

LANKA

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Why there's sound of laughter in this rustic tobacco barn....

There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

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Briefly . . .

Unit Trust for Janasaviya

Janasaviya recipients were given Rs 1000 to Rs 5000 units by the Ceybank Unit Trust in a new scheme launched on March 25. Recipients were selected from 30 areas where the Janasaviya poverty alleviation program operates.

The distribution of units was "a means to take the share owning democracy to the grass roots level", a Ceybank Unit Trust spokesman said. The Ceybank Unit Trust is managed by Unit Trust Management Company Limited which is a joint venture between the Bank of Ceylon, Carson Cumberbatch, Merchant Bank of Sri Lanka, Unit Trust of India and Wardley Investment Services (Hong Kong) Limited.

Reason for delay

The Elections Commissioner's report on the 1989 General Election was delayed because election petitions and local government elections intervened, Commissioner Chandrananda de Silva said in a press release. The report was out only this month, and there was public criticism about the delay.

India protests

Sri Lankan High Commissioner (Ambassador) Neville Kanakarathne was summoned to the Foreign Office in Delhi to be told that India was "concerned" about continuing incidents involving Indian fishermen, their boats and the Sri Lanka Navy.

Loan delayed

Slow implementation of IMF conditions, especially privatisation of state ventures, was likely to delay the release of the second tranche of an IMF loan, sources in Colombo said. The first instalment of 75 million dollars from a 450 million dollar loan agreement was given last October.

Whole country an EPZ

President Premadasa told a meeting of the Export Development Council of Ministers that the whole of Sri Lanka would soon be an export promotion zone. Export promotion would no longer be limited to any geographical area. Any enterprise set up anywhere with 70 per cent or more of its production for export would enjoy the privileges of an EPZ, he said. The emphasis would be on agricultural exports, the President said.

BoC loses Rs 406 m.

The Bank of Ceylon has written off Rs 406 million as bad debts after lending without adequate security, the Auditor General has revealed in a report to parliament. Some borrowers did not pay back even a single instalment; these related to eight loans amounting to Rs 65.5 million.

The report said that Rs 288.3 million due from 44 persons had been given without any or adequate security. Loans amounting to Rs 697,878,524 given to 17 clients had been granted against weak securities. No action had been taken on the possible reco-

very of Rs 229.6 million by the sale of assets, the report said.

Tigers grab tank weapon

The LTTE captured a powerful anti-tank weapon from the army during operations in the North-East at Welioya. Twenty six soldiers were killed and sixty were wounded; two tanks were also captured.

Drought kills 75 per cent of crop

Officials estimated that 75 per cent of the Yala paddy crop would be ruined by the on going drought, the severest in recent times. About 3000 minor tanks have dried up.

Tea plantations are also facing a severe threat, about 45,000 acres could be doomed, officials said.

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The Earth Summit and Lanka: A Plea

Ravi Prasad Herath

Man, in his journey upon this planet earth, had one friend for all times. That is the environment. But today due to his own folly that friend — the environment stands devastated by man's own actions.

In order to meet man's basic needs this process has been carried out without rhyme or reason. Thus during the last decade, environmental data endemic to each country have been vandalized.

To avert this destruction or at least to stall the speed of the process, delegates of 115 countries are due to meet in Brazil in a few months, to reach a historic accord on environment.

The conference in Brazil would pose the delegates serious problems. Two of the major areas to be tackled would be to identify the harmful elements to environmental development emanating from the developed countries and to plan a lifestyle for the nations of the Third World in consonance with their traditions and cultures.

Realization, though late, has come about that the model plans of action introduced to Asian countries by the nations of the First World, have caused a serious depletion of environmental resources to serve the commercial interests of the industrial nations of the West. Teak forests of Burma and India's cedar and sal trees have been decimated to serve the needs of the rich nations. Indonesia has ravaged 1 million of hectares annually.

How has this unfortunate situation affected Sri Lanka? How responsible have the surveys been in this regard? The situ-

ation is a challenge which needs an honest answer.

Sri Lanka has secured its place in the list of poor nations as one other country that has carried out the directions and instructions received from the West faithfully.

Today our awareness of the socio-political forces is keen and more acute than previously. In this context the recent trends in these spheres indicate that a more realistic and a more national oriented policy towards the reconciliation of the conflicting interests becomes essential.

