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Prolonged political impasse

Interim administration and core issues

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) severely criticized Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunge in a statement on 13 June 2004, accusing her of duplicity and political manipulation. The Tiger attack is seen by observers as a further set back in the peace process.

The President invited the Tamil National Alliance¹ (TNA) for discussions on 10 June to explore the possibility of beginning peace talks between the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government and the Tigers. The TNA team led by Trincomalee MP R Sampanthan pressed for establishment of an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) for the north-east region as proposed by the LTTE, emphasizing that an ISGA is urgently needed for resettlement and rehabilitation of thousands of internally displaced Tamils. They also pointed out that the opposition United National Front (UNF) would not oppose the setting-up of an ISGA.

After the meeting, TNA member Joseph Pararajasingham said that the President had indicated that she is prepared to begin talks with the LTTE on the ISGA without any pre-condition and the TNA had reason to believe that peace talks will begin in August. The politburo of the People's Liberation Front² (JVP) met the next day and announced that the President had not consulted them and threatened 'extreme action' if she accepted the ISGA. In a government policy statement to the nation on 12 June, President Chandrika denied that she had given TNA any assurance and reiterated the position of the UPFA that there must be parallel talks on the ISGA and the fundamental issues for a final settlement of the ethnic conflict. According to Colombo newspaper *Sunday Leader*, senior leaders of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) within the UPFA recognize the importance of resuming peace talks for the sake of the Sri Lankan economy, but fear that the government would collapse if the ISGA is accepted as the basis for talks.

On 13 June, the Tigers launched a scathing attack on the President for linking the ISGA with a permanent political solution. They accused her of duplicity and alleged that her plan was a manipulative strategy to take forward the peace process only for a

¹ The TNA have accepted the LTTE as the sole representatives of the Tamil people and are incapable of independent decision or action.

² The JVP is a constituent of the UPFA and has 40 members in Parliament. The JVP and the SLFP signed an agreement on 20 January 2004, forming the UPFA.

short period in order to obtain the aid pledged by the international community.³ Analysts point out that the struggle over "interim administration and core issues" is a sham, as the LTTE's ISGA proposals are wide-ranging and deal with many of the core issues that will lead to a solution to the ethnic problem. These include legislative, executive and judicial powers, law and order, taxation, internal and external trade, control of land and sea and control of natural and marine resources.

Observers say that President Chandrika is desperate to take the peace process forward for her own political survival as her term as President would end in 2006. She wishes to ensure an agreement with the LTTE and the appointment of a constituent assembly to adopt a new constitution. The new constitution will abolish the executive presidency and enable her to enter Parliament to become Prime Minister. If the LTTE agrees to begin negotiations, there may be support from the 22 TNA MPs in Parliament for the UPFA and the task of appointing a constituent assembly to adopt a new constitution may become easier.

President's initiatives

A number of steps taken by President Chandrika since election in April are said to be part of this design. She telephoned the Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik on 22 April and requested resumption of Norway's role as peace facilitator and on 9 May it was announced that the UPFA had agreed to recognize the LTTE as the sole representatives of the Tamil people. It was also indicated that the ceasefire agreement will be in force and that the SLMM would continue its ceasefire monitoring work. When the UNF was in power, President Chandrika and the JVP vehemently opposed Norwegian involvement, accused the SLMM of supporting the LTTE and made it clear that the LTTE cannot be recognized as the sole representatives of the Tamil people. They had insisted that the ceasefire agreement should be renegotiated.

President Chandrika also appointed respected diplomat and former head of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDR), Jayantha Dhanapala, as Secretary General of the Colombo Peace Secretariat.⁴ But observers are not convinced that politicians will allow the needed power and freedom to Mr Dhanapala to take the peace process forward effectively. On 12 June, the President announced the formation of a National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation (NAC) to serve as a forum for the following purposes:

1. Explaining to the country government efforts to bring peace
2. Briefing the country on the progress of peace negotiations
3. Obtaining the views of all concerned parties and groups
4. Promoting reconciliation and understanding among the different communities.

Majority in Parliament

Since general elections on 2 April, the energies of the UPFA have been expended on finding support among minority parties and MPs in order to gain a majority in

³ Donors pledged \$4.5 billion at the Tokyo Conference in June 2003.

