

## Truck bomb blasts Colombo

**S**uspected guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) caused havoc by exploding a massive truck bomb in Colombo's commercial Fort district at 7.00am on 15 October killing nine people and injuring 110 others including 38 foreigners.

Many buildings were extensively damaged, including the Galadari Hotel and the Twin Towers of the International Trade Centre, ceremoniously opened only three days earlier by President Chandrika Kumaratunge. The damage is estimated at Rs 350 million (\$7 million).

According to the police, the guerrillas entered the government's newspaper publishers Lake House, 300 yards east of the scene of the blast. Fighting continued for 11 hours as a special Army commando team attempted to flush them out. At 5.30 pm it was announced that three guerrillas had been killed and two others committed suicide.

In January last year, a *Black Tiger* suicide squad rammed a bomb truck into the Central Bank, a short distance from the current blast, killing over 80 people and wounding 1,400. As LTTE's London representative Anton Rajah denied responsibility for the Galadari bombing, President Chandrika told journalists that the government had evidence of Tiger involvement.

Observers say the bomb was aimed at tourist hotels and the Twin Towers which housed the Central Bank, Board of Investment (BOI) and the Colombo Stock Exchange, in yet another attempt to ruin Sri Lanka's economy. Central Bank Governor A Jayawardena maintains that the economy which slumped last year due to increasing war expenditure and prolonged drought has shown remarkable resilience and will not be affected.

But others warn of the effect on tourism and long-term foreign investment. BOI Chairman Thilan Wijesinghe is confident that committed investment projects will continue. Military top brass

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are anxious that a weakened economy will in turn weaken the war effort. Tour agents are worried that the world-wide publicity about the blast may affect tourism. Police reports that two more *Black Tiger* suicide units are at large in Colombo will deepen fears. Tourist arrivals fell by 25% after the Central Bank bomb, but rose by 20.6% in the first seven months of 1997 as compared to the same period last year.

Analysts believe that the bomb was an extension of the LTTE's *Operation Do or die* in response to Army's six-month offensive in the Vanni and have expressed fears that north-east Sinhalese border villages may now be targeted. The press says the bomb was aimed at the Galadari Hotel where a 15-member team of US Green Beret commandos was booked while on a secret mission to train Sri Lankan Army personnel.

On 8 October US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced that the LTTE had been placed in the US list of terrorist organisations which includes the Palestinian Hamas and the Peruvian *Shining Path*. While a delighted Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar who led a two-year international campaign to proscribe the LTTE, called on expatriate

Tamils to end funding the guerrillas' war machine, the LTTE declared that the US decision will encourage the Sri Lankan government to pursue its war policy thereby escalating the conflict.

In Colombo the security forces conducted a search immediately after the blast detaining over 500 Tamils. There are moves to impose a total ban on heavy vehicles into the city centre. The biggest ever search operation in the capital, involving over 6,000 soldiers and police was launched at 2.00am on 25 October. Tamil areas were particularly targeted and over 1,000 Tamils, including 139 women were detained.

The Defence Ministry says that those not required for further investigation will be released after interrogation. While Tamil leaders bitterly complained about harassment, Deputy Defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte maintained that the search operation was also linked to the LTTE threat to the Colombo Tamil community when government devolution proposals were before Parliament.

Justice minister GL Peiris tabled the report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform (PSC) in Parliament on 25 October amidst strong objections from opposition members who say no consensus has been reached on several vital issues including the unit of devolution. Parliament was adjourned without debate as chaotic scenes of protest ensued.

This illustrates the difficulties that President Chandrika Kumaratunge's ruling People's Alliance (PA) will face in obtaining the support of the opposition for the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed. Analysts believe that the PA will not be able to overcome the legal technicalities in changing the constitution and with only three years before the general elections vote-grabbing will become more important for all political parties. That means continuing the "war for peace strategy" and the likelihood of more bombs in the capital.



## THE NORTH

# War without end

AFTER six months of the bloodiest of battles since the war began, the Army's *Operation Jayasikurui* (Certain victory) launched on 13 May to weaken the Tigers and open a landroute to Jaffna has cost Rs 10 billion (\$200 million) and is still 25 miles south-east of Kilinochchi.

In early October the Army secured Karappukuthi, eight miles south-east of Mankulam. Thereafter, accompanied by artillery and aerial bombing, troops advanced in three fronts westward. In a counter-attack on 13 October, the LTTE captured arms worth Rs 150 million. The Army, however retained a section of the Mankulam-Oddusuddan road cutting-off a supply route to LTTE's nerve centre - Mullaitivu.

In late October Deputy Defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte claimed for the third time in two years that Tiger leader Prabhakaran's 1-4 Base in Mullaitivu jungles was destroyed. The Airforce sunk a Tiger supply ship off Mullaitivu on 2 November. Reports say substantial quantities of arms had been unloaded before the attack.

