

People vote for peace

In his annual *Great Heroes Day* statement on 27 November, Velupillai Prabhakaran announced that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were sincerely committed to a negotiated political settlement to the Sri Lankan conflict, but insisted that the ban on his organization should be lifted to enable participation in peace talks as the legitimate representatives of the Tamil people. LTTE's hand has been strengthened by the October declaration of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), a coalition of four Tamil parties.

The TNA has demanded that future peace talks should be held only with the Tigers, as the representatives of the Tamil people, and there should be no negotiations with any other Tamil party. Observers believe that this position aims at putting an end to the use of the 'divide and rule policy' of successive Sri Lankan governments in denying the legitimate rights of the minorities.

Although the standpoint of the TNA and the rare unity among Tamil parties has been welcomed, some activists have expressed concern that it would stifle pluralism and may become a difficult problem in the future. They say that the demand for the recognition of the LTTE as the 'sole representative', while opposing the existing unitary state in Sri Lanka is a glaring contradiction. Observers say that the Tigers were banned for resorting to violence and the demand for removal of the proscription without renouncing violence is unreasonable.

Mr Prabhakaran warned that if racism continues as the dominant force in Sri Lankan politics, it would create the objective conditions for the emergence of an independent Tamil state. He claimed that because of the deep-seated Sinhalese belief that the ethnic conflict could be resolved by repressive military means, the Sinhalese parties have no concrete proposals for a permanent solution.

Mr Prabhakaran also condemned the People's Alliance (PA) government for rejecting the ceasefire and peace initiative offered by the Tigers in December

The Tamil people favour a political solution that enables them to live in their own lands with the right to rule themselves. This would not undermine the political liberties or the social, economic and cultural life of the Sinhalese people.

V Prabhakaran, LTTE leader

2000 and marginalizing the Norwegian peace envoy Erik Solheim, by accusing him of supporting the LTTE.

In light of the attacks in New York on 11 September, Mr Prabhakaran had a message for Western governments, calling for a clear and comprehensive definition of the concept of terrorism that would distinguish between armed liberation struggles based on self-determination and blind terrorist acts based on fanaticism. He said it was strange that these governments, while understanding the position of Tamils, support Sri Lanka's political and military efforts and contribute to prolongation of the conflict.

Mr Prabhakaran also had a word for the Sinhalese people. Among the contending parties in the general election, he distinguished between the forces that seek peace and extremists who opposed peace efforts. He seemed to indicate that the opposition United National Alliance (UNF) led by the United National Party (UNP) were peace lovers and the ruling PA were opponents of peace.

The UNF campaigned on a peace ticket, assuring the people of a ceasefire and peace negotiations with the LTTE on being elected. But the PA's election campaign was for continuing the war. President Chandrika Kumaratunge and Prime Minister Wickremanayake made clear that the PA would intensify the war and go all out to annihilate the LTTE. Mr

Prabhakaran reminded the Sinhalese people that ethnic harmony and economic prosperity cannot be realized as long as the Tamils are denied justice and their political aspirations remain unfulfilled.

The general election on 5 December was marred by unprecedented violence. The UNF won the election, securing 109 seats and along with the five seats of its ally Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), gained majority in Parliament. The PA won only 77 seats losing in every district except Moneragala (see Special Issue December 2001).

In the run-up to the elections, the PA accused the UNP of entering into a secret pact with the LTTE, referred to as the *Tiger-Elephant Agreement*. PA members even produced an audio tape purported to contain conversations between UNP's Jayalath Jayawadena and an LTTE leader. The UNP vehemently denied the allegation and went to great pains to explain to the influential Buddhist monks, the *Mahanayake Theros*, that there was no such agreement.

Allegations were rife that the government resorted to vote-buying tactics. In November, the government ordered the completion of village-level projects such as small-scale irrigation schemes, health programmes and repair of roads. Rs 5 million (\$55,000) was promised for each district. The government also announced wage increase for state employees. But these tactics proved unsuccessful.

Observers say the PA failed to concentrate on the two main problems facing Sri Lanka: 'the ethnic conflict and the economy'. In a number of opinion polls, more than 65% of the people said that the government should solve the ethnic conflict by peaceful means. The LTTE assault on Colombo airport in July and the Twin Tower attacks in New York in September have had a devastating impact on the economy and Sri Lanka is said to be poised to record its worst economic performance in decades. Majority of the Sri Lankan people are of the opinion that the UNP will be better able to manage the economy than the PA.

JAFFNA

Fuel scarcity

FUEL shortages in Jaffna led to rapid increase in prices in November. The price of rice and vegetables rose steeply and poor families were particularly affected. In October, the LTTE attacked the fuel ship *Dunhinda* near Point Pedro disrupting fuel supply to the peninsula.