⁴ The appointment to the Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) is effective from 1 June 2004.

Parliament.⁵ Senior members of the UPFA have been holding discussions with the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC).⁶ But these two parties want assurance that,

- 1) the current Presidential system of government will not be abolished; and
- 2) the current proportional representation system of elections will not be changed.

Apart from these, the CWC have continued to demand the abandonment of the Upper Kotmale Hydropower Project⁷. They also want two cabinet posts, including the Ministry of Aviation currently under SLFP stalwart Mangala Samaraweera. The SLMC have continued to demand the inclusion of a Muslim delegation in the peace talks, independent of the government or the LTTE.

These parties say they have been successful in obtaining some rights because the president in power has been able to take decisions in favour of the minorities on occasions by exercising the huge powers vested in him/her under the constitution, whereas Parliament, with a Sinhalese majority, has adopted on many occasions discriminatory legislation inimical to the minorities. Under the proportional representation system of elections, major parties have not been able to obtain huge majorities in Parliament as in the case of the 1970s and 1980s, and have been able to form governments only with the support of the minority parties.

Minority parties reluctant

According to observers, when the attempt to obtain the support of the minority parties failed, the UPFA chose to destabilize and divide the SLMC by blaming its leader Rauf Hakeem, through the state media, of involvement in a scandalous extra-marital affair. Two SLMC MPs - Risard Badiudeen and Najeeb Abdul Majeed - who are alleged to have been used by the UPFA for the purpose, were suspended from the SLMC on 19 May. When the CWC expressed reluctance to join the government, the 21-strong security team assigned by the government to its leader Arumugam Thondaman was withdrawn. A CWC statement on 26 June said that the party would not join, as it could not serve the people while the minority government struggles to carry out normal administration of the country. However, observers say that the CWC may review its decision after the provincial council elections on 10 July 2004.⁸

Peacemakers struggle

The Norwegians have been travelling between Colombo and Kilinochchi to bring the two sides together. Norwegian special peace envoy Erik Solheim arrived in the island on 28 June and held meetings with Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and

⁵ UPFA has 105 seats and needs another eight seats for overall majority. The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) of Douglas Devananda has pledged support, but has only one seat.

⁶ There are eight CWC MPs and five SLMC MPs in Parliament.

⁷ Upper Kotmale is a 150MW plant hydropower project in the Talawakelle region of the Hill Country, proposed by the Ceylon Electricity Board. According to some experts, the Project will affect seven famous waterfalls, displacement of the population in Talawakelle area and may lead to heavy soil erosion. They point out that there is lack of plan to relocate the families that will be displaced.

⁸ Nominations for provincial council elections in six provinces closed on 28 May 2004. The provinces are Central, North-Central, Sabragamuwa, Southern, Uva and Western. The UPFA won the elections in North Western Province on 24 April 2004, gaining 59.1% of the votes and 31 seats in the Provincial Council against UNF's 37.5% of the votes and 19 seats.

opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe. Mr Solheim and Norwegian ambassador Hans Brattskar met LTTE's political leader SP Thamilchelvan in Kilinochchi on 30 June. According to the LTTE Peace Secretariat, Mr Thamilchelvan raised concerns over the serious development in Batticaloa and Amparai districts. He said that the LTTE had solid evidence that former LTTE eastern commander Col. Karuna was being used by military intelligence to carry out killings and abductions. He warned that the entire peace process would be in jeopardy if the situation continued. LTTE's Batticaloa-Amparai political leader I. Kousalyan had declared on 25 June that the Army cannot expect cordial relations with the LTTE while sheltering Karuna and indulging in murder in Batticaloa.

The LTTE have suspended regular meetings with the Army to discuss security issues. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) expressed serious concern over suspension of the meetings. Deputy chief of SLMM, Hagrup Haukland says their work has become more difficult as the meetings were very important to maintain contact between the parties to uphold the ceasefire. On 16 June, the Navy had imposed a new rule for the LTTE cadre travelling by sea between the Northern and Eastern provinces. The Navy wants 72-hour notice for any such travel.

