

## Depriving the north

Three children died of disease at Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi in Sri Lanka's northern Vanni region in mid-September. Ten month-old Edison Divani died of septicaemia and one year-old V Sinthuja of diarrhoea in Mullaitivu hospital. In Akkarayan, 11 month-old B Dilakshana died of malnutrition.

According to reports, between January and August this year, 32 children died in the Kilinochchi hospital. In late September, a month-old Mayuri died of diarrhoea in Akkarayan hospital. Local people say lives could be saved if adequate medicines and medical equipment are available.

A large part of the Vanni region is controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are fighting a 17-year war to establish a separate state or *Tamil Eelam* for the minority Tamil community in the north-east. The Sri Lankan government has imposed restrictions on food, medicines, fuel and other essential needs into the Vanni. The economic embargo under Emergency regulations is in force since August 1991. International agencies continue to protest, as the restrictions have little effect on the Tigers but adversely affect the health sector and undermine the local economy.

The World Bank says that health services have deteriorated in the conflict areas, border villages and welfare camps and identifies three health risks: "The first is the rise of the most virulent form of malaria due to the absence of proper control activities. Respiratory infections and water borne diseases are also on the rise due to inadequate shelter, damage to sewage systems and unsanitary conditions in welfare camps.

■ **Shipping and Rehabilitation minister and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader MHM Ashraff, 52, was killed in a helicopter crash near Aranayake, 43 miles north-east of Colombo, on 16 September. Thirteen others, including PA's Digamadulla election candidate Kathirgamathamby, also died. Mr Ashraff established the SLMC in 1981 to promote Muslim rights and aspirations. Some members of the SLMC suspect foul play and have demanded an investigation.**

*The extent of social and economic deprivation in the North-East is not precisely known as the security situation has precluded the province in island-wide household surveys since the mid-1980s.*

*The World Bank*

"The second is the worsening in maternal and child health, especially the nutritional status of children, due to food shortages and the deterioration of health services. The third and most challenging concern relates to the psychological trauma associated with the conflict, displacement and disintegration of community and family structures".

At Vavuniya in early September, the military appropriated medicines and medical equipment earmarked for Mullaitivu's Mallavi hospital. The medicines and equipment were taken to the Army hospital and desperate attempts by local government health authorities to retrieve them failed.

People injured in the war are unable to procure rehabilitative materials. The Army continues to prevent raw materials needed to manufacture artificial limbs, which is affecting hundreds of people who have lost limbs in landmine explosions. There are only a few ambulances for transport of seriously ill patients to Anuradhapura or Vavuniya hospitals where more facilities are available. Three

ambulances provided by international agencies for the Vanni region are still being held by the Army in Vavuniya. According to the Health Department, 17% of the children

born in the hospital at Puthukudyiruppu in August were malnourished and underweight. Reports say that the government has not released Rs 800,000 (\$10,250) allocated in January this year for nutritional programmes in Mullaitivu District.

NGOs say the military has refused permission to supply dry rations to 120,000 of the 374,000 people who need humanitarian assistance in the Vanni. As a result of the restrictions, prices of essential commodities remain high in the area. A litre of kerosene (paraffin) was sold at Rs 250 (\$2.5) in September.

As fighting continues in Jaffna, more than 90,000 people displaced from southern Thenmaratchy and south-eastern Pachchilaipalli areas are unable to return home. A further 65,000 are said to have fled their homes following Army's *Operation Kiniheera* (Anvil) launched on 17 September. NGOs have expressed concern for the 17,000 people in 136 government refugee camps which lack water and sanitary facilities. There is fear that diseases may spread in the camps. The refugees are affected by the current rains and say that temporary shelters built in Valikamam and Vadamaratchy by NGOs are inadequate.

The BBC says that in a recent survey, French medical agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) concluded that around 20% of the displaced people in Jaffna are suffering from acute malnutrition. This figure rises to more than 30% among displaced children aged between six months and 17 months.