Cooperative stores began supplying only one or two litres of kerosene to each family. Only seven of the 19 petrol service stations were open and provided limited amounts of petrol and diesel. On 17 November, a ship arrived from Colombo with 600,000 litres of diesel. Although the supply was for the people of Jaffna, reports say that the Army took 150,000 litres for its own use.

The Airforce announced that with effect from 12 November, people travelling to Jaffna by air with a return ticket need not obtain permits from the Defence Ministry. The requirement of permits for travel from Jaffna to southern areas and to Jaffna by ship through Trincomalee would remain. But when people went to Heli Tours in Colombo to buy air tickets to Jaffna, they were told to obtain permits from the police.

In addition to these problems, the people of Jaffna faced violence in the run-up to general elections on 5 December. Grenades were thrown at the Jaffna University hostel on 28 November, injuring two students. Reports say that the University students had been carrying out house-to-house campaign in support of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA).

A gang said to be belonging to the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) attacked a TNA rally on Kayts Island on 28 November. One man was killed and another died later in hospital. Nineteen people, including TNA candidates were wounded. EPDP leader and Northern Rehabilitation minister Douglas Devananda claimed that the people of Kayts Island rose up against the TNA. The following day, a *hartal* (general strike) was observed in Jaffna, protesting against the attack. Schools, government offices and shops were closed.

Jaffna magistrate RT Vignarajah ordered the arrest of three EPDP members following the attack. The islands west of the Jaffna peninsula have remained under the control of the EPDP for several years. The TNA say that their members were prevented from campaigning on the islands since election nominations.

The Army arrested Jaffna University student Arumugam Sutharsan at his residence in Thirunelveli on 10 November suspected of links with the LTTE. The Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission has received complaints that 13 year-old student Linganathan Nijendran of St Henry's College, Ilavalai is missing from 12 November. Another student Senthamil Selvan, 17, is missing since 24 October. Report say that the Army shot dead a youth in Kopai, five miles north-east of Jaffna town, on 26 November. His body was handed over to the Jaffna hospital.

Refugee return

Australia returned 37 Sri Lankans who landed in August on Cocos Island, 1,750 miles north-west of Perth, to Colombo by plane on 14 November. The Criminal Investigation Department detained them on arrival, but released them later. Australia expelled 9,523 persons in 2000 under immigration laws.

Tiger deaths

The LTTE say 17,472 cadre died in the 18-year war up to 20 November 2001. This includes 3,728 women, 239 *Black Tiger* suicide cadre and 264 members of Tamil group and LTTE ally, EROS.

Fishermen shot

The Sri Lankan Navy fired and killed an Indian fisherman in early November near Vedaraniyam, 25 miles south of Nagapattinam in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Another fisherman was seriously wounded.

Journalist attack

Reporter for Batticaloa journal *Thinakathir* (Daily Ray), Lakshmanan Thevathiran, was assaulted by two officers of the Education Department on 2 November while probing allegations of corruption in the department involving funds allocated for student scholarship.

Satellite campaign

In a satellite transmission to the Jaffna on 21 November, President Chandrika said that she was aware of the problems of the Jaffna people and called for co-operation of the LTTE and the Tamil parties for solutions.

Endless suffering in the Vanni

EIGHTEEN month-old child U Vincent died of diarrhoea at Mallavi hospital in Mullaitivu District on 6 November. In mid-November eight children were admitted to the hospital with the disease. The Puthukudyiruppu hospital also received several people with diarrhoea. Reports say that between January 2000 and October 2001, 405 children were born underweight in Akkarayan hospital.

The government economic blockade of the LTTE-controlled Vanni has affected ordinary people in the region. According to Colombo newspaper *Virakesari*, 13,379 people died in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts as a result of military operations and the economic blockade between 1990 and 2000.

The two districts have not received Malathion insecticide and chlorine for disease prevention for several months. *Thripasha* milk food for children has also not arrived. According to reports, prices of rice and kerosene have risen. Regional Education Director P Ariyaratnam says that in Kilinochchi District there are only 696 teachers for 34,000 students whereas nearly 1,600 are needed.

In Vavuniya District, security was tightened to prevent LTTE infiltration and clashes between political parties in the run-up to general elections. On 2 November, Tamil group PLOTE members *Kanthan* and *Prathap* were shot dead in Poonthottam area. PLOTE has accused rival Tamil group TELO.

The security forces arrested several people in Vavuniya. Local people have expressed concern over the failure of the security forces to inform relatives and the Human Rights Commission (HRC) about arrests and detention. Reports say that in November alone HRC received 32 complaints of disappearances after arrest.

