

## Disorder in Parliament

The supreme law-making body in Sri Lanka descended into chaos on 24 July, when government and opposition MPs exchanged blows within the legislature, after members of the People's Alliance (PA) and the People's Liberation Front (JVP) displayed placards and banners demanding the sacking of Trade minister Ravi Karunanayake from the Cabinet. The fighting continued even after Speaker Joseph Michael Perera pointed out that there were over 200 students in the gallery to witness democracy in action.

Minister Karunanayake had earlier accused President Chandrika Kumaratunge of spying. She is alleged to have brought a handbag to Cabinet meetings, which really was a sophisticated eaves-dropping device containing photographic and recording equipment. The government has ordered a police investigation into the handbag affair.

Government members are also accusing the President of corruption. Galle MP Gayantha Karunathileke alleges that Rs 4.9 billion (\$50.9 million) allocated to the President for projects is missing. A Cabinet sub-committee headed by Finance minister KN Choksy, says that President Chandrika had imported 48 luxury armoured vehicles at a cost of Rs 2 billion (\$20.8 million) without Parliament or Cabinet approval.

The main opposition PA and its ally JVP tabled a no-confidence motion in the legislature against Interior minister John Amaratunge in July. Both parties say that the law and order situation in the country has deteriorated since the ceasefire agreement between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was signed in February. On 1 August, the opposition also submitted a no-confidence motion against Defence minister Tilak Marapane.

Despite the show of force, there are visible cracks in the opposition. The Colombo District Court issued an interim order on 16 July, to prevent the suspension of former Transport minister AHM Fowsie from the Sri Lanka Freedom

*Sri Lanka has failed to achieve equality in the fields of employment, use of the mother tongue and education. There can be no military solution to terrorism created by inequality and injustice within the country.*

*Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe  
During a visit to the US in July 2002*

Party (SLFP). The SLFP is the main constituent of the PA, whose leader is President Chandrika Kumaratunge.

Earlier, Ms Chandrika had sent a letter to Mr Fowsie asking him to show cause for advocating the formation of a national government in which the PA would participate along with the ruling United National Front (UNF). Mr Fowsie points out that the President herself had initiated talks in March 2000 for the establishment of a national government.

The problem stems from suspicion within the PA that Mr Fowsie is planning to defect and support the government's proposed amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution to remove some powers of the President. The President retains the power to dissolve parliament after one year from the date of a general election and the government believes that she will exercise that power after 5 December. Observers say that these events, showing the lack of commitment to bipartisanship, have introduced an element of uncertainty to the peace process.

In early July, President Chandrika urged the government and the LTTE to begin talks without delay. She accused the LTTE of levying taxes, stressing that only the government is authorized to raise taxes throughout Sri Lanka. The President also continued to express concern about the harassment of the Muslim community by the LTTE.

Addressing the press on 11 July in the Vanni, LTTE's political leader SP Thamilselvan attempted to allay fears over Tamil hegemony in the north-east. He claimed that a solution to the conflict would be based on equality and the rights of the Muslims and the Sinhalese would be respected. LTTE supporters claim that deputy leader Karikalan, alleged to be the main figure behind the harassment of the Muslims, has been removed from his responsibilities in the east.

The government faced its own problems in July. On 5 July, petitions filed by Sinhalese nationalist organisations against the ceasefire agreement were taken up for inquiry in the Supreme Court. The decision was postponed to 19 September. PA spokesman Sarath Amunugama condemned the government for lack of progress in the peace process. LTTE Advisor Anton Balasingham had apparently been avoiding meetings with Norwegian and Sri Lankan representatives, blaming the government of failing to implement the ceasefire agreement.

A meeting between Mr Balasingham and Economic Reform minister Milinda Moragoda on 27 July in London came as a relief. Norwegian Deputy Foreign minister Vidar Helgesen's discussions with Mr Balasingham in London on 17 July had paved the way for the first meeting between a government minister and the LTTE.

While local struggles continued in July, Pakistan President Pervez Musharaff and Indian Foreign Affairs minister Yashwant Sinha visited Sri Lanka. Both assured that their countries would support a peaceful solution that ensures the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the island. US President George W. Bush also pledged support for peace efforts and economic development when Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe visited Washington in late July. Some observers say that an agreement may have been reached for military facilities in Sri Lanka for the US during any armed conflict, in exchange for pressure on the LTTE.



## Jaffna Peninsula

# High security zones

IN a letter to Defence Secretary Ostin Fernando in July, Tamil MP Gajendran Ponnambalam says that the Army is declaring the areas it is vacating in the north-east as high security zones (HSZ). As a result, in areas such as Mirusuvil and Palai in Jaffna's southern Thenmaratchy region, displaced people are unable to resettle. The security forces are required to hand over civilian buildings occupied by them before 2 August in terms of the ceasefire agreement.

