

Gamini dies in election blast

The cult of assassination in Sri Lankan politics claimed another victim when opposition presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake was killed with over 60 others in a massive bomb blast at an election rally at Grandpass, north Colombo in the early hours of 24 October.

Among the dead were United National Party (UNP) MPs Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi, GM Premachandra and party organiser Christy Perera. Another 100 people were injured. As Mr Dissanayake finished speaking a woman in the second row rose to her feet and a massive explosion engulfed the stage.

Police say the head of a woman found on a nearby two-story building is that of a female suicide bomber from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Her remains have been sent to Scotland Yard, London, for forensic examination.

The new People's Alliance (PA) government called off a second round of peace talks with the Tigers, declaring a state of Emergency and a curfew but said it was keeping an open mind about Mr Dissanayake's assassination as investigations continue. LTTE deputy political leader *Karikalan* in a statement delivered to the ICRC in Jaffna has denied Tiger involvement.

Mr Dissanayake, 52, one of the Kandy elite was a protege of UNP leaders D Senanayake and JR Jayewardene. Close to India and a backroom architect of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, allegations of corruptions during his term as Mahaweli minister supervising a multi-million dollar irrigation project continued to reverberate. He recaptured control of the faction-ridden UNP in the wake of the party's general election defeat in August. With former National

Security minister Lalith Athulathmudali, he moved to impeach Sri Lankan President Premadasa in 1991. Both men were assassinated in a ten-day period last year.

At a turbulent UNP Working Committee meeting two days after Mr Dissanayake's killing, his widow Srimala was designated new presidential candidate. Former UNP Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, threatened and manhandled by enraged members of the Gamini faction, was elected opposition leader.

Helicopters sprayed flowers as tens of thousands gathered in Colombo for Mr Dissanayake's state funeral on 29 October blacked out by television technicians after they were attacked by UNP supporters. Former parliamentary Speaker MH Mohammed in a funeral oration claimed a conspiracy between the government and the LTTE to kill Mr Dissanayake. Two weeks before his death, Gamini insisted there was a LTTE plot to eliminate him.

A new series of roundups is underway in Colombo with over 300 young Tamils arrested in student hostels and cheap lodging houses. A week before the killing, police sources warned that LTTE intelligence agent Sasitharan alias *Daya* had penetrated the capital.

But Mr Dissanayake's assassination could also be an inside job by the UNP mused police chief Frank Silva to journalists, articulating the underside of Colombo speculation.

In a series of statements, Western embassies, pledged support to PA Prime minister Chandrika Kumaranatunge saying that the peace process she has initiated with the Tigers must not be knocked off track by the assassination. Chandrika made a midnight dash to Colombo airport in early October for an unscheduled three-day private visit to Singapore, the hub of LTTE operations in Asia.

But her relations with the Sri Lankan military have deteriorated after a hard-hitting BBC interview in mid-October where she implied that Army high com-

mand had a vested interest in continuing the war. While ministries and state corporations have been purged of UNP bureaucrats since the PA's August general election victory, the military remains intact and there is little doubt where their allegiance lies.

The Dissanayake killing, if anything, knocked the crisis off the boil. A coded warning from senior Army officers was released to the press hours before Gamini's death saying no government could afford to take the loyalty of its soldiers for granted. Both sides have pulled back from the brink in the aftermath but the air is thick with hostility.

The stage is now set for what foreign correspondents callously bill as "the battle of the widows", the presidential election contest between Srimala Dissanayake and Chandrika Kumaranatunge on 9 November. Chandrika's husband, film-star politician Vijaya, was assassinated after a peace mission to Jaffna in 1988. Her peace drive keeps faith with his memory.

While a sympathy vote for Srimala is likely, pundits say Chandrika will prevail with a reduced majority to bolster her fragile coalition government. She then retains the option of a snap general election to grasp the two-thirds parliamentary majority she needs to dismantle the executive presidency and return the country to a Westminster system by 15 July 1995, as she has pledged.