Airforce planes bombed Peraru in Oddusuddan, 15 miles south-west of Mullaitivu on 13 October killing seven people including four refugees from Jaffna. Mullaitivu Government Agent R Tharmakulasingham says continuous Army shelling and Airforce bombing has led to chaos. No food is currently sent to the district by the Essential Services Commissioner and only two-weeks' food

is available. According to Kilinochchi GA Thillainadarajah, the entire population is suffering because of the fighting and the reduction in government's food aid from May.

Mr Ratwatte announced in early October that local elections in Jaffna will be held in January. London *Guardian* correspondent Suzanne Goldenberg who visited the peninsula says daily life under the gaze of 25,000 Sri Lankan soldiers, who cannot speak Tamil, remains precarious and the Army has lost its battle for hearts and minds.

The LTTE attacked the Army at Sarasalai on 6 October killing a soldier. The bodies of three civilians washed ashore at Velanai on the same day. The body of Manoharan Jayanthan shot dead by the Army in Chunnakam on 26 September was handed over to the parents in October.

Over 2,000 fishermen in Gurunagar are protesting over new restrictions after the Army discovered smuggling of banned goods. The three mile sea limit for fishing has now been reduced to 300 metres. Fishermen say that the Army is forcibly taking 10% of their fish.

In mid-October three members of the new Human Rights Commission visited Jaffna for the first time for discussions. Jaffna's Guardian Association for Persons Arrested and Disappeared says only one name from their list of over 600 disappeared appears in the government's list of 170 released detainees.

## Drowned

Twelve people on their way to Jaffna drowned on 3 October when their boat capsized near Nachchikudah, 25 miles north of Mannar Island.

## Accused

The Special Presidential Commission enquiring into the killing of former National Security minister Lalith Athulathmudali in late April 1993, says in its report that former President R Premadasa was involved in the murder conspiracy. Mr Premadasa was assassinated on 1 May 1993.

## Strike

Northern border town Vavuniya came to a standstill on 13 October after Tamil group PLOTE called a *hartal* or general strike demanding the government to allow the 12,000 Tamils detained in camps to go to their places of choice in the south.

## Bail

Former Jaffna Government Agent S Pathmanathan was released on bail by a Colombo court on 3 October. Mr Pathmanathan is accused of siphoning over Rs 100 million (\$2million) for the LTTE while in office.

## Invitation

Following a telephone call in October purported to be from the LTTE inviting the Muslim community to return to Jaffna, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader IM Iliyas says that the Tigers must extend the invitation in a public statement guaranteeing safety.

## between two fires

OVER 60,000 refugees in five camps around the Madhu Church in Mannar District are suffering without adequate food and medicine. NGOs warn that the situation may reach a crisis point as more and more refugees pour into the area fleeing the fighting in the Vanni.

Visitors say it is not uncommon to find children with signs of malnutrition. The camps, assisted by international refugee agency UNHCR, receive only half their food requirements from the government. The dry rations supplied contain only rice, flour, sugar and lentils and other needs must be purchased from the black market which refugees cannot afford without income.

Colombo newspaper *Sunday Times* says that at least six deaths are reported every month at Madhu hospital as a result of malnutrition and lack of medicines. Malaria, diarrhoea and typhoid in the camps cannot be controlled because of insanitary conditions and lack of water.

Lack of blood test facilities in hospitals is making diagnosis difficult and the shortage of medical staff has added to the problems. Sixteen doctors at the Mannar hospital, returned to Colombo in early October after they received death threats. The LTTE has denied involvement.

In two attacks on Murunkan police station in mid-October the Tigers killed

12 soldiers. The Army says 12 LTTE were killed in the assaults. Four soldiers died and 14 injured in a clash at Sinnakadu on 12 October.

UNP MP Jayalath Jayawardena has in an October letter to Mr Ratwatte demanded an enquiry into the Army killing of refugees S Balachandran and Anthony Sebastian at Kalimodai on 16 August. Mr Jayawardena says S Arunagirinathan, M Parameswaran and J Roach arrested at Manalmodai by Army's Maj. H Perera on 26 July have disappeared.

Further south at Kalpitty in Puttalam District seven people were arrested by the Navy on 20 October accused of smuggling fuel for the LTTE.



## ■ Artillery duels increase in the east

# Batticaloa's forgotten front-line

STUDENT Logendran Subashini and Kumarasamy Loganayagi were killed when the LTTE shelled Mavadivembu and Murakottanchenai areas between Batticaloa and Valaichenai on 17 October. Fifteen other civilians and four soldiers were injured and many houses damaged.