The LTTE have also complained to the Norwegians about what they regard as malicious and false propaganda by the state media. The Tamil service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) is relaying a one-hour daily programme of the London-based Tamil Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) run by members of the former Sri Lankan paramilitary group Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF). The Tigers allege that the programme is aimed at maligning the LTTE, promoting divisions between the people of the north and the east and vilifying the Tamil cause.

UPFA deny Karuna link

The President and minister Kadirgamar have denied any government involvement with Col. Karuna. But Cabinet spokesman and minister Mangala Samaraweera says some individual military officers may have links with Karuna and that an investigation was underway. On 21 June, the LTTE arranged a press interview for four women cadre who had travelled to Colombo with Karuna, allegedly escaped on 13 June from a safe-house in the capital and returned to Batticaloa to rejoin the Tigers. One of the women, Nilavini revealed that UNF's MP Ali Zahir Moulana was involved in helping Karuna and his associates to leave Batticaloa. Mr Moulana says that he offered assistance on humanitarian grounds, in order to avoid bloodshed, on the request of LTTE's current Eastern commander Ramesh.

UNF leader Ranil has denied any knowledge of the involvement of Mr Moulana and called for his resignation from his position as an MP. Mr Moulana resigned on 23 June. Reports say that Mr Ranil sent a letter on 30 June through Mr Solheim to Mr Thamilchelvan assuring that the UNF has no links with Col. Karuna. Ms Nilavini also claimed that while at the safe-house in Colombo, Karuna held discussions with Sri Lankan intelligence officers. TNA parliamentarian T Raviraj accused both the UPFA and the UNF of being prepared to re-ignite the war by pursuing any opportunity to weaken the Tigers.

Killings in Batticaloa

The LTTE say at least 12 of their members or supporters have been killed in Batticaloa district by the Karuna faction in recent months. Tiger cadre Markandu Punithalingam was killed by a bomb at Alankerni, north of Batticaloa town on 20 May. Eastern University's economics lecturer Kumaravel Thambiah was shot dead in the town on 24 May. Prominent Tamil journalist, Aiyathurai Nadesan, who reported for Colombo Tamil newspaper *Virakesari* and the London-based International Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) Tamil radio, was shot dead on 31 May in Batticaloa town. Other journalists have received death threats. The LTTE's political office in Batticaloa was damaged in a bomb attack on 1 June. As the LTTE observed *Black Tiger Day*⁹ on 5 July, four Tigers were shot in Batticaloa District and one of them named *Murinchan* died of his injuries. Batticaloa sources say that many of the eastern cadre who were with Col. Karuna and were released to return to their homes in early April, retain their weapons and these weapons are sometimes sold on the black market. These sources allege that up to Rs 20,000 is being offered for the killing of a Tiger member.

Other killings have also continued. Directorate of Military Intelligence officer Dassanayake was shot dead in Batticaloa town on 19 May. The LTTE have denied involvement in the killing. Trincomalee resident and businessman Arulananthan Arulbharath was shot dead on 29 May at Kurumankadu in Vavuniya. K Devarajah's body was found on 27 June at Ganeshapuram in Vavuniya District. He had been shot in the head. Press reports say Mr Devarajah was a member of a Tamil militant group six years ago.

Suicide bomber in Colombo

The police said that they found a suicide kit and explosives on Prince of Wales Avenue in the Colombo suburb of Grandpass on 17 June. Thirty people in the surrounding area were taken into custody. A woman suicide bomber killed four policemen and a civilian and wounded seven people inside the Kollupitiya suburb police station in Colombo on 7 July. The police say she was arrested near the office of Tamil minister Douglas Davananda nearby and brought into the station. The LTTE have come under suspicion. There have been no *Black Tiger* suicide attacks in southern Sri Lanka after the ceasefire agreement of February 2002. But tension has been mounting in the recent weeks over the Karuna issue. The police say that the suicide bomber's name is Thilagarajah Jeyarani and that her accomplice Selvakumar Sathyaseela has confessed confirming LTTE involvement.