The Chavakachcheri regional council wrote in early July to Jaffna commander Sarath Fonseka, asking him to permit fishing in the Kilali region in southern Thenmaratchy. This area has also been declared a HSZ. Around 600 families are suffering because of the ban on fishing.

Reports say that the Army also declared the coastal area of Amban, north-west of Nagarkovil, as a HSZ on 6 July. The Army is occupying the local hospital and several government buildings. Apart from Palaly, and Mandaitivu Island, the areas from Columbuturai in Ariyalai eastwards to Thanankilappu and areas from Eluthumadduval northwards to Nagarkovil are HSZs. The coastline occupied by the Navy also remains a security zone.

Following demonstrations by the people, the Defence Ministry announced that the HSZ will be reduced from 1,000 metres around military camps in western Valikamam to 200 metres. The Navy said in late July that resettlement will be allowed beyond 200 metres from the

perimeter of the HSZ on Mandaitivu Island. Fishermen will be allowed to go to Palaitivu and Iranaitivu Islands, south of Jaffna town, after obtaining a permit, but they are prohibited from visiting Kalmunai, south of Jaffna.

Local people demonstrated on 16 July at Velanai demanding opening of roads and submitted a petition to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), which is tasked with monitoring ceasefire violations. Thousands of students from 17 schools staged a demonstration on 26 July, demanding the Army to vacate schools occupied in Thenmaratchy.

At a meeting with the Prime Minister on 16 July, the Tamil National Alliance complained about difficulties faced by displaced people in resettling in western Valikamam and southern Thenmaratchy. They claim that the Army is strengthening its structures in Thenmaratchy. The Army says people can farm in some areas of Valikamam but cannot build houses or reside in the areas in the nights.

On the instructions of the Prime Minister, Defence Secretary Fernando visited Jaffna on 20 July to assess the situation. After inspecting Valikamam and Thenmaratchy and holding talks with MPs and local officers, Mr Fernando announced that a final decision regarding resettlement in Valikamam North will be taken by the Prime Minister. The military is occupying an area of 25 sq miles in Valikamam North, which contains Kankesanthurai Army camp and the Airforce base in Palaly.

## Appointed

Chief Justice Sarath Silva appointed three judges in late July to hear the Madawela case, in a trial-at-bar without a jury. The case relates to the massacre of ten Muslims on election day in December 2001. Former Deputy Defence minister Anuruddha Ratwatte's sons Lohan and Chanuka are the main suspects. They were released on bail by the Court of Appeal on 30 July.

## Stranded

Six Sri Lankan Tamils stranded on a sandbar near Dhanushkodi in July were saved by the Indian Navy and taken to the Mandapam refugee camp in Ramnad District in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Press reports say that they were forcibly dumped on the sandbar by the Sri Lankan Navy.

## VAT

Finance minister KN Choksy announced on 7 July that National Security Levy (NSL) and Goods and Services Tax (GST) will be abolished from 1 August. The NSL, a direct contribution to the war, rose to 6.5% between 1995 and 2000. NSL and GST will be replaced by Value Added Tax (VAT) of 10% for essential goods and services and 20% for others.

## Assault

A Tamil journalist was assaulted by an Airforce officer on 16 July during a ceremony to mark the appointment of Airforce Commander Donald Perera. The new commander apologised and promised an enquiry into the incident.

## The Vanni

# Strike in Mannar after security force attack

A *hartal* (general strike) was observed in Nanattan, 12 miles south-east of Mannar town on 1 July, after the Army and police attacked civilians indiscriminately in the streets. The attack followed a dispute between two groups of civilians. Local people say that despite the ceasefire, the security forces continue to harass civilians in Mannar District.

A citizens committee says that the Army has vacated 10 public buildings as required by the ceasefire agreement, but is still occupying 27, including cooperative society buildings and the Immigration Department building in Talaimannar on Mannar Island.

Since the ceasefire, some Tamil refugees in government camps in the

southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu are returning to Mannar by the hazardous sea route in small boats. A group of 17 returnees were stranded on a sandbar between Pamban and Mannar islands in early July. Kularatnam Sivakumar died of exposure on the sandbar.

As internally displaced people return to their homes in the Vanni, landmines and other explosive devices left behind by the warring factions continue to cause concern. Kanthan Arumugam, 75, was killed by an explosive device while clearing his land in early July, at Thiruvaiyaru in Kilinochchi District.

Since the opening of the A9 road the traffic between Vavuniya and Jaffna has increased. But problems continue to per-

sist. Private Bus Owners Union president Gemunu Wijeratne says that the LTTE is demanding Rs 1,500 for each passenger travelling between Omanthai in Vavuniya and Muhamalai in Jaffna. The Union is willing to accept Tiger conditions, but the government has refused permits. Currently there is no direct bus service from the south to Jaffna. Travellers through the Vanni have no alternative but to use LTTE's *Tamil Eelam Transport* buses.