Tamil parties TULF, PLOTE and EPRLF will back Chandrika while TELO and Douglas Devananda's EPDP side with UNP. After two months of backstage negotiations, Ceylon Workers Congress leader and political godfather to a million Hill Country Tamils, Mr S Thondaman, was reappointed Tourism minister on 31 October, this time in a PA government after a 17-year alliance with the UNP.

The shock waves after Gamini's death have receded quickly but reverberations remain. When the smoke clears, Chandrika Kumaranatunge's first priority whether as Prime Minister or President, must be to strike a new deal with the military.

■ **Jubilant crowds broke through a LTTE cordon at Jaffna University in mid-October to welcome a helicopter bearing the new PA government's first peace delegation. After four years under siege a million war-weary civilians want peace. A full report on page two.**

THE NORTH

Give peace a chance

JUBILANT crowds broke through a LTTE cordon shouting "peace! peace!" as a helicopter landed at Jaffna University in mid-October bearing the new PA government's first peace delegation led by the Prime Minister's Secretary K Balapatabendi.

The talks centred on a series of confidence-building measures. The Tiger team led by deputy political leader *Karikalan* stressed the need to alleviate the hardships of the northern people as a prelude to political negotiations insisting that refugees in the peninsula from Army-occupied Mathagal and the Jaffna islands must be resettled. A complete lifting of the economic blockade and the ban on fishing were essential the Tigers told the government delegation. Among the issues discussed were a safe passage to Jaffna through Sangupiddy and rebuilding the peninsula's bomb-scarred infrastructure.

At the end of the two-day talks, government negotiators Bank of Ceylon Chairman Rajan Asirwatham and architect Navin Gunaratne told reporters that although many years of mistrust had been overcome more time was needed to build complete confidence. A joint statement by Mr *Karikalan* and Mr Balapatabendi has been submitted to Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunge. Negotiator and former Jaffna Government Agent Lionel Fernando describing the talks as "the last bus to peace" says the LTTE administrative structure now in place would assist devolution and could be incorporated into the Sri Lankan administration.

As a gesture, 18 LTTE suspects held in Palaly Army camp were released in

mid-October. The Tigers reciprocated by freeing nine Sinhalese fishermen captured off Mannar. On 19 October, the Sri Lankan Cabinet approved repair of the Jaffna library, burned down by UNP politicians in 1981 and Prime Minister Chandrika has ordered the reopening of a Cooperative Wholesale Establishment (CWE) branch in Jaffna to supply food to the peninsula's population.

The Tigers oppose Army scrutiny of travellers at Pooneryn if the Sangupiddy route is agreed. LTTE still want a ceasefire as the joint statement after the talks makes clear but senior Tiger cadre also say a ceasefire would lift the pressure on the Army and end the virtual siege around four or five military camps in the north.

The cargo ship *Ocean Trader* carrying military supplies to Elephant Pass camp was attacked and sunk by the LTTE off Vetrilaikerni, east of Jaffna on 9 October. The 16-member crew was rescued by the Navy and Tamil crew members interrogated. Colombo suspects a high-level LTTE spy in a government ministry leaked the ship's travel plans. Airforce planes bombed Vetrilaikerni and Kattaikadu areas while the Tigers attacked the Army's defence lines at Kandavalai close to Elephant Pass camp. Three days later the LTTE struck again at Welis Oya in Mullaitivu District killing seven soldiers and a civilian travelling in a tractor.

In Jaffna there is new hope. "After all the boys' sacrifices, peace is coming our way. Even if we don't grasp it we must feel its pulse and give peace a chance".

Vendetta

SLBC radio announcer Jiffrey Rajabdeen was shot dead outside Vavuniya on 3 October. Another four people have died in the last three months, all shot in the head after dark with a 9mm pistol. Police suspect a vendetta between Tamil militants.

Firing

Police shot dead one man and wounded four others in early October as local people demonstrated against the siting of a Voice of America radio transmitting station at Iranawila near Chilaw.

Exile

Former Finance secretary in the Premadasa and Wijetunge UNP governments, Ramalingam Paskaralingam, says he will remain in London because of ill-health. Over Rs 30 billion (\$750 million) are reportedly missing from the treasury.