Let us for the time being defer questioning how long this planet earth would exist. Instead if we peep in to the composition of the animal kingdom upon earth, it could be revealing, according to the statistics of the scientists. According to them the earth is inhabited by 30 million species of animals of which a mere 1.4 million has been identified. The majority of them are resident in the tropical countries.

One result of the modern developmental process has been the destruction of animal life on earth at a speed of more than 10,000 times than it took for man's evolution. Mathematically the quantum of animal life destroyed is 20,000. Further examination reveals that as 18% of the world's animal kingdom is found in the tropical forests, **it would take only as short a period as 30 years to decimate the entire animal species if the presently available data remains static.**

Sri Lanka is a signatory to the accord on the protection of the earth. Thus it is a national responsibility. Hence wherever we are it devolves

on us as citizens of this country to help fulfil the provisions of the Accord.

Even 30 years after independence it is regrettably noted that a comprehensive forest resources conservation plan has not been undertaken with the same intensity of commitment that it deserves.

A short period though it is, when compared with the world's life span we cannot forget that the land space we occupy is comparatively small and that the plant life on that small space has diminished without any notice. Within a period of 25 years the forest cover of the island has been cleared of 30,000 acres for cultivation of economic crops.

In the circumstances, Sri Lankans have to endeavour to save nearly 3000 varieties of wild flowers, 450 types of reed (bamboo reed) and about 170 species of orchids, which speak for the very ancient history of this island home of ours.

During the past 10 years a group of young people truly interested in the conservation effort have been able to gather a large quantum of data and vital clues relating to the island's environmental resources. The members of this eco-group are school children who have pooled the money they receive for travel as well as pocket-expenses and have set up a fund to meet the expenses of their activity. These young enthusiasts have so far been able to collect 3000 photographs and slides, and over 1500 varieties of animal species and wild flowers complete with all their detailed information. Coord-

(Continued on page 6)

NEWS
BACKGROUND

PREMADASA

Pro and Con

Steve Coll

Two years ago, the night belonged to the death squads. Jittery teenage soldiers manned checkpoints around the capital, searching cars for revolutionaries. Jeeps filled with pro-government enforcers patrolled back roads, plucking suspected ultraleftists from their residences. At dawn, smoldering corpses appeared on highways, beaches and river banks.

Now the night belongs to the young, the hip, the promiscuous. Downtown dance clubs teem with European tourists and the Sri Lankan jet set. Youthful gay prostitutes called "beach boys" comb the coastline for clients under the eye of a police force whose officials worry about how to regulate the flesh trade without offending tourists holding hard currency.

The transformation of the security forces from brutal counterrevolutionaries into easy-going vice cops reflects a broad change in the Sri Lankan south, where a civil war that took tens of thousands of lives from 1988 to 1990 has yielded suddenly to calm and to economic growth. The stock market is rising, hotels are packed and businessmen are talking again about making their island nation Asia's next version of Singapore, the insular republic to the east viewed as a symbol of prosperity.

The architect of the still tentative peace is President Ranasinghe Premadasa, a political alchemist who reportedly hires sorcerers and astrologers to battle his parliamentary opponents, styles himself as an heir to ancient Buddhist kings and courts international bankers to invest in his accelerating program of capitalist revision.

Opinion about Mr. Premadasa, who was elected in December 1988, is sharply divided between

among Sri Lankans and Western nations that are pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into government coffers annually. Some say the price of his peace in the south has been too high, purchased at what critics describe as a steep cost in human-rights abuses, including the use of the death squads. Others see him as a timely, if quirky, savior.

Both camps wonder what sort of future he will bring to a country of 18 million that has known little but bloodshed and ethnic hatred for nine years.

Critics say that Mr. Premadasa is an egocentric authoritarian who holds democracy in disdain and was responsible for tens of thousands of extrajudicial killings while crushing the island's leftist uprising. They see him as brutal and prejudiced as he wages Sri Lanka's remaining war, in the far north, where his ethnic Sinhalese army is fighting a separatist Tamil guerrilla force.

