

## UN concern for Jaffna civilians

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata said in mid-May that the military situation in Jaffna has put civilians at great risk and has already caused casualties among the people. She appealed to all parties to ensure that civilians are protected and allowed to move to safe areas. UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have also expressed concern for the deteriorating situation of civilians in Jaffna.

Refugees have fled to north-eastern Vadamaratchy or western Valikamam areas and have taken refuge in temples, schools or empty houses. Many have no access to government relief. The extension of a 48-hour curfew on 10 May and a 24-hour curfew on 18 May to the entire peninsula made refugee flight more difficult. UNHCR continues to intervene with the Sri Lankan military to ensure safe passage for the refugees. Many are still trapped in the combat zone and are undergoing immense difficulties without food or medical care facilities.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in late May that continuous Army shelling prevented the evacuation of refugees from Chavakachcheri, 11 miles east of Jaffna town, to points where UNHCR officials were waiting. UNHCR says that it conveyed to the government, a temporary truce offer by the Tigers to facilitate evacuation of refugees from southern Thenmaratchy, but received no reply. The government denied receiving any communication. But a 12-hour truce on 27 May was observed by both sides and more than 8,700 people moved out of the combat zone.

The Essential Services Commissioner (ESC) Lt. Gen. Sarath Munasinghe says 16,700 displaced people have registered in 138 relief centres in the Jaffna peninsula. The Jaffna Government Agent has made arrangements to provide them cooked meals for three days and dry rations thereafter. Aid agencies say some 150,000 are displaced including 70% of the population of Jaffna city.

Many refugees say that they have left

*UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on all parties to ensure safety of civilians in Jaffna and urged free access to areas where humanitarian agencies are providing assistance to the people.*

their documents, such as house-holders lists and identity cards, at their homes. Government officers are delaying or refusing to register their names at relief centres without these documents. According to UNHCR, refugees are crammed in camps with little in the way of water and sanitation facilities and some children are suffering from malaria, chicken-pox and diarrhoea.

International agencies confirm that a three-month food stock is available in Jaffna, but warn of a humanitarian crisis if the fighting continues. The ESC says that cargo ship *Kumana* left Colombo on 29 May for Jaffna with 3,200 tonnes of food. But distribution of food within Jaffna has become a major problem.

Agencies in Jaffna town are setting-up offices in other areas. UNHCR has established an office in Pandatharippu, eight miles north-west, to assist refugees in Valikamam. The office of the Human Rights Commission has been shifted to Sithankerni. The Jaffna prison is closed and reports say that 80 prisoners and 38 detainees under the Prevention of Terrorism Act will be sent to the south.

Civilian casualties are mounting as fighting continues. International agencies say people fleeing combat areas were seen carrying the injured. According to reports, Tiger-held Chavakachcheri, Kaithady, Madduvil and Sarasalai in Thenmaratchy have been subjected to massive Airforce bombardment and artillery shelling.

At least 50 civilians are reported killed and some 200 wounded. But Mannar Bishop Rayappu Joseph puts the civilian casualties in Madduvil alone at 500. In mid-May, Amnesty International appealed to the LTTE and the armed forces to make every effort to ensure the security of half a million people in the contested area.

Many people trying to flee the war zone have also been killed. In a letter to foreign missions in Colombo, Bishop Joseph alleges that the attitude of the armed forces is that "It is better to kill the people than allow them to go into LTTE-controlled areas". Shells fired at Columbuturai in the western part of Jaffna town on 15 May killed five people and wounded six others.

French medical agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) says that military targets in the vicinity of health facilities endanger patients and may prevent access of the population to medical care. A Sri Lankan Army base lies within 15 metres of Jaffna general hospital. Many military installations are near refugee camps, schools and health facilities. The Jaffna hospital continues to suffer from shortage of medicines and medical staff.