The LTTE observed *Black Tiger Day* on 5 July in the north-east. They say that 17,637 cadre died in the 19-year war, and 241 of them were *Black Tigers* who perished in suicide attacks. Meetings and processions were held in the Vanni.



## Batticaloa, Amparai and Trincomalee

# Shooting in the east

FOUR people, including Thiyagarasa Kumaran, 18, were wounded on 28 July, when police at Vellaveli in Batticaloa District opened fire on demonstrators. The protesters were demanding the release of the local Development Committee President Ponniah Perinpam who had earlier been arrested on charges of dealing in illicit liquor.

Six people, including 19 year-old Paramsamy Logaraj, were injured in another incident two days later. Police guarding Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MP T Thangavel's residence in Arayampathy, four miles south of Batticaloa town, opened fire on a crowd of people. The police claim that the crowd attempted to attack the MP's

house. But other sources say the shooting took place following an argument. The police took the injured into custody.

These incidents are blighting the peaceful atmosphere that prevailed following the ceasefire. The local people are extremely concerned over the developments. They point to the fact that the ceasefires of 1989-1990 and 1995 collapsed following violent incidents in the Eastern Province.

According to press reports, 160 shops were damaged or destroyed in violence between Muslims and Tamils at Valaichenai, north of Batticaloa town, in June. Police say seven Muslims and two Tamils were killed and 31 Muslims and 25 Tamils were wounded.

Opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse said in Parliament on 9 July that the Muslims were badly affected in the east and alleged that the violence was the result of the ceasefire agreement between the LTTE and the government. The opposition parties maintain that the government has offered too many concessions to the Tigers.

At a meeting on 4 July, National United Alliance (NUA) leader and MP Ferial Ashraff urged President Kumaratunge to ensure the safety of the Muslim community in the east, before removing the security forces from public buildings such as schools and temples. Five days later, during a discussion with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe assured that military camps will not be closed without consultation.

The security forces continue to occupy many public buildings in Batticaloa District. Further south in Amparai District, the Army vacated several schools in the coastal areas. But some Hindu and Buddhist temples were still occupied at the end of July.

In Trincomalee District, three LTTE cadre were taken into custody by the Navy at sea near Sampur on 3 July. On the same day, two more Tigers were arrested at Kanniya. LTTE's Trincomalee political leader A Ruban says that the actions of the Navy violate the ceasefire agreement. The LTTE cadre were released on bail by the Trincomalee magistrate on 5 July.

## The North

## Ceasefire violation

THE Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), composed of ceasefire monitors from the Nordic countries, accused the LTTE in mid-July of violating the ceasefire agreement of 22 February 2002. Two *Sea Tiger* trawlers were observed on 13 July near Iranaitivu Islands, 15 miles north of Mannar Island. The LTTE rejected SLMM requests to hand over the trawlers to the Navy and attempted to prevent two SLMM officers from boarding one of the boats. The other trawler meanwhile moved and disappeared from the scene. After the two officers succeeded in boarding the boat to carry out an inspection, whether it was carrying any weapons, the *Sea Tiger* cadre moved it towards the mainland despite the protests of the monitors. The SLMM officers were allowed to leave for the shore at Devil's Point, seven miles further north in Kilinochchi District. The LTTE deny that they violated the ceasefire and say that the trawler was within 10 miles from the shore. They accuse the Navy of firing at their trawler.

The Tigers also say that the Navy is entering zones under their control and is harassing the fishermen. In a meeting with the head of the SLMM, LTTE's political leader SP Thamilselvan expressed concern that the issue of sea travel of LTTE cadre has not been finalised by the government despite several representations.

In an apparently unprovoked incident on 25 July, an armed soldier went into LTTE territory near Muhamalai, 20 miles east of Jaffna town, and fired injuring two Tiger women cadre. He was then shot dead by the LTTE. The Army say that the man was mentally disturbed. This is the first shooting incident involving the Army and the LTTE since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in February. Army commander Lionel Balagalla has ordered an enquiry into the incident.

## Hill Country

## Repatriation

CA FONSEKA, an officer of the Department of Immigration declared in early July that 150,000 Hill Country Tamils, who had been issued Indian passports, will be forcibly sent to India. The Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and the Up Country People's Front (UPF) say they would vehemently oppose any attempt to deport the people.

Almost a million Hill Country Tamils were made stateless by the Citizenship Act enacted in 1948. Under the Indo-Ceylon Agreements of 1964 and 1974, India granted citizenship to 506,000 people and Sri Lanka recognized 375,000 as her citizens. Some 461,000 were repatriated to India between 1968 and 1983. The remaining stateless persons were

recognized as Sri Lankan citizens under two laws introduced in 1986 and 1988.