Two soldiers were killed by a landmine on 6 November at Maruthanamadu. Another LTTE mine claimed the life of a Buddhist priest, north-east of Medawachchiya on 18 November. Two days later, three policemen died in a mine blast at Poonavai on Vavuniya-Medawachchiya road. Another policeman was killed by a mine, east of Vavuniya town, on 28 November.

■ LTTE target police in the east

Killed by shells

FIVE people were killed and ten were wounded, when security forces shelled villages in Eravur in Batticaloa District on 20 November. The dead included 70 year-old S Sellathamby and 11 year-old P Suren. The retaliatory attack was launched after the LTTE fired shells on Eravur police station.

The LTTE intensified its attacks on the security forces in the east in November, particularly targeting the police. The Tigers launched a suicide attack on Munai road in Batticaloa town on 15 November, killing three Tamil members of the Army's intelligence unit. Nine people, including two women, were wounded and three shops were damaged in the attack.

Four days earlier, a senior police officer and two policemen died in a dawn raid on the Palameenmadu police Special Task Force (STF) camp. The LTTE launched simultaneous attacks on Bakiella police station, 17 miles southwest of Batticaloa town, and the STF camp at Nugalande.

The Tigers infiltrated Eravur and attacked a police station on 11 November. A Home Guard was shot dead and the station was burned. Two civilians were injured in the attack. A simultaneous attack on the police station in Vammiyady in the same area, killed a policeman and civilian Murugan Subramaniam. Two policemen were killed and another wounded in a parcel

bomb attack in Paddiruppu police station, south of Batticaloa on 14 November.

Tamil group EPRLF member Muthusamy Anusamurthy was shot dead allegedly by LTTE's *Pistol Group* on 20 November near Chenkalady Army camp. He was returning from the camp after guard duties. The bodies of *Grama Sevaka* (Village Headman) Gnanamuthu Vivekanandan and another civilian Ragavan Nesarajah were found in Batticaloa in early December. Reports say that they had earlier been abducted by the LTTE.

The security forces continued cordon and search operations. In early November, the Army began collecting details of Tamil residents in some villages in Eravur. Army officers say the details are needed to prevent LTTE infiltration into the area. The Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission (HRC) received complaints about several arrests from the people, including that of Shanmugam Suriyakumar, 16. The security forces are required to inform the HRC about arrests within 48 hours, but this rule is often disregarded.

Reports say that the STF killed Kanthalingam Vasanthan and Karunaratnam Sriranjana at Periyakallaru on 12 November alleging LTTE links. The Army shot dead M Kogulan near Pavatkodichenai on 2 December. The body of Mahendran Manalan was found in Oddamavady on 23 November. Relatives say that he had been taken into custody by the Army a day earlier.

Dreadful weapons

TAMIL political parties condemned the Sri Lankan government in late November over the acquisition of dangerous weapons for the security forces. Tamil and Muslim leaders say that the government intends to use the weapons in the north-east, which would pose grave risks to the population, as the Sri Lankan security forces are known to deliberately target civilians in Tamil areas. The concern follows a report appearing in the *Guardian* (London) newspaper on 23 November about the purchase of 1,000 shoulder-launched rockets with fuel-air warheads, through a firm with a British address and about the involvement of former Sri Lankan Army officer Lt. Col. Upali Gajanayake. The deal was first revealed by the Sri Lankan newspaper *Sunday Leader*.

These Russian-made weapons, which are said to have been banned by NATO, can have a devastating impact on the body. The *Guardian* says that the force of fuel-air blasts can burst eyeballs out of their sockets and crush other internal organs. The warheads contain inflammable liquid mixed with explosives and it is impossible for victims to find a hiding place. British Liberal Democratic Party spokesman Menzies Campbell expressed deep concern and said that the nature of these weapons is so dreadful that they ought to be banned under an international convention. In July, the British foreign affairs think-tank Saferworld, referred to export of small arms to Sri Lanka and questioned whether the exports are in keeping with the criteria that arms exports 'which would provoke or prolong armed conflicts' will not be licensed. The UK Working Group on Arms says that new proposals for legislation in the UK could still allow British brokers to supply weapons to terrorists and governments guilty of human rights abuses.

Trinco fighting

TWO soldiers died and two others were wounded in an LTTE attack on an Army patrol near Mallikaitivu, five miles south of Muthur in Trincomalee District on 10 November. The Tigers intercepted the reinforcements from Palathoppur Army camp, and in the ensuing fight six soldiers and two civilians were killed. The Army shelled the area wounding 60 year-old S Sannasipillai.

The Army fired shells on Koonitivu, four miles north-east of Muthur, on 20 November, injuring five civilians, including two children. Farm animals were also injured. The Tigers attacked the Kaddaiparichchan Army camp, two miles east of Muthur killing two soldiers and wounding six. Reports say V

Pathmananthan and A Sivalingam were arrested in Kantalai on 3 November by police. Relatives have complained to the Human Rights Commission that they were severely beaten up by the police.