Some of the injured are being brought by boats across the Jaffna lagoon to Vanni hospitals. In late May, MSF assisted in transporting 25 wounded civilians from Kilinochchi and Mallavi hospitals to the Vavuniya hospital. Observers say many people in Thenmaratchy have refused to accede to a request by the LTTE to move to the Vanni. In 1995 and 1996 some 400,000 Jaffna people went into the Vanni following an LTTE order.

In the Vanni, the security forces have severely restricted medical supplies since March this year. MSF said in mid-May that in the earlier weeks, more than 40 patients were transferred or discharged without adequate surgical treatment and over 3,700 out-patients were turned away without medication. There is a critical shortage of medical supplies, especially emergency surgical items, dressing material and antibiotics.

## THE NORTH

# Tigers take Chavakachcheri

THE LTTE resumed *Operation Oyatha Alaigal* (Unceasing Waves) on 10 May and captured a three km section of Navatkuli-Ariyalai road east of Jaffna town. Reports say Israeli Kfir jets bombed Tiger positions in Ariyalai, Thanankilappu in the peninsula and Pooneryn on the mainland.

Parts of Kilali in Thenmaratchy area were held by the military despite continued LTTE attacks. But the Sri Lankan forces suffered another blow when Chavakachcheri, the second largest town in the peninsula, fell on 20 May after heavy fighting. The Tigers also captured a section of Sarasalai, three miles north of Chavakachcheri. LTTE attempts to move further north-east, through Manthuvil, into Vadamaratchy proved unsuccessful. But the Army mounted operations from Meesalai towards Sarasalai in the north-west and Chavakachcheri in the south-west regaining some lost territory.

The Tigers fired artillery shells at Palaly airbase and Kankesanthurai naval base damaging the runway and communication towers. Reports say that five LTTE cadre blew themselves up after Army surrounded a hideout in Atchuvveli, four miles south-east of Palaly.

By late May, the LTTE had withdrawn from some areas of the eastern part of Jaffna municipality, but held sections of Columbuturai and Ariyalai. Some observers say that the LTTE is unable to advance further into Jaffna

town or towards Palaly from Sarasalai, since the armed forces received new weaponry in May. Others believe that the Tigers are consolidating captured areas and are preparing for another assault.

In Mannar District on the mainland, the LTTE continued to keep up the pressure on the security forces. Two policemen were killed in a Tiger attack in early May on Mannar-Vavuniya road. Five other policemen were injured by a landmine at Uppukulam on 11 May. The Army searched Arippe area on 14 May and arrested *Sea Tiger, Varani*.

Mannar fishermen have been ordered to place their boats and engines near any Army camp on the coast, at the end of each day. The military say that the arrangement is to prevent the boats being used for smuggling banned goods into LTTE territory in north Mannar.

The daily supply of 35 litres of kerosene to fishermen was reduced in May to 25 litres, alleging that fuel was reaching the LTTE. Vanni MP A Adakalanathan says that the government has stopped dry rations to fishermen resettled in Silavathurai, 16 miles south of Mannar town. At the same time, fishing in Silavathurai is banned under Emergency regulations.

The Sri Lankan Navy shot and wounded three fishermen, including a 72 year-old man, at Silavathurai on 13 May. Reports say that a Navy patrol vessel approached the coast and fired on the village for 30 minutes.

## Killed

Reports say Jaffna municipal councillor Santhanam Kandeepan was killed by suspected LTTE cadre in May. The Tigers have repeatedly called on local councillors to resign and a number of them have been assassinated.

## Extended

India extended the ban on the LTTE on 14 May for two years. The LTTE was proscribed in India in May 1992 following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi a year earlier.

## Accused

Colombo newspaper *Sunday Times* says that eleven Supreme Court judges, have written to President Chandrika to clear their names, following her alleged accusations that a Supreme Court judge had accepted bribe from an LTTE supporter in a fundamental rights case.

## Refused

A British firm has threatened to take the Sri Lankan government to court for refusing to pay part of £750,000 for 6,000 body armours supplied to the military. The company denies that the body armours were below standard and says unnecessary deaths could have been avoided if they were used.