Acquittal

Deputy Food Minister and Upcountry People's Front (UPF) leader, Periyasamy Chandrasekaran, was acquitted in the High Court on 7 October of harbouring LTTE bomber Varathan after Army headquarters in Colombo was blown up in July 1990.

Write-off

A Presidential Commission report says the Samanalawewa dam, 160kms south-east of Colombo, built with UK aid in the 1970s is a Rs20 billion (\$500 million) write-off because British engineers moved the dam site to an unstable area.

buffer zone

LAUNCHING his new resettlement drive Rehabilitation minister MHM Ashraff assisted 500 farming families, Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim, to return to hamlets around Eluvankulam north of Puttalam in early October.

The military has pushed the western edge of the frontline a few miles north to the boundaries of Wilpattu game reserve a vast LTTE jungle stronghold. Mr Ashraff warned the resettlers to prevent Tiger infiltration. Local people fled after a LTTE attack a year ago. Mr Ashraff has pledged to resettle all 60,000 refugees in camps by the end of the year.

A few miles north, a Tiger blockade is tightening around Mannar Island where 4,000 refugees were repatriated from India in February. Government

Agent (GA) K Ganesh says food and fuel stocks are dangerously low. The military's fishing ban around the island has decimated the local economy. People in Mannar town were beaten up and a Sinhalese teacher Cyril Banda shot dead by rampaging soldiers after two of them were killed in a LTTE ambush on Sebastian Street on 11 October.

The Tigers continue to infiltrate the Army-controlled island from their bases on the Mannar mainland. At Madhu, where 20,000 refugees shelter in a UN-run camp, LTTE has relaxed its hardline policy, allowing those to return home who live in Army-controlled areas south. Over 200 families have returned to Cheddikulam and local people say brokers are charging up to Rs 100,000

(\$2,500) to escort youths through Army checkpoints.

With little fighting in the area, fishing families have left Madhu, Sri Lanka's most sacred Catholic shrine, to return to hamlets on the west coast like Arippu where LTTE's *Sea Tigers* have a string of bases to contest control of the seas south of Kalpitiya - the only current route to provision Mannar Island.

After six Arippu returnees were shot dead by navy patrols in late October. Mannar's Bishop Rayappu Joseph warned that resettled fishermen faced starvation and said the military had agreed to permit inshore fishing. Defence sources claim a *Sea Tiger* dinghy was attacked and six LTTE killed. Three fishermen are still missing.

■ *Inter-group killings plague the east*

Settling old scores

AFTER the military pulled back thousands of troops from the north to camps in the east, a 100-strong elite Tiger brigade has been dispatched to the Batticaloa front to keep up the pressure on the Army.

Tiger units launched an attack at Manalchenai in Amparai District on 12 October killing two Special Task Force (STF) members and injuring another. Within 12 hours the LTTE killed two more STF at Padurakandiya military camp. On 28 October, the STF shot dead two Tigers at Iththiyadi. Amparai residents say Tamil villages are often searched and many people detained especially those formerly held at the notorious *Boosa* camp in Galle.

There were Army search operations in

Puthukudiyiruppu and Nasivantivu in Batticaloa District in early October. Civilians have been ordered to report at Army camps every month. According to Defence sources five Tigers died on 12 October in a night gun battle in the Thoppigala jungles. Two more LTTE were killed by the Army at Kurundanmadu on 16 October. Following the killing of two STF personnel on 17 October at 39th Colony in Paddiruppu, soldiers ran amok attacking people and burning down the homes of V Parameswaran and S Arulampalam. People fled the area and took refuge in schools. A Tiger cadre was killed in an encounter at Kattumurivukulam on 29 October.

Tamil militant group rivalry continues

to dominate life in Batticaloa. TELO's Poobalapillai was shot dead in early October. TELO organiser and Valaichenai local council member S Krishnananthan was shot and seriously wounded on 20 October. The bullet-riddled body of PLOTE members Puvanendran and Vivek were found two days later at Navalkadu. Attalaichenai local council Chairman Uduma Lebbe has complained that an attempt was made on his life. Security forces suspect that LTTE cadre have infiltrated Batticaloa and are targeting rival group members.

