandate to investigate disappearances before 15 January this year and say it is a smokescreen to deflect international concern. Over 60,000 people have disappeared in southern Sri Lanka since 1987 in the military's brutal contest with the JVP.

The Kokkaddicholai Commission investigating the Army's massacre of over 150 eastern Tamils in June, reconvened for a second four-day session in Batticaloa on 26 August. Sources say Batticaloa Brigadier Ahanagama will implicate Eastern Commander Lt. Gen. Cecil Waidyaratne as part of a struggle for

power involving Army chief Hamilton Wanasinghe.

The Government has cancelled a visit from an International Commission of Jurist's (ICJ) delegation which is monitoring Sri Lanka's Presidential Commission on NGOs. At a series of Commission hearings, selected NGOs have been widely attacked and human rights agencies fear a witch-hunt. The ICJ will publish their report in September.

The security forces' drive against the remnants of the JVP's military wing continues, with the arrest of leaders in Kalutara and Beliatta, including Moneragala leader *Siriwardene Mahataya* released in the Government amnesty of January 1989. Over 14,000 JVP suspects remain in state custody and ambitious plans to rehabilitate them - as recommended by another Presidential Commission on Youth - now seem to be shelved.

Most have not been charged and the Government cannot rescind the current State of Emergency without releasing them. There was fresh fighting this month inside Boossa, one of the largest detention camps between rival JVP factions with six detainees wounded.

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

The Sri Lanka Project  
The British Refugee Council  
3/9 Bondway  
London SW8 1SJ  
Tel: (071) 582 6922  
Fax: (071) 582 9929

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