## Suspended

Following the introduction of new Emergency regulations on 3 May, the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation suspended relaying BBC's Tamil radio service *Thamilosai* and Sinhala programme *Sandesaya* from 12 May.

# Civilians die in Airforce bombing

SRI LANKAN Airforce planes bombed the fishing village of Pallikudah in Kilinochchi District on 12 May, killing five members of one family, including two children. MSF says doctors at Mallavi hospital attended 11 other bomb victims and treatment was hindered by the acute shortage of medical supplies.

The military allowed only a small fraction of the medicines earmarked for the first quarter of 2000 into the Vanni in late May. According to reports, 65% of the 345,000 population in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts has suffered from malaria and many people have contracted the disease several times. NGOs say drugs to treat malaria are acutely short.

In Vavuniya District, 26 people arrested by the police Counter Subversive Unit (CSU) are in custody. Police arrested Kilinochchi refugees S Valli and S Annaletchumy. The Human Rights Commission says that the police have not disclosed where Ms Valli is held. T Vigneswaran, who came to Sithamparapuram refugee camp from Puttalam has disappeared. Six others, including three from the Goodshed and Nelukulam refugee camps, are missing.

An armed gang shot dead three members of a family, including S Surendran, at Veerapuram in Cheddikulam. Reports say Mr Surendran, a former police informant, was assisting the Army. Security

forces say that 120kg explosives were found in a house at Nelukulam, three miles west of Vavuniya town. Following the discovery, a businessman and a woman were arrested on 15 May and taken to Colombo for interrogation. Two members of Tamil group PLOTE were killed in a Tiger landmine attack in Vavuniya town on 25 May.

In another landmine attack two days later in Nelukulam, a police officer was killed and five others were wounded. A landmine killed eight policemen in a truck and wounded 21 others at Pambaimadu, nine miles west of Vavuniya on Mannar road. Three people were taken into custody after the attack.

## ■ Censor deletes reference to eastern deaths

# Children killed

THE Sri Lankan security forces shot dead nine children and wounded 20 others, in Batticaloa town on 17 May. The shooting followed an LTTE cycle bomb attack in which five soldiers and a policeman died. The Tiger bomb also wounded five civilians and 25 security personnel.

The children, from an orphanage in Ayithiyamalai, were accompanied by Parish Priest Jeyachandra on a visit to view decorations in the town to celebrate Buddhist Vesak Day. As they approached the Mangalaramaya Buddhist temple, the cycle bomb exploded. Thereafter the security forces fired at the van carrying the children, despite the plea of Rev Jeyachandra, "Please don't shoot the children; shoot me instead".

The priest was also shot and wounded. The government Media Centre accused the LTTE of inflaming ethnic passions in the district, but failed to mention the shooting of the children. References to the killing of the children in newspapers have been censored.

Observers have condemned both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan security forces for targeting civilians. Eight members of two families, including two children were killed by a Tiger shell on 24 May near Kallady Army camp, three miles south of Batticaloa town. The LTTE also shelled Vavunativu Army camp and Batticaloa airbase on the same day killing a soldier. A Tiger grenade attack at Kattankudy on 31 May killed two

policemen. Following the incident police shot and injured three civilians.

On 15 May, the Army closed the bridges at Karuthapalam and Valayiravu connecting Army-held areas to LTTE-controlled territory, west of the lagoon and northern Batticaloa. The Army ban on tractors affected farming and trade, and prevented transport of patients into Batticaloa town for treatment. The bridges were opened on 29 May and private vehicles were allowed. But the ban on state buses remains.

The practice of holding cargo lorries from Batticaloa for 24 hours at the checkpoint in Mannampitiya, nine miles south-east of Polonnaruwa town, ended on 5 May. The procedure was introduced following suspicions that the vehicle used in the LTTE attack on the Kandy Buddhist shrine *Dalada Maligawa* in January 1998 was from Batticaloa.