Farmers say that the Army is rationing diesel supplies and they are forced to return to Batticaloa town every time tractors run out of fuel. Cooperative stores in northern Batticaloa have no fertiliser and the military has prohibited its transport from the town. TULF MP K Thurairasasingham says farmers can go to their fields only after 10am and must check their tractors at Army camps. In Vaharai, west of the Batticaloa lagoon, the military allow people to transport only two or three kilos of rice to prevent food falling into LTTE hands.

Local councils in Batticaloa have been instructed by the government that all refugees must be resettled before 15 December. The Batticaloa secretariat estimates Rs 313 million (\$6.3 million) is needed to pay resettlement, death and injury compensation claims.

In Trincomalee security forces shot dead a Tiger at Verugal in early October. On 16 October four more LTTE were killed at Neelavanai in an Army ambush.

Hall of mirrors

EIGHTEEN months after President Premadasa's assassination in May 1993, half of Colombo refuses to believe he was killed by the Tigers. Local surmise houses responsibility with former UNP ministers and Gamini Dissanayake's death points the finger in the same direction. This time the suspicious sanitisation of the assassination site after Mr Premadasa's killing has been prevented and a full forensic investigation is underway. It may confirm the Tiger signature on the crime - the suicide bomber - but not the motivation or the range of conspirators.

Political analyst Jayadeva Uyangoda says whoever killed Gamini did so to destabilise the peace process with the LTTE. Colombo insider columnist Taraki believes Dissanayake's continuing closeness to India and supposed responsibility for the burning of Jaffna library was enough to make him a Tiger target.

Journalist Jehan Perera points to police chief Frank Silva's seemingly casual surmise that Gamini's killing may have been an UNP inside job. But two months of government goodwill will not knock the Tigers off their *Eelam* objective he warns.

Will the suicide bomber theory stand up? Who dropped the LTTE trademark cyanide capsule at the explosion site? Can one person carry enough explosives to kill 60 people? Without a doubt says DR Karthikeyan head of the Indian Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigating the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. A kilo of white RDX plastic explosive used in the Gandhi killing would have a lethal effect across two or three rows at the Dissanayake meeting. Less publicised eye witness accounts say the stage seemed to rise and fall in slow motion after Gamini's speech suggesting it concealed a stationary bomb detonated by remote control. In the hall of mirrors, nothing is as it seems.

Prosperity drive

Chandrika Kumaranatunge launched her government's ambitious poverty alleviation programme *Samurdhi* (prosperity) at a high profile ceremony in Anuradhapura on 7 October. Over 30,000 unemployed graduates would spearhead the programme and *Samurdhi* centres would be opened in every village promised the Prime Minister.

The programme replacing the UNP's *Janasaviya* movement and bypassing the traditional rural elite of village officers and local MPs has sent ripples of unease through Chandrika's party. The World Bank and IMF are also perturbed over how much Chandrika plans to spend on fighting poverty. She has reduced bread, kerosene and diesel prices, restored a 40% subsidy on fertiliser and promised two million struggling farmers they will

get Rs 4,000 loans to plant their next crop. While analysts predict 6% growth this year, the Asian Development Bank has postponed a major aid package claiming the Rs 2 billion (\$50 million) price tag for *Samurdhi* and other welfare measures will send the budget deficit soaring beyond the critical 7.5% of GDP.

Others demand even more radical measures. The *Citizens Report* of Sri Lanka's Environmental Journalists Forum (SLEJF) calls for an end to the World Bank model of growth without equity which ensures only "some people's development". Western models have destroyed cultural values disrupted traditional systems of natural resource use and have failed to provide improved living conditions for the majority of the people argues the SLEJF report.

Re-writing the death-squad years *digging up the past*

VETERAN human rights lawyer and new People's Alliance (PA) MP Batty Weerakoon, tabled a bill in Parliament in early October to set up Commissions of Enquiry into the deaths and disappearances of over 40,000 Sri Lankans since January 1989. The inquest into the death-squad years and the Army's brutal contest with the insurgent Sinhalese Marxist People's Liberation front (JVP) is underway.