The Army banned fishing in Jaffna lagoon on 3 September as it launched *Operation Rivi Kirana* (Sunbeam) to capture LTTE-controlled areas east of Jaffna town. The ban was removed on 13 September, but re-introduced on 20 September after five men who went fishing failed to return. The Army suspect that the fishermen have gone into Tiger-held territory. Punishing the entire fishing community for such incidents has become the norm in Jaffna, crippling the fishing industry and throwing the fisher families into extreme poverty.



JAFFNA

## Army capture Chavakachcheri

AS a military court probed the debacle of *Operation Rivi Kirana* (Sunbeam), the Army launched a new operation code-named *Kiniheera* (Anvil) and recaptured the strategic Chavakachcheri town on 17 September. The town was held by the LTTE since 20 May.

Despite the losses in *Operation Rivi Kirana* on 3 September, the Army launched a limited operation a week later, securing areas closer to Ariyalai and destroying a bridge at Navatkuli, east of Jaffna town. On 17 September, 4,000 troops advanced from Sarasalai and Meesalai, while artillery shelling of LTTE-controlled areas in Thenmaratchy from Palaly and other military bases and heavy bombardment by the Airforce continued. Chavakachcheri town fell within four hours.

The government arranged for a group of reporters to visit the town. The journalists were allowed half hour to meet the people of Jaffna town and then taken to Chavakachcheri through Palaly and Vadammaratchy. Jaffna commander Major Gen. Anton Wijendra told them that the capture of the town removed the LTTE threat to Jaffna city. The journalists say 80% of the buildings, including the hospital, are damaged or destroyed. Over 65,000 people in the surrounding areas have been displaced as a result of *Operation Kiniheera*.

The Tigers retaliated on 19 September, but were unable to push back the Army. The Sri Lankan troops contin-

ued *Operation Kiniheera* and on 26 September further extended lines of control west of Sarasalai and north of Madduvil. The *Sunday Times* columnist Iqbal Athas says the Army captured 22 sq. km. in operations *Rivi Kirana* and *Kiniheera*. More than 300 soldiers were killed and over 1,300 wounded.

On 26 September, the LTTE launched *Operation Oyatha Alaigal IV* (Unceasing Waves) and simultaneously attacked Kilali, Eluthumadduval and Nagarkovil, capturing around 30 sq. km. Observers say that the Tigers' main aim is to take the Army camp at Nagarkovil in Vadammaratchy, which would facilitate an offensive on Palaly military base. In early October, the LTTE continued to fire artillery shells on north Valikamam forcing the suspension of military flights into Palaly airbase.

Civilians continue to suffer in the fighting. Refugee Nadarajah Nadesini was killed by a Tiger shell at Kopai in early September. Army shells killed S Karthigesu, 70, and S Poobalu, 60, at Nunavil near Chavakachcheri on 2 September. Five men who went fishing in the Jaffna lagoon on 18 September are missing. The Army shot dead S Sivanathan on the same day at a checkpoint in Kopai. It is alleged that he fled as soldiers at the checkpoint attempted to search him. Three civilians, including Y Thamilarasu, 25, died when shells hit Kodikamam on 26 September. Four others were seriously injured.

### Massacre

After two Home Guards were shot dead by suspected Tiger cadre at Mahindapura in Trincomalee District on 2 October, seven Tamil farmers were hacked to death in retaliation at Poonagar in Eechilampathai.

### Disappeared

Amnesty International said in September that Trincomalee resident GMM Zackariya was arrested by the Navy at a checkpoint, in the presence of his wife and child, on 11 August. The Navy has denied the arrest.

### Emergency

President Chandrika recalled Parliament on 14 September, under article 70(7) of the Constitution, in order to extend Emergency. Parliament was dissolved on 18 August.

### Order

The Court of Appeal ordered on 25 September that officers of the government poverty alleviation programme *Samurthi* should not become involved in campaign on behalf of any political party during working hours.