In Amparai District, police arrested motor mechanic K Thiyagarajah, 39, in Akkaraipatru, alleging LTTE links. Three other youths were also detained in the area. Tiger suspects S Sriskandarajah and L Asokanathan, detained by the CSU were killed on 31 May. Police say they were taken to a plantation in Akkaraipatru to identify places where explosives were buried and were killed when they attempted to attack the police.

In Trincomalee District, over 4,500 people continued to wait for ship services to Jaffna. On 27 May, the ship *Trincomalee City* carrying 350 people left for Point Pedro in Jaffna.

## PA and UNP agree

THE ruling People's Alliance (PA) and the main opposition United National Party (UNP) met at the Sri Lankan President's *Temple Trees* residence on 7 May and reached agreement on nine chapters of the draft constitution. Under current proposals, voters of Tamil-dominated Batticaloa and Trincomalee will decide, in a referendum, whether these two districts should join the Northern Province to form one devolution unit. A separate south-east provincial council for Muslim areas of Kalmunai, Pottuvil and Sammanthurai is also envisaged. If a north-east provincial council is created, the Sinhalese-majority Amparai District voters will decide, in another referendum, whether a separate Amparai provincial council should be created. Despite agreement on some issues, the PA and the UNP remain suspicious of each other and observers say that strategic decisions in the light of forthcoming general elections will determine the outcome of the deliberations.

Following reports that some senior government ministers want to extend the current Parliament by two years, the UNP leader declared in early May that his party would oppose any such move. An extension must be approved by a two-thirds majority in Parliament and accepted in a national referendum. The PA will not be able to obtain a two-thirds majority without UNP support. Whether the LTTE will be invited to consider any agreed proposal is yet unclear. The Tigers said on 8 May that they would declare a ceasefire if the government agreed to withdraw the 40,000 troops from Jaffna peninsula, paving the way for peace talks. The government was unimpressed and rejected the offer. Media minister Mangala Samaraweera says the offer is part of LTTE's psychological warfare and follows government's intense campaign for international assistance.

## Denying asylum

AS fighting continued in Jaffna, more than 500 Sri Lankan refugees arrived in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Around 2,000 refugees in Mandapam refugee camp at Ramnad were sent to other districts, to house the newcomers.

Boatmen bringing the refugees from Sri Lanka's western coast are dropping them off on sand bars in the Palk Strait. Indian fishermen rescued 12 refugees stranded on a sand bar on 9 May. Seventy others were saved by Indian coastguard. But sources say that there is increasing official reluctance to assist refugees and fishermen have been forbidden to offer help. A child died of dehydration on a sand bar in Sri Lankan territorial waters in May.

Indian coastguard and naval patrols in the Palk Strait have been intensified. Security has been strengthened in the coastal region of Ramnad District and increased Airforce surveillance over Tanjore, Kanyakumari, Pudukottai and Nagapatanam is reported.

Although government officers say these measures have been introduced to prevent LTTE cadre entering India, observers believe that the main purpose is to discourage refugees. There are already 150,000 Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu. Five refugees from Jaffna's Neduntivu Island were arrested by police at Thondi in Ramnad District on 29 May and charged with illegal entry under Indian immigration laws.

## President appoints committee to protect Tamils

# Fear in Colombo

SRI LANKAN agency, Centre for Policy Alternatives Director, Pakiasothy Saravanamuttu, told *Reuters* in mid-May that as war in the north intensifies, the Tamil community in Colombo is fearful of an ethnic backlash. Following the LTTE killing of 13 soldiers in July 1983, an estimated 2,000 Tamils were massacred in southern Sri Lanka.

Mr Saravanamuttu says that the new Emergency regulations restricting freedom of expression and granting greater powers to the security forces have deepened fears. As fighting escalates in the north, security forces are expected to intensify cordon and search operations in Colombo and other parts of the south.