Many new mass grave sites have been unearthed and people are coming forward to say what they saw. After more human remains were excavated in heavy rain at Akmeemana near Galle, local school-teacher Elson Seneviratne described how police burned six bodies in September 1989 and bulldozed over the site.

As excavations began at Kitulgolla near Kandy, Police Inspector Padmasiri Dissanayake told how he came upon the bodies of 31 youths shot through the head in reprisal for a landmine blast that killed local police officers in November 1989. Because no one would identify the youths, their bodies were burned on the

spot under the infamous Emergency regulation 55/EE claims Inspector Dissanayake.

Digging is continuing at Rakwana near Balangoda after human remains were found and more mass graves have been discovered at Hokandara near Thalangoda in Colombo District. Two policemen have been arrested.

Five new excavation sites have been opened around Suriyakande near Embilipitiya, where 32 schoolboys disappeared in August 1989. Ten Army personnel are currently on human rights charges and the military is edgy and angry. Top brass say newspaper photos of soldiers brought handcuffed to court is bad for morale and that they are scapegoats for the state's decision to fight fire with fire.

Human rights workers say hundreds more security personnel may be indicted. Sri Lanka's Bar Association has detailed files on over 3,000 missing persons. Conditions for 4,000 in Sri Lanka's detention camps are under investigation and almost 300 youths held for four years

without charges, will be released shortly.

Justice Minister GL Peiris says the shadowy network of secret torture camps will be probed and urged people to come forward with corroborating evidence. Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar also introduced a parliamentary bill in early October, acceding to the UN Convention against Torture, while Home Affairs minister Amarasiri Dodangoda presented the Registration of Deaths Act allowing thousands of families of the disappeared to obtain death certificates and claim compensation for loss of breadwinners.

Another legacy of the JVP period means thousands of unlicensed weapons are still in the hands of United National Party (UNP) politicians. Less than 100 have been recovered says Colombo's *Island* newspaper in a blistering editorial, urging the new PA government to take stronger action. After 17 years in power, the retribution of UNP politicians in their sullen rural strongholds remains a major stumbling block to a full accounting of the death-squad years.

Swiss MPs condemn Sri Lankan deportations

SIXTY NINE Swiss MPs have written to Police and Justice minister Arnold Koller condemning his government's programme of forced repatriation for Sri Lankans refused asylum. Conditions in the island are too unstable say the MPs. After the Dissanayake assassination, Switzerland suspended the programme for a week.

Following a rally in Zurich on 22 October, anti-racist groups and workers associations are providing refuge for 50 Sri Lankan Tamils who have received deportation notices. Some 53 Tamils have been forcibly returned since the programme began in June and another 600 have escaped to other European countries. Switzerland plans to deport a quota of 600 Sri Lankans over a two-year period under the terms of the present agreement with Colombo.

Police minister Koller now concedes that Swiss officials will honour the "last-in-first-out" principle of the agreement and determine most recent asylum claims first. Over 6,200 of the backlog of 16,000 cases will be allowed to stay in Switzerland even if they are refused because they arrived before June 1990. Cases registered between 1990 and 1992

will be frozen. Refugee workers say those who arrived between 1992 and 1994 - when *Eelam War Two* was in full swing - are being discriminated against. Officials shrug and say the cut-off date is random and "procedural". The pro-

gramme is aimed as much at deterring future asylum-seekers from Sri Lanka say analysts by targeting recent arrivals who pay up to \$15,000 for forged passports and visas from Colombo "refugee runner" agencies.

Other European countries are set to follow the Swiss example - with or without an agreement with Colombo. Over 100 Tamil asylum-seekers in Norway face imminent deportation say refugee workers. Scandinavian governments want to break the alliance between Colombo criminal networks and the Russian mafia who charge Rs 400,000 (\$10,000) to smuggle Tamils into their countries through Baltic ports.

Another 31 Tamils were picked up on life rafts off the Danish island of Bornholm on 24 October after they were set adrift by a Polish trawler. Four Tamils drowned in September trying to cross the river Neisse into Germany from the east.

The southern Italian coast with its mafia links is another weaklink in *Fortress Europe*. Over 140 Sri Lankans were deported to Colombo in mid-October after arriving in flimsy boats in July.

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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