### Protest

Sprinter Susanthika Jayasinghe wore a yellow ribbon during the 100 metre semi-final race at the Sydney Olympics on 22 September, to support the campaign for free and fair elections in Sri Lanka. Ms Jayasinghe, who won a bronze medal later in the 200 metre race, has accused a government minister of sexual harassment.

## Arrest and detention in Vavuniya

ARBITRARY arrests and detention in Vavuniya continue to cause concern. In early September, the Vavuniya magistrate warned the police Counter Subversive Unit (CSU) that the court's permission must be obtained for re-arrests. Ponnuthurai Sathanantharajah was held by the CSU from 27 June but was released by court on 2 September. He was re-arrested on 4 September within the court premises.

The Human Rights Commission says six young Tamils arrested by the police Special Task Force, during a search operation on 6 September are held by the CSU. Student M Chandramohan and P Suppiah are currently detained at

Vavuniya Army headquarters. They were taken into custody on 1 September, while returning to Vavuniya after visiting their homes in the Vanni.

The Vavuniya court also ordered the police that the court must be informed of doubtful deaths and permission obtained for an inquest. The order follows a number of suspicious deaths, particularly of young people, caused by shooting.

Reports say a Tiger and a policeman were killed in an LTTE attack on a police post near Poovarasankulam on Mannar road in early September. Nine soldiers in a tractor died in a Tiger landmine attack on 26 September at Vannankulam, nine miles north-west of Vavuniya town.

The Sri Lankan Airforce bombed Mullaitivu on 4 September wounding Sivarasa Vigneswaran. The following day, another civilian Velupillai Anton was injured. Reports say in two days of bombing, a house and hundreds of trees were destroyed.

At a meeting with the Indian High Commissioner Gopalakrishna Gandhi on 13 September, Tamil groups PLOTE and EROS complained about intrusion of Indian fishermen into Sri Lankan waters in Mannar sea. Following a visit by Culture minister Lakshman Jayakody to India on 23 September, both countries agreed on a joint committee to examine the problems involving fishermen.



## ■ Batticaloa people protest over disappearances

# Former Mayor killed

BATTICALOA DISTRICT People's Alliance (PA) election candidate Cheliyan Perinpanayagam, 63, was shot dead on 10 September at Pandiruppu, 23 miles south of Batticaloa town. PA's organiser for Amparai District N Manoharampillai also died in the attack.

Mr Perinpanayagam became Batticaloa Mayor following local elections in February 1994. He left his party TELO and joined the PA in August. PA's local leader S Ganeshamurthy blames the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress for the killing. The police suspect the LTTE and have launched an investigation.

Batticaloa people have expressed concern over the large number of killings in the east which remain uninvestigated.

Over 1,070 people disappeared after June 1990 in Batticaloa District according to the Presidential Commission on Disappearances. Other reports say over 5,000 people were arrested in the district during this period.

On 5 September, a *hartal* (general strike) was observed in Batticaloa to commemorate the disappearance of 174 refugees arrested by the Army at the Vantharumoolai camp in September 1990 and 184 people taken into custody in Sathurukondan and other villages. No enquiry has been held into the disappearances despite repeated requests by local and international agencies. The Army failed in its attempt to force open shops in Batticaloa town. But in Valaichenai

soldiers smashed the doors and forced traders to open their shops.

Amnesty International says provisions under Emergency regulations on post-mortem and inquest procedures remain wholly inadequate for the full and impartial investigation of deaths caused by the security forces. Emergency procedures could be used to bypass normal procedure and used to cover-up illegal killings.

Civilians Poobalapillai Srikanthan and Kanagasabai Karunakaran were shot dead by the police Special Task Force at Arayampathy, south of Batticaloa town, on 12 September, when returning from a temple. The Batticaloa magistrate has urged an investigation.

The LTTE shot dead two Sinhalese farmers in Welikande on 13 September. Two soldiers and civilian Thambiyappah Ulagasekaram, 53, were killed in a Tiger attack on Army positions in Vavunativu on 11 September. Ponnambalam Kirubakaran was injured in a revenge attack by soldiers.