In a statement in Kilinochchi on 8 July, LTTE spokesman Daya Master denied Tiger involvement in the Colombo bomb attack and blamed anti-peace elements. The US Embassy in Colombo said: "Although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, the incident bears the hallmarks of an LTTE attack. The United States has consistently called on the Tigers to renounce terrorism and cease terrorist acts, including political assassinations and to comply with the terms of the ceasefire agreement that they signed".

⁹ *Black Tigers* are suicide cadres of the LTTE. The first suicide attack by the LTTE was launched at Nelliady in Jaffna on 5 July 1987 against a Sri Lankan Army camp.

UPFA General Secretary and minister Susil Premajayanth said that the Kollupitiya bomb blast would not affect the peace process. The Colombo Peace Secretariat also stated that the ceasefire agreement and the peace process would continue. Mr Premajayanth assured that security barricades would not be re-established in Colombo. However, some Tamils in Colombo have expressed fear that the bomb attack will trigger security force checks on the streets, cordon and search operations and arrests in the capital.

Mr Devananda's Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) has always opposed the LTTE and currently supports the UPFA government. Mr Devananda is said to have invited Col. Karuna to join him in a political alliance. According to Colombo newspaper reports, the intention of the government is to encourage Karuna to form a political party.¹⁰ A political party would enable a campaign to break the Tiger stranglehold in the east, divide the north and the east and end the claim of a Tamil homeland.¹¹ In such an event, observers say that although in the present situation Karuna is no match for the LTTE in military terms, in the long-term he may pose a formidable political challenge to the Tigers in the east.

Buddhist Front

The Buddhist monk MPs of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (National Sinhalese Heritage) have come under attack, allegedly by UPFA members for refusing to support the government in Parliament. JHU have nine members in the legislature. There was chaos in Parliament on 8 June when the Speaker attempted swear in JHU member Akmeemana Dayaratna Thera who had been nominated in place of Kataluwe Ratnaseeha Thera.¹² Two Buddhist monks were attacked by other members and Kolonnawe Sri Sumangala Thera was injured.

The JHU has continued to stress that the government must make use of Col. Karuna to weaken the LTTE. Reports say that on 5 July, 14 armed Tamil youths, allegedly belonging to the Karuna faction, were arrested by police in the Bodhirukkharamaya Buddhist temple, at Hingurakgoda, seven miles north of Polonnaruwa town and released on bail the following day. The chief priest of the temple, Lendigele Sudassi Thera, who is said to be a member of the JHU, was seriously wounded in a grenade attack on 8 July.

India and reconstruction

Some observers believe that the new Indian government, led by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, may become more involved in the peace process in Sri Lanka than the previous government. Although Sonia Gandhi has declined to accept the position of Prime Minister, as Congress Party leader she remains in a powerful position.

¹⁰ *Daily Mirror*, 30 June 2004

¹¹ The Oslo Declaration says that the parties agreed to explore a solution founded on the principles of internal self-determination in areas of historic habitation of the Tamil speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka.

¹² JHU dissident Ratnaseeha Thera had resigned his parliamentary seat, but filed a case in the Colombo District Court alleging that he had been forced to resign and the court had issued an interim order preventing anyone taking his place until its final decision. In the circumstances, UPFA strongly objected to Dayaratna Thera taking oaths as an MP, but the Speaker said that he had not received the court order.

India's *Economic Times* quotes Anton Balasingham's statement last year in London that the LTTE is wary of three women - Chandrika Kumaratunge, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha and Sonia Gandhi - and has called for review of Ms Gandhi's security arrangements.¹³

On 14 May 2004, India extended the ban on the LTTE under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for a further two years, on grounds that the Tigers' continued violent and disruptive activities are prejudicial to the integrity and sovereignty of India.¹⁴ Some press reports have suggested that Mr Kadirgamar had requested India to demand the extradition of LTTE leader V Prabhakaran over the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, in order to pressurize the LTTE to resume peace talks with the Sri Lankan government.¹⁵ The Indian High Commission in Colombo has denied Sri Lankan newspaper reports that India has demanded the extradition. The Indian Home Ministry extended the term of the Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) by one year on 31 May. The MDMA was established in 1998, following recommendations of the Jain Commission, to continue probing the conspiracy behind the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.¹⁶

Some Tamil observers have expressed concern over the appointment of former High Commissioner to Sri Lanka JN Dixit as National Security Advisor in New Delhi. They blame Mr Dixit for treating the Sri Lankan Tamil community with contempt during his term as High Commissioner, thereby jeopardising the entire peace process in which India was a prominent player at the time.