In a recent, unsuccessful impeachment motion, eight members of Mr. Premadasa's United National Party accused him of being mentally infirm, proclaiming false miracles, wasting state funds on a gold throne, collaborating with enemies of the state and being "ignorant and selfish." They said that during the leadership fight, he hired sorcerers from southern India to cast evil spells on opponents.

Mr. Premadasa communicates through state news media, which devote themselves to chronicling his speeches and public appearances. He seems not to worry about his image overseas. Since becoming president, he has never left the island, reportedly on the advice of astrologers who predict he will die if he goes abroad.

Bradman Weerakoon, the president's admiring biographer, lists among Mr. Premadasa's formative influences the ancient Buddhist warrior-kings of the Sri Lankan Middle Ages as well as Margaret Thatcher, Britain's former prime minister.

Supporters say that while he may have his idiosyncracies, Mr. Premadasa is a genuine democratic populist and understands the political psychology of the island's Sinhalese majority, whose shifting attitudes and deep-seated prejudices have shaped independent Sri Lanka's history.

These Sri Lankans say Mr. Premadasa's acumen saved the country from a brutal Cambodian-style revolution led by the People's Liberation Front beginning in 1988.

The United States and other Western governments stood by Mr. Premadasa during his campaign to crush the Front. In fact, the Bush administration is proposing \$10 million in credits for military equipment. Now Washington wants him to clean up his rights record, and some say he has taken steps to do so. Reported disappearances of young Sri Lankans are declining, and Mr. Premadasa has agreed to carry out most recommendations by the human-rights group Amnesty International.

Much of the ambivalence toward the president appears to reflect an assessment that the evils he has confronted on the island were greater than the evils he may represent. "I think he was what Sri Lanka needed," said a Western diplomat who has followed and worked with Mr. Premadasa for several years. "I still detest him. But he may have been the right man at the right time."

— Washington Post Service

CORRESPONDENCE

Why mourn Soviet disappearance?

No one, including American President George Bush, would have imagined that the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) would be no more by the end of year 1991. The complete disintegration that occurred in the former Soviet Union stunned the whole world.

Even the opponents and rivals of the Soviet Union would have not wished the disappearance of this Country from the World Map. Instead they would have preferred a weaker, subservient Soviet Union which could be turned into their market.

When considering the magnitude of this event, mourners are few, nationally and internationally. Often their contributions are loaded with selfcontradictory logic and arguments as to why it happened in the Soviet Union the way it happened.

Trotsky's Views

Many, including the Trotskyites of various hues, try to say that it is because of Stalinism that Socialism failed in Soviet Union, and Soviet Union came to this dismal end.

They argue that if the Soviet Communist Party would have listened to the warnings of Leon Trotsky regarding bureaucracy etc. they could have avoided the Stalinist blunders and horrors.

But they stop with that. These brand of Trotskyites don't talk about Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution or about his attitude towards the peasantry anymore.

They should be reminded of a recent aphorism quoted in a Sri Lanka English Magazine. "Stalin was the greatest Trotskyite ever born". This statement is not complimentary to Trotsky.

Another kind of leftist interpreters put the blame 'on Gor-

batchev's weakness for the events that led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. For them Boris Yeltsin is the villain.

They forget that one Gorbachev, or one Yeltsin cannot make or mar history.

They put forward the view of the reforms initiated by Nikita Khrushchev were continued without interruption and interference Socialist Soviet Union could have been saved. For them, Gorbachev is an innocent but faithful disciple of Khrushchev, and was the last Russian Communist who attempted to save the Soviet Union from its demise.

It is quite puzzling as to why all these Marxist, Trotskyite and leftist interpreters, commentators and 'mourners' forget the ideological controversy that raged in the (Communist) world during the sixties of this century.

Ideological Controversy

This controversy or the ideological debate or the great polemics as it was called then started after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in which Khrushchev came out with his peaceful co-existence theory and attacks on Stalin.

Later, led by Mao Tse-Tung, the Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party an ideological offensive was launched on a world scale against the positions taken by the Soviet Communist Party.

Not only the question of the correct evaluation of the life and works of Stalin was discussed in the course of this debate, but myriad problems concerning the international Communist Movement were also discussed.

In this struggle between the 'genuine' marxist-leninists led by Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-Tung and the revisionists led by the Soviet

Communist Party the marxist-leninists concluded that Soviet Union was no more a Socialist Country and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was no more a Communist Party, it was revisionist party, a capitalist party.