The Kalkudah Army camp, north of Batticaloa town came under Tiger shell fire on 12 September. A Soldier was killed. The Army, suspecting that the shells were fired from Nasivantivu near Valaichenai, arrested 15 people working at the temple in the village. The military later denied the arrests. The following day, the LTTE attacked an Army convoy at Sunkankerni wounding four soldiers. Three policemen died and seven others were injured in a bomb attack in Kalmunai on 18 September.

## Diversion

ARMY spokesman Brigadier Sanath Karunaratne says that following military successes in the Jaffna peninsula, the LTTE have intensified operations in the east, particularly Trincomalee District, to divert attention. Twenty four people died in a suicide bomb attack during an election meeting at Muthur in Trincomalee on 2 October. The dead included People's Alliance election candidate Lateef Fidullah. The police blame the LTTE for the attack. Mr Fidullah who earlier served in the police Counter Subversive Unit (CSU) and promoted to Inspector following successful operations against the Tigers had been accused of grave violations of human rights against civilians.

A Tiger landmine killed two soldiers and a civilian in Thoppur, 13 miles south of Trincomalee town on 10 September. The LTTE ambushed an Army patrol at China Bay, south-west of the town, on the same day, killing three soldiers and wounding seven. An Army truck was attacked near Wilgampura junction, eight miles north-west of Trincomalee town on 19 September, killing 22 soldiers. On 22 September, the Navy fired on boats at sea off Trincomalee killing four Tamils and two Sinhalese fishermen. Seventeen other fishermen were wounded. The Navy claim that naval vessels were fired on by *Sea Tigers*.

Despite the Tiger attacks, the ship *Lanka Muditha* brought 1,190 passengers to Trincomalee from Jaffna on 14 September. The ships *Hendela* and *City of Trinco* carried 1,600 passengers the following week. As the fighting in Jaffna continues, more civilians want to leave the peninsula. Reports say over 10,000 are currently registered with the government secretariat to leave Jaffna. The ship service to Trincomalee is the only mode available to the people for travel outside Jaffna.

TRADE UNIONS launched a strike on tea estates on 11 September, demanding higher wages. The unions led by the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) want the Rs 400 (\$5) a month wage hike to the private sector to be extended to the plantations. President Chandrika issued Emergency regulations on 21 July requiring the private sector to grant the increase following the devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee by 4% in June.

The Employers' Federation says that wage increases to the tea sector were determined under a June collective agreement which stipulates a daily allowance rise of Rs 6, totalling Rs 150 a month. The unions also accepted a formula that links increments to productivity, but now

## Wage strike

claim that circumstances have changed since the devaluation. The unions point to increase in production. In the first five months of 2000, tea production increased by 7.9% compared to the same period in 1999. Tea exports rose by 3.8% and export earnings by 18.8% to Rs 19.8 billion (\$253 million). But employers argue that productivity levels are lower than in other tea producing countries.

The government, which needs the support of the CWC at general elections, intervened and following discussions, the President appointed a committee on 20 September to examine the wage issue. The CWC may have extracted concessions on undisclosed political demands before agreeing to end the strike.



## Explosives intercepted in Batticaloa

# *Tiger bomber kills seven*

SEVEN people were killed in a suicide bomb attack on 15 September, near the Eye Hospital in Colombo's Cinnamon Garden suburb. Twenty eight other civilians were wounded, ten of them seriously. Five shops in the vicinity and a number of vehicles were damaged.

The male suicide bomber had been posing as a beggar and was being questioned by a suspicious policeman in front of the hospital. People say that two accomplices fled from the scene when the bomb was detonated. The police believe the LTTE carried out the attack and that a number of Tiger suicide units are in the capital seeking high profile targets. The LTTE has carried out many suicide attacks in Colombo resulting in the death of a large number of civilians.