In late May, President Chandrika appointed a nine-member committee headed by Justice minister GL Peiris to ensure the safety of Tamils in southern Sri Lanka. This Inter-Racial Committee on Ethnic Harmony has appointed a sub-committee headed by minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle to prepare an action plan.

An LTTE suspect, arrested in Colombo's Bambalapitiya suburb on 13 May, attempted to commit suicide by taking cyanide. Three other suspects were also arrested in the area. Following their interrogation, a young Tamil millionaire in Kotahena suburb was taken into custody on allegations that he funded the Tigers. Police detained Batticaloa resident K Sarumathy in late May at Wattala, five miles north of Colombo, where she worked in a textile mill. Security forces searched Sea Street and Kathiresan Street in Pettah commercial district on 30 May and questioned over 500 people. Twenty young Tamil men and ten women were arrested.

Three Tamils, including Subramaniam Panchalingam from Vavuniya, arrested by unidentified persons in a white van on 27 May, were later found at the Bambalapitiya police station. The whereabouts of S Karunakaran and A Satheeskumar from Vavuniya, arrested in a lodge at Kotahena, are unknown. The

Human Rights Commission says another Vavuniya resident M Krishnarajah who went missing when he went to Colombo was later found in a Gampaha police station. A family residing in a Kotahena lodge went missing in May. According to the HRC, one member of the family, A Arulananthan is held at the Kotahena police station. His wife and two children aged two years and 18 months are at the Mt Lavinia police station.

On 23 May, the Committee of Inquiry into Undue Arrest and Harassment (CIUAH) issued summons on the Director of the police Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) to explain delays in filing cases against Tamils detained under Emergency regulations and the PTA. The order was made after the Attorney General's Department (AG) revealed in May that the TID has not submitted reports on over 315 Tamils arrested in 1998 and 1999. The AG's Department says it is unable to file cases without the TID reports.

## US says separate state is unacceptable

FOLLOWING reports in mid-May that a Western nation was pushing for a UN Security Council resolution for international intervention in Sri Lanka, Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar declared that the move is interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. Mr Kadirgamar said that he expected Russia and China to use the veto, if a proposal is tabled before the Council. Sources say that the US and India also oppose a Security Council resolution.

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on 19 May urging the Sri Lankan issue to be taken up at the UN. Speaking in Singapore on 2 June, the Indian Foreign minister Jaswant Singh expressed the view that the UN has no role in the conflict, other than providing relief to the displaced.

As the LTTE is poised to take Jaffna city, there is an unprecedented flurry of activity. Russia says that the conflict is a threat to the security and unity of the South-Asian region. China and Pakistan have declared that there should be no outside intervention in Sri Lanka. Reports say Beijing and Islamabad are

keeping a close watch on India's response to the situation in Sri Lanka.

Norway continues its peace mission. Special envoy on Sri Lanka, Erik Solheim arrived in New Delhi on 11 May

for talks with the Indian Foreign Secretary Lalith Mansingh. Norwegian Deputy Foreign minister Raymond Johansen visited Colombo on 22 May on a three-day visit.

India says military assistance to Sri Lanka is not on the cards, but there are indications of co-operation. India's Air Chief Marshall Yaswant Tipnis arrived in Sri Lanka on 7 May on a five-day visit. This was followed by a visit to India by Sri Lanka's Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Rohan Daluwatte. Former Punjab Police chief and anti-terrorist expert, KBS Hill was in Colombo 21 May for discussions on the security of the capital.

US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Thomas Pickering who flew to Colombo on 29 May said that the US did not envision or support the establishment of another independent state on the island or believe other members of the international community would support it. He also said that it is the international community that is the arbiter of who becomes a state and who does not, through a process of recognition and establishment of relations.

THE SRI LANKA MONITOR is part of an information 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 Refugee Council 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ Tel: (020) 7820 3100; Fax: (020) 7820 3107 E-mail: slproject@refugeecouncil.org.uk Internet: www.gn.apc.org/brcslproject

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