Social Imperialism

The once Socialist Soviet Union thereby became a capitalist country. In other words, with the might it had, Soviet Union became an imperialist country like the United States of America.

In the sixties and seventies of the 20th century the two super-powers United States of America and Soviet Union contended for world supremacy.

The marxist-leninists used the term "Social-Imperialism" for Soviet Union. At times they even said that social-imperialism i.e. Soviet Union is a more dangerous enemy to the people of the world than the old United States' imperialism.

The fact that the post-Stalin Soviet Union developed into an imperialist country is effectively proved by its foreign policy actions.

If not in terms of imperialism how can one explain its invasions of countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland as well as Afghanistan?

If not in terms of imperialism how can one explain its 'master' attitude towards the (socialist) East European countries and Mongolia and its exploitation of these countries?

If not in terms of imperialism how can one explain the Brezhnev doctrine of specialisation for countries of the "socialist block" which in fact means that these countries should be forever dependent on Soviet Union for everything?

In this context, should the progressive mankind mourn the death of Soviet Union?

They should feel glad that one imperialism with socialist label is dead and the confusion it created to their detriment is no more.

V. Sinnathamby

Coconut and Heart diseases

An expatriate cardiac surgeon Dr. Tony Don Michael, the head of the American team of heart surgeons had told a press conference in Colombo that the "arteries of patients in Sri Lanka were narrower and cases were more complicated than in the States". (Sri Lanka News). He had also told "people to avoid heart disease was to avoid smoking, avoid coconut oil, eat more fish. Check cholesterol level and avoid heavy meals at night".

In U.S.A. and Canada people will not touch coconut oil or biscuits or other food products containing coconut oil. They will not touch coconut oil even with a ten feet pole. They have developed such aversion to coconut oil.

It is high time Sri Lanka should find a substitute oil especially for those who have cholesterol problems. Export of olive oil will bring in much wanted foreign exchange. In California olive growing is a multi million dollar industry supporting several thousands of small and large scale growers and their families and giving employment to several thousands of people. In spite of the large scale production of olives in California, olive oil is expensive and they have to import olive oil from other countries because of the large scale consumption. In the Supermarket a bottle of 32 FL. OZ (946 ml) Extra Virgin Olive oil (No Cholesterol) cost U.S.\$9.29 (Rs 390.18). People are health conscious and there are people who have the money to buy olive oil at this high price. Olives are also good to make pickles, sweet preserves, salads etc. The poonac is fed to animals.

Oil producing varieties of olive plants can be imported from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco

China etc. These countries are closer to home and air freight will not cost much. Perhaps Air Lanka will transport them free of charge.

Pakistan had introduced olive trees over 20 years ago. India may have done that too. Sri Lankan Government should import the oil producing varieties of olive plants and sell them at a subsidized price to farmers, planters etc. who are interested to plant them. Olive plants can be planted between tea bushes and coconut trees, in marginal lands where other trees or crops will find it difficult to grow. Olive trees contribute to soil conservation. Olive trees will grow very well in the Dry Zone (Vanni) areas. On 11th September 1991 I visited a 50 acre olive plantation in the desert (maximum 10 inches of rain per year) of Southern California. This olive plantation is making lots of money.

Do not wait for researches to be done by the Agricultural

Department (Research & Horticulture Division, Kandy) which did not even acknowledge my letter dated 20th March 1991 on the subject of Date Palms and Olive trees, polpala, gotu kola, karapincha and jasmine. Their research will take several years of delay, waste of time and money and narrowing of more human arteries. Use common sense as your guide. Import the olive plants and plant them and then take it from there. Research findings can be obtained from other countries, F.A.O. etc. Sri Lankan Government's help, support and encouragement are very important. Wish all the best for the olive growers in Sri Lanka. Your readers could write to me for more information etc. P.S: Please publish my address too so that any one interested could write to me.

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The Earth. . .

(Continued from page 3)

inating with 24 groups district based, over 90 forested areas have been visited during the last decade or so to gather true and real evidence of the islands eco-system — on which effort nearly Rs. 800,000 had to be expended.