Observers suspect that the bomber was waiting for Health minister Nimal Siripala de Silva whose ministry office is in the area. He was scheduled to pass the Eye Hospital to reach his office. The security forces believe that the bomber

arrived in the capital an year ago and lived in a lodge. The police summoned over 100 lodge owners on 22 September and warned them not to accommodate any person from the north-east without proof of police registration.

Earlier in the month, Deputy Inspector General Bodhi Liyanage warned that 23 LTTE suicide units and 15 spies had infiltrated Colombo to disrupt elections. At Kalmunai in Batticaloa District, the Police intercepted two powerful bombs on 14 September, destined for Colombo. Police also say that following the arrest of a Tamil youth in Pettah commercial district on 28 September, a 'suicide kit' was found inside a television.

Six Tamil youths were arrested during a search operation in Wellawatte suburb in early September. Sources say five of them were waiting to travel abroad and the other is a travel agent. Following the suicide bomb attack, over 100 Tamils were taken into custody. It has been brought to the notice of the Sri Lankan

Human Rights Commission (HRC) that brothers M Rathakrishnan and M Sasikumar who worked in a shop in Jampettah Street have been arrested by Kotahena police.

The security forces conducted a search operation in Galle District on 2 October and arrested seven Tamil youths. Three electricity transformers were blasted with bombs on 17 September in Hill Country's Passara region, seven miles south-east of Badulla. The police blame the LTTE. Search operations were carried out on tea estates in the area and ten Tamil youths were taken into custody.

In early September, Tamil political parties demanded the Commissioner of Prisons that Tamil detainees should be allowed to vote in the general elections. The Commissioner says that there is no legal provision to allow detainees to vote. According to reports there are currently 4,000 Tamils in detention, most without trial, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Emergency regulations.

## EU monitors deplore election violence

THE European Union (EU) monitors expressed concern over rising violence in the run-up to the general elections on 10 October and said on 24 September that the vote was taking place in a climate of fear and intimidation. The EU monitoring appears to be part of implementation of the Action Plan for Sri Lanka drawn by EU's High Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration. The EU mission also voiced serious concern over the apparent inaction by police.

By 4 October, the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) had recorded 1,162 violent incidents including 24 murders and five attempted murders. In more than 53% of the incidents the perpetrator was the ruling People's Alliance. CMEV also says that the situation in Jaffna is not conducive for elections. Over 250,000 people have been displaced and government ally EPDP, which has been allowed to carry arms, is involved in a campaign of intimidation in the peninsula. A survey by the Centre for Policy Alternatives indicates that only 23% of the people believe that the elections will be free and fair.

The violence was particularly bad in the hill capital Kandy, where Deputy Defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte's son Chanuka Ratwatte is accused of involvement in intimidation of opposi-

tion members and candidates. He was arrested in late September for shooting at the vehicle of an opposition UNP candidate, injuring a person.

JVP member AD Sirideva was shot dead in Matale on 27 September. Six houses belonging to UNP supporters at Polgodawatte near Negombo were burned on 29 September. A boy was killed in a bomb attack on vehicles carrying election campaigners, including deputy minister MLAM Hisbullah, on 2 October in Batticaloa town.

The decision of the Elections Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake to introduce stickers on polling cards to prevent fraud has been attacked by government ministers. Colombo newspaper *Sunday Leader* reports of 'a threatening presence outside the Commissioner's residence'. The Commissioner discovered forged polling cards and in order to maintain secrecy contracted a private printer to print the stickers. An election candidate of the ruling PA has petitioned the Human Rights Commission alleging that the Commissioner's actions violate his fundamental rights.

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. The Sri Lanka Monitor for a particular month may contain information relating to events of previous months or the early part of the following month.

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

The Refugee Council:  
Tel: (020) 7820 3000; Fax: (020) 7582 9929  
E-mail: info@refugeecouncil.org.uk  
Internet: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk  
Charity No. 1014576; Company No. 2727514

ISSN 0955-5943

Printed by: Immedia Print, 76-89 Alscot Road  
London SE1 3AW