After discussions with Sri Lankan Foreign minister Kadirgamar on 31 May, Indian External Affairs minister Natwar Singh said that India is committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka in a federal system. India will take forward defence co-operation with Sri Lanka and a Defence Co-operation Agreement (DCA) would be signed by the two countries. Mr Singh said that India could play a role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the island's war-torn areas. Responding to Indian High Commissioner Nirupam Sen's¹⁷ statement that India would be willing to undertake reconstruction activities in the north-east, SP Thamichelvan said that the LTTE would provide unconditional support for India's genuine efforts even in areas under Tiger control.

Tokyo principles reaffirmed

The Co-chairs¹⁸ of the Tokyo donor conference met in Brussels on 1 June 2004 to discuss support for the peace process. In a statement afterward they pointed out that in a world of competing crises, and with so many demands on donors, donor attention and funding might go elsewhere unless there is rapid resumption and progress in the

¹³ *The Economic Times*, 17 May 2004

¹⁴ The LTTE was outlawed in India on 14 May 1992. This followed the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister and Sonia Gandhi's husband, Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May 1991. The US extended its ban on the LTTE on 3 October 2003 under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.

¹⁵ *The Telegraph* (Indian newspaper), 17 May 2004

¹⁶ The Jain Commission was set-up on 23 August 1991 to investigate the conspiracy behind the Rajiv assassination.

¹⁷ Ms Nirupama Rao, the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, was appointed on 7 July as High Commissioner to Sri Lanka to succeed Nirupam Sen.

¹⁸ The Co-chairs are the European Union, Japan, Norway and the United States.

peace process. They stressed that the peace process and the development process are mutually reinforcing and inter-linked as agreed in the Tokyo conference, and as such there should be no drift and no delay in resuming and taking forward the peace process. The Co-chairs called on donors to stand ready to accelerate the implementation of their Tokyo pledges once properly prepared peace talks have resumed.

In late May, European Commission spokesperson Emma Udwin said that the EU would press for talks to resume where they left off in April 2003. This and the emphasis of the Co-chairs that there should be no drift in the peace process stem from fears that the JVP and other elements within the UPFA government may demand for the discussions to move away from their original framework principle of setting up a power-sharing body in the north-east.

Benefits of peace

Local NGOs have continued to complain that the benefits of the major rehabilitation projects in the north-east are not reaching the population. The LTTE have called on international organisations engaged in rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the north-east to deal with them directly rather than through government agencies. But Some experts blame the LTTE, the donors and the Sri Lankan government for the problems of economic dividends of peace reaching ordinary people. The donor assumption that conflicts are generally similar and the preference of large-scale infrastructure projects have led to neglect of much-needed small-scale livelihood packages. There is also marginalization of local knowledge and local experience.

The government is blamed for procedural delays in tenders for contracts in the north-east and bureaucratic delays in line ministries. The LTTE's institutional structures such as the judicial system, police and public administration are not favourably disposed towards business activities. In addition, the pass system, the taxes and child recruitment are major impediments for business development. These experts also say that the LTTE has made little effort to woo entrepreneurs who fled the LTTE-controlled areas and expatriate Tamils who are accustomed to a new way of life including freedom of thought, expression and movement.¹⁹

As the north-east observed Landmine Awareness Week declared by the UNICEF from 21 June, fourteen vehicles belonging to the Halo Trust were smashed and burned by a gang of around 20 people in Jaffna town on 24 June. All members of the gang were masked. They also attacked four security officers, seriously wounding one of them. Halo Trust is a British agency, involved in landmine removal projects in Jaffna since June 2002. It employs over 135 de-miners and is funded by the European Union. Police say six former employees of the Trust have been arrested.

Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu

As World Refugee Day was observed on 20 June, news reached Sri Lanka that more than 20 refugees died when their boat capsized in rough seas in the Palk Strait between India and Sri Lanka. Five bodies washed ashore in Pesalai on Mannar Island

¹⁹ *Economic dividend of the post-war period in Sri Lanka: Problems and prospects* - Saman Kelegama, Institute of Policy Studies, Colombo - June 2004

and Neduntivu Island, west of the Jaffna peninsula. Sri Lankan government officers say that smugglers may be using the refugees. A huge amount of goods brought by refugees without proper documentation has been confiscated by customs officers. A *hartal* (general strike) was observed at Pesalai in Talaimannar on 22 June protesting the death of refugees and refugees being used by smugglers.

According to UNHCR, 9,793 refugees have returned from India up to 20 June 2004 since the ceasefire in February 2002. There may be others whose returns are not recorded by the Mannar government secretariat. Many of them have used unsafe boats to cross the Palk Strait in hazardous conditions. While expressing concern over the dangerous mode of travel, UNHCR also says that conditions in Sri Lanka are not yet conducive for return of refugees from India.

The Sri Lankan Navy arrested 47 refugees returning in boats on 13 May and 26 more on 23 June. They were produced before the Mannar Magistrate and later released. The refugees said that they had not enough money to travel by plane and had paid Rs 5,000 each to the boatmen.

The Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) has opened offices in Colombo and Vavuniya to assist refugees returning from Tamil Nadu. OfERR has been the main agency assisting Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu since 1984. According to OfERR, there are currently 140,000 refugees in the southern Indian state and 65,000 of them are sheltered in 116 camps run by the Tamil Nadu government.

Violence against Plantation Tamils

Hill Country organisations have expressed concern over continuing violence against the Plantation Tamils. Up-Country People's Front's (UPF) Administrative Secretary S Arulsamy says that since the UPFA came to power, Plantation Tamil workers have been attacked in many areas including Kandapola, Kalutara, Bulathsinhala, Ingiriya, Matugama and Hatton. The voting pattern in the April 2004 elections indicated that the Plantation Tamils largely supported the UNF and they are being targeted for collective punishment. Mr Arulsamy alleges that these have been planned and has called on President Chandrika to take immediate measures to identify those behind the attacks.

A Sinhalese gang entered Millakande Estate at Bulathsinhala in Kalutara District on 30 May and launched an attack on the workers and their line-room accommodation. Ten line-rooms and two shops were burned and over 100 line-rooms were damaged. Ten people, including regional councillor (*Pradeshiya Sabha*) Ponniah Ramalingam, were seriously wounded and admitted to Horana hospital. The gang entered the hospital and attacked them again, causing further injuries. The doctor who was treating them was also assaulted. Later, the ten injured people were transferred to Kalutara and Negoda hospitals. Estate workers say that the attack was led by a Buddhist monk. They also say that the police arrived in 15 minutes, but did not intervene to stop the attack.

More complications

As predicted by analysts, the political situation has become more complicated since elections in April. The government is unable to establish a majority in Parliament or take the peace process forward. The LTTE has taken an entrenched position insisting on the establishment of an interim administration. All attempts by the Norwegians to rekindle the peace process have so far proved futile. There is fear following the suicide attack in Colombo that a return to war is a possibility.

The London-based *Economist Intelligence Unit* says as follows regarding the situation:

"...Mrs Kumaratunge campaigned partly on a platform of taking a harder line in negotiations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, Tamil Tigers), than did the UNP, although she has begun to backtrack. Nevertheless, her negative platform with regard to the LTTE, coupled with the fact that the JVP in particular has in the past criticised the peace process, means that the risk of the process resulting in failure remains high.

The JVP....is a hardline Marxist party that opposes any form of political devolution for Tamils....Although it (Jathika Hela Urumaya) has similar views towards the LTTE to those of the JVP - it opposes political compromise with the Tigers - it has stated that it will neither support the new government nor nay attempts to bring it down. As a result, a prolonged political impasse is possible, with no grouping able to gain a majority in parliament."

**Sri Lanka Project
International Section
Refugee Council
240-250 Ferndale Road
London SW9 8BB**

**Contact: Vije
Tel: 020 7820 3100
Fax: 020 7840 4388
e-mail: slproject@refugeecouncil.org.uk**