The Army retaliated by shelling Tiger-held areas west of Batticaloa lagoon. A day earlier the LTTE shelled Army's Third Brigade headquarters, the airbase and the district secretariat in the Puliyantivu section of Batticaloa town. Sixteen soldiers at the headquarters were wounded.

Many of the government departments are in Puliyantivu adjoining the head-

quarters and Tiger artillery capability makes relocation impossible. The last two years have seen LTTE gaining ground in many areas after the closure of 44 military camps and observers believe Batticaloa is now under real Tiger threat.

The Tigers are also increasingly targeting members of other Tamil militant groups fighting on the side of the Army. Three were killed and three others wounded on 15 October in a LTTE attack on a TELO camp at Arayampathy, three miles south of Batticaloa. Three EPRLF cadre were abducted on 20 October in Pandiruppu. On the same day the body of S Sasikumar abducted earlier was found tied to a lamp post in Thuraincelavanai.

After a clash with the LTTE on 18

October, soldiers attacked and wounded Puthukudyiruppu Kali temple priest K Sivapalan. The following day, the Army shot dead Kiran student P Chandrakumar. In late October Michael Pavakunan was abducted and killed by men in uniform at Murakottanchenai. A shell blasted a car at Sunkankerni near Valaichenai on 31 October killing two members of the same family.

Over 260 Tamil families at Central Camp in Amparai District fled after Tigers hidden in a truck shot dead two policemen at a checkpoint. In a Special Task Force (STF) search operation that followed in Alankulam and Komari, local LTTE leader *Mahesh* was killed. Over 100 refugees from Amparai Fourth Colony where police ran amok last month, were arrested from a Sinnakudyiruppu camp by the STF on 20 October. All were released later.

A 30-strong LTTE unit stormed the bus depot in the southern sacred city of Kataragama, 60 miles south of Amparai on 11 October, burning 19 buses and killing a man. The attackers escaped into the nearby *Yala* jungle. Transport minister AHM Fowsie estimates the damage at Rs 17 million.

Six Muslims were abducted by unidentified gunmen on 10 October from Kadduvanvillu in Polonnaruwa District. The bodies of four including 18 year-old A Buhari were later found. An Army officer and two soldiers were killed in a Tiger ambush at Welikanda on 18 October on Polonnaruwa-Batticaloa road.

## no refuge

TAMIL asylum-seekers in custody for some ten months in detention centres in Australia staged a hunger strike on 12 October against prolonged detention. Their asylum applications were denied by the Refugee Review Tribunal. They have appealed to the Federal Court and are likely to remain in detention until their cases are heard. Tamil refugee organisations say such detention is a violation of human rights and have appealed to Immigration and Multicultural minister Philip Ruddock. Australian press reports say new legislation is currently being considered to deny appeals to refused asylum-seekers. In July the Immigration Department introduced a charge of \$1,000 on unsuccessful applications before leave to appeal was granted. Some 640 applications from Tamils are said to be pending. In July 17 Tamils were found stranded at Coral Bay, 700 miles north of Perth. There is increasing concern over the plight of Sri Lankans who are stranded in other countries. The Tamil Refugee

International Network (TRIN) estimates that over 20,000 Sri Lankans are stranded in over 12 countries in South-East Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe, including 5,000 in Russia and 5,000 in Thailand. According to reports, around 1,500 foreigners including 234 Sri Lankans are held in a Lithuanian Army camp. A young couple who returned to Sri Lanka blame their travel agent for the harrowing journey through Moscow and Minsk in Belorussia. They were transported in a container and locked-up in a barn for nine days with meagre food. They walked many miles in the bitter cold before reaching Poland through Lithuania but were arrested and returned to the Army camp in the Baltic state. After receiving some money from relatives in Denmark they were returned to Sri Lanka through Moscow.

## Tigers tighten grip on Trinco

SEA TIGERS rammed an explosives-laden boat into a naval vessel off Pulmoddai in Trincomalee District on 19 October killing 12 sailors on board. In ensuing sea battles, two other naval craft were damaged and the Navy say ten *Sea Tiger* boats were sunk killing over 80.

Eight military camps in the Muthur area south of Trincomalee town were closed in mid-October to move troops to the Vanni war zone. The Tigers moved in and destroyed the camps. Sunday Times columnist *Taraki* says the LTTE which lost 390 sq mile territory in Jaffna have gained 1,275 sq miles in the east. The gain would effectively protect LTTE coastal supply lines to the Vanni but disrupt the Army supply route to Jaffna.

Shipping companies are reluctant to undertake services to Jaffna following LTTE attacks on ships at sea in the last two months. The Defence Ministry is currently considering introducing flights for refugees and others, from Trincomalee airbase.

Twenty eight fishermen were arrested in Trincomalee by the Navy in early October. Over 50 Tamil youths were detained by police on 29 October at Gunasinghapuram. Six others were taken into custody at Lingangar and Nilaveli in late October. During the month the Army imposed restrictions on food, medicine and fuel into Kinniya, west of Trincomalee town, to prevent them reaching LTTE-controlled areas.