The Hill Country political parties argue that applications for Indian citizenship were made 35 years ago and many of the applicants have died. Their descendants look upon Sri Lanka as their home and are unwilling to go to India.

Earlier, the CWC proposed that Sri Lanka should recognize these people as her citizens and India should grant citizenship to Hill Country Tamils who fled to India in the wake of violence since 1983. India has maintained that this would be contrary to her citizenship laws. Suggestions have been made that this issue should be included in the agenda for peace talks in Thailand.



**Colombo and the south**

## Torture victim released by the Colombo High Court

# Prison hunger strike

SOME 100 Tamil detainees in Kalutara prison, 25 miles south of Colombo, and in Batticaloa prison in the Eastern Province, began a hunger strike on 19 July, demanding to be released. They are held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), many of them for several years without trial.

After the fifth day, several detainees in Kalutara were admitted to the prison hospital. The hunger strike by the Tamils caused tension within the Kalutara prison. Press reports say that the authorities transferred 80 Sinhalese prisoners to another section, after a plot to attack the Tamils was discovered.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe said in mid-July that since the ceasefire agreement in February, action has been taken to release 40% of the Tamil detainees held under the PTA. He also assured that Defence minister Tilak Marapane would discuss the issue of releasing the other detainees with the Attorney General Kamalasabeysan.

In late July, the Colombo High Court released Tamil detainee Anton Jude, a resident of Mannar District. He had been arrested in May 1998 when he came to the capital for medical treatment. He had suffered brutal torture at the hands of the police Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) and as a result, lost his sight. The torture has been confirmed by the government Judicial Medical officer.

The removal of checkpoints in Colombo has made movement within the city easier for residents and visitors. Some cultural activities suspended because of the state of Emergency and restrictions on the freedom of movement have now resumed. The Hindu *Adi Vel* festival began on 22 July, after a period of eight years. The festival has been celebrated in Colombo since the 1840s.

The rule that required foreigners to obtain permits from the Defence Ministry to travel to the north was removed on 16 July. The decision was taken following a meeting between Prime Minister

Wickremasinghe and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), a coalition of four Tamil parties. The rule particularly affected foreign Tamil citizens of Sri Lankan origin who had relatives in Jaffna or the Vanni.

Despite the ceasefire, many people continue attempts to leave the island. Three Pakistani and 148 Sri Lankan illegal immigrants travelling in a ship for several weeks to reach Italy were saved by Saudi Arabian authorities in the Red Sea, following an appeal by the captain for food and water. Three were admitted to hospital. Reports say all would be returned to their countries.

According to press reports, Interior minister John Amararatunge assured foreign envoys in Colombo in July that the Sri Lankan government will do everything within its power to prevent illegal emigration from the island. A Sri Lankan was sentenced to imprisonment by an Australian court in early August for involvement in attempting to smuggle 71 Sri Lankans into Australia.

**Internally displaced people**

## Refugees face serious difficulties in resettlement

THE Human Development Centre (HUDEC) says that some 7,500 displaced families have returned to the southern Thenmaratchy area in Jaffna peninsula, since the signing of the ceasefire agreement in February. Another 2,000 families have resettled at Maruthankerny in north-eastern Vadammaratchy. Over 840 families have returned to western Valikamam from the Vanni mainland. A further 1,070 families have reached Kayts Island, west of the Jaffna peninsula, from the Vanni. Around 500 families have also returned to Palai.

According to HUDEC, a number of factors are seriously affecting those people who have returned to their home areas after several years. Many houses have been damaged or destroyed. The lack of water and sanitation facilities are major problems in most areas.

A large section of cultivable land in the peninsula is under military control, particularly in Valikamam west, as are a large number of houses. More than 30 families who settled at Sivankovilady in Thenmaratchy have been ordered by the Army to leave, following the establish-

ment of a new camp at Nunavil East. Where lands are available, the people lack the necessary resources to begin cultivation as a result of long years of displacement. People are reluctant to go into certain areas fearing landmines. Many are being disabled or killed by mines

each month. In mid-July, Kumaravel Vijayakumar lost his left leg in a landmine explosion at Palai.

Hospitals in the peninsula face shortages of medicines and medical equipment. There is also an acute shortage of medical personnel. According to reports, doctors of Sri Lankan origin abroad are being encouraged to spend short periods in northern Sri Lanka to assist hospitals. But some doctors say that without proper supply of medicines and equipment, their visits would not be useful.

All resettled refugees are not receiving a resettlement allowance from the government. Of the 7,500 families resettled in Thenmaratchy, only 1,500 have received the resettlement allowance. NGOs have expressed concern that the amount of commodities supplied to refugees has also been reduced.

Regular electricity supply to the peninsula resumed on 7 July after many years. Reports say that a US firm has been contracted for 18 months supply of electricity. The lack of electricity has adversely affected industries, education and health facilities in Jaffna.

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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