In Mannar District, the Sri Lankan intelligence services arrested 24 year-old Jayadeepa Mariyadas at Uppukulam in early November on allegations of LTTE links. Two of her relatives were also taken into custody. The Navy arrested twelve Tamil youths on the Mannar coast on 6 November and handed them over to the police. Further south in Puttalam District, the Navy fired on fishermen at sea off Kalpitty on 23 November. Kingsly Fernando was killed and Rizmy Fernando was wounded.

PSD collecting details of Tamils in Kandy **Detention under PTA**

REPORTS say that arbitrary arrests and detention of Tamil civilians continued in November in several parts of the island despite the long-standing concerns of human rights NGOs. In November, former UNP MP T Maheswaran said that there were over 1,700 Tamils in detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), many of them without trial for long periods.

When the state of Emergency ended in June, the President issued regulations under the PTA providing that 'any person who had been remanded ... in terms of any other written law, and has also been connected with or reasonably suspected ... with any unlawful activity within the meaning of the PTA, shall be deemed to have been remanded under the PTA'. In effect all detentions under Emergency laws have now been brought under the PTA and despite the lapse of the Emergency, Tamils arrested for offences under the Emergency regulations, continue to be detained.

Colombo Human Rights agency Home for Human Rights reported that there were over 290 arrests in November throughout the island. The police detained 25 Tamils on 2 November in Anuradhapura. Press reports say that several Tamils were rounded-up in Matale town and its suburbs in a security force cordon and search operation on 11 November. The police Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) arrested 27 Tamils in Waduwa, 17 miles south of Colombo on 16 November.

Ramalingam Uthayanathan was arrested in June 1999 at Udappu in Puttalam District, accused of taking part in LTTE's military operations and other activities. Four cases were filed against him in courts, based only on a confession extracted while in police custody. The Colombo High Court rejected the confession evidence and released Mr Uthayanathan in November.

Security forces continue to use torture to extract confessions from detainees. In

a fundamental rights application, mobile phone dealer, Mylvaganam Ramnath says he was arrested on 2 August in Colombo by the police Criminal Investigation Department (CID). At the time of the arrest, he was not informed of the reasons. He was severely beaten in custody and forced to sign a confession, the contents of which he did not understand. He was held without being produced before a court until 12 September.

In November, Tamils in some parts of Kandy expressed concern over the activities of the Presidential Security Division (PSD) in the run-up to the general elections. The PSD, an agency set up to ensure the security of the President, was involved in collecting particulars of Tamil residents and owners of shops in Kandy. Local people say that all details had already been provided to the *Grama Sevakas* (Village Headmen) and police stations. The PSD has been accused of nefarious activities under the guise of presidential protection.

Demonstration over Jaffna disappearances

THE Jaffna government secretariat came to a standstill on 5 November, by a demonstration over disappearances organised by the Guardian Association for Persons Arrested and Disappeared (GAPAD) and the Mothers Front.

There were widespread disappearances after the Army captured Jaffna in 1996. The fate of 540 Tamils arrested by the security forces still remains unknown. The skeletal remains of 15 people were found in Chemmani after the burial sites were identified in August and September 1999 by soldier Somaratne Rajapakse who had been convicted for the murder of Krishanthi Kumarasamy.

The skeletal remains were sent to Colombo for forensic examination and it was said that foreign assistance had been sought in the investigation. Four army officers and a police officer were arrested in March 2000 suspected of involvement in the murder of the 15 people. They were all released on bail in June 2000.

GAPAD members travelled to Colombo two years ago to meet President Chandrika Kumaratunge and to call for an independent enquiry. The

President assured them that a Commission would be appointed into the Jaffna disappearances. Six months later, the most senior state officer in Jaffna, the Government Agent (GA), had promised that there would be some action within three months. But there was none.

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.

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After a visit to Sri Lanka in 1999, the UN Working Group on Disappearances had also recommended the appointment of a commission to investigate the disappearances after 1994. There have been four police enquiries into the disappearances in Jaffna. But no independent investigation has been carried out into disappearances after Kumaratunge's People's Alliance took power in 1994.

The PA government appointed three regional commissions in November 1994 to investigate disappearances during the period 1988-94. These commissions investigated 16,742 disappearances. In May 1998, a fourth commission was appointed to probe a further 10,000 disappearances during the same period. But its mandate was not extended to cover the period after 1994.

According to the UN Working Group, Sri Lanka remains the country with the second highest number of unclarified disappearances, next to Iraq, in the world. The Working Group also says that the government has brought charges only against 500 of the 4,000 perpetrators identified by the national commissions.