# Courts confirm Tamil torture claim

## Colombo Tiger hunt

TEN days after the Galadari Hotel bomb on 15 October, over 1,500 Tamils were arrested in Colombo in an operation named *Tiger Flush*. Those arrested were taken to the Sangaraja school in Maradana for interrogation and many to Al Iqbal school at Slave Island for a second interrogation and finger-printing.

Police claim only 50 were detained, but NGOs find it impossible to ascertain the number held in mass round-ups. Four youths who were in possession of documents with a Tiger insignia, downloaded from the Internet, were detained for alleged Tiger propaganda abroad. Reports say detentions had not been brought to the notice of the Human Rights Commission despite requirements under Presidential directives.

Four Tamils were arrested on 23 October in Negombo, 20 miles north of Colombo. Modera area in north Colombo was surrounded by security forces on 31 October and 75 Tamils were detained. Tamil MP TV Sennan says that a number

of Tamil youths from the Hill Country have been detained without assigning any reason. Seventeen Hill Country youths working in shops at Veyangoda were taken into custody in early October. Tamil youths were also detained in Kandy, Matale and Hangurankette.

The Supreme Court awarded in October Rs 100,000 compensation in a fundamental rights case of Tamil trader Ratnasabapathy Mohanadas who was detained and tortured by the security forces. The case illustrates the difficulties Tamils face in Colombo, NGOs say.

The Crimes Detection Bureau (CDB) arrested Mr Mohanadas in March 1996 and held him incommunicado for three months. He was neither informed of the reasons for the arrest nor a receipt issued to relatives acknowledging detention as required by law.

Mr Mohanadas was hung by his legs and tortured. His eye sight is affected after his head was covered with a plastic bag dipped in petrol. A confession had

been obtained from him against his will, written in the Sinhala language which he does not understand. The police had filed several cases against him based on the confession.

Batticaloa farmer Parameswaran Navaratnam alleges that soldiers tied him to a jeep and dragged him to the Kommathurai Army camp in Batticaloa District, after shooting him in the leg. At the camp he suffered brutal torture for three days. Mullaitivu resident Kalimuthu Krishnaveni, currently at Colombo's Welikade prison was arrested at Vavuniya on a visit to see her mother. She was produced before a Magistrate only after six months.

Danish Tamil David Jesudasan who came to Sri Lanka after 16 years to see his parents after the Danish government declaration that conditions in Sri Lanka had improved, was arrested on 14 October in a Kotahena lodge while awaiting security clearance and an air ticket to travel to Jaffna.

# US declares Tigers terrorists

THE Sri Lankan government has urged foreign governments to follow the example of the United States and take measures to outlaw the LTTE. The US added the Tigers to its list of terrorist organisations on 8 October. India is the only other country which has officially proscribed the LTTE.

US officials claim that the two-year ban under the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalties Act is designed to support the Sri Lankan government's "war for peace strategy". Others say the ban is designed to strengthen the super-power's military presence in the region.

The Sri Lankan Tamil parties fear that the US will expand its military assistance to Sri Lanka thereby aggravating the conflict. PLOTE leader D Sitharthan has called on the Sri Lankan government not to impose a ban on the LTTE which would shut the door to future peace talks.

US neighbour Canada has already taken some measures against LTTE activists following allegations of crime and violence against opponents. Sri Lankan newspaper *The Island* columnist DBS Jeyaraj, a bitter critic of the Tigers,

continues to receive death threats. LTTE activist M Suresh faces deportation after the Canadian courts declared him *persona non-grata* as belonging to a group engaged in terrorism.

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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British Refugee Council: Charity No. 1014576  
Company No. 2727514

ISSN 0955-5943

Funded by voluntary agencies worldwide.

Printed by: Imedia Print, 20 Rushworth Street,  
London SE1 0RB

Outlawing the LTTE in Europe in the near future is unlikely. British High Commissioner in Colombo David Tatham says no direct link between LTTE activities in Britain and terrorism in Sri Lanka have been established. Observers say if the European nations believe that a ban on LTTE would contribute to peace in the island enabling refugee returns, they may follow the US example. Norway's new Prime Minister Magne Bondevik has declared that illegal activities will not be tolerated but Tamils will have the freedom in Norway to pursue their cause through legal means.

Over 1,000 Tamils arriving on 27 October in a "Tamil Eelam-Scotland Friendship train" from London marched in Edinburgh, led by a Scottish bagpiper. Edinburgh was the venue of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, where President Chandrika presented a paper on "Intervention on terrorism". The protesters held a vigil outside the meeting centre demanding that Sri Lanka should be brought to book by the international community for its war against the Tamils.