This heritage of Lanka, if presented at the world environmental conference to be held in the first half of this year, is sure to give us the satisfaction of having been partners in an endeavour to put on display the magnificent and proud history that this country possesses.

The membership of this group consists mainly of girls from the rural areas of Lanka. The raw material for this environmental conservation card project

is the flower offerings removed from the temple altar. True they earn a pittance from this activity.

While the tendency of the natural law is to allow the wretched of the earth to remain marginalized, their labour is utilized to sustain national needs and aspirations. We have grasped the truth of the moment. Yet the entire membership is an unemployed workforce, numbering nearly 16,000 girls and boys of Sri Lanka's rural backwoods, clamouring for the sons of the soil, wherever they may be to help exhibit this completed task before the nation states of the world.

If this were to happen, we really would be helping the magnificent beauty of our wild-life to be unraveled before the eyes of the world.

JVP & LTTE

V. I. S. Jeyapalan

Two major armed conflicts have taken place in the south in this century other than the anti tamil communal riots. The first such conflict was the JVP insurrection in 1971. The period of active conflict lasted in some places for a few weeks after April 5, 1971. During this period insurrectionists attacked 92 police stations and established control over 35 police areas. They also took and held the famous Singharaja forest in the wet zone and Ritigala strict natural reserve in the dry zone. Because of the direct confrontation in some jungle areas aerial bombardments also took place as a part of the anti insurgent activities of the security forces.

This all lasted only for a few weeks. JVP was not regrouped to change its insurrection strategy and start a guerilla war. The first insurgency of JVP had not much impact on the environment other than that they made some jungle areas as the centre of conflicts. In some places armed forces bombed the jungles.

In the second insurgency of JVP/DJV the active period of conflicts which started with the reimposition of state of emergency on June 20, 1989, lasted several months up to the beginning of 1990. But very few direct armed confrontations with the security forces were reported, including a few ambushes and land mine operations.

The major part of the dirty war was carried out by killing individuals, political opponents, security personnel and their family members. JVP/DJV may be expected to get some support among security forces on the anti Indian line. This never happened partly because of the

(The author a Sri Lanka Tamil activist now works in OSLO)

JVP/DJV killings of the families of the security personnel and the active anti Indian approach of the country's new president Premadasa and the partial withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF).

The Government started a dirty war type of counter insurgency activities without facing any noticeable guerilla offensive from JVP/DJV. They have militarily but not politically contained JVP/DJV activities by the beginning of 1990.

Information reports including a NORAD sponsored environmental study of Hambantota district edited by Michael McCall noted the awareness of the JVP cadres on matters of environmental concern. "In environmental matters the JVP was probably more significant (as well as having enormous influence in rural Hambantota) because it took up several important ecological issues, including timber cutting and straying cattle and sand removal, although its enforcement methods were quite savage." (Environmental study of Hambantota district.)

JVP's concern about land use pattern in the upcountry tea areas is also noteworthy. They are not in favour of tea plantations which dominate the hill country. They forcibly occupied some of the lands belonging to plantations and they also burned down several tea areas. Foreign agricultural companies involved in bigscale farming in Moneragala and Mahaweli areas also became the possible targets of JVP.

JVP's concern for the environment can be understood. All over the world most insurgents and guerilla movements have the natural instinct of preserving the jungle bases of their clandestine activities. Stopping logging and similar activities also

means a way of stopping outward information flow from their areas. Together with this they also developed a concern about the longstanding problems of the rural poor and forest farmer population. This also includes some relevant readings.

JVP and DJV utilized anti Tamil and anti Indian sentiments of the Sinhalese masses as the centre of their struggle in order to convert it to a broader liberation struggle (against the presence of Indian forces and the Tamil militants) as a short way to social hegemony. But the basic concern of the JVP on social and regional inequalities highlighted in the 1971 insurrection also remained as a part of their politics in a little way.

The terror and dirty war used by JVP/DJV and by the security forces to annihilate each other and to create an environment of intimidation to make the population obedient also have an impact on the environment. JVP/DJV started it with large scale killings of political opponents, security forces and their family members including children. The Government answered with counter killings of youths with suspected background or in suspected areas in a mass way.

Sinhalese geography has been sown with the charred bodies of the youths. Bodies of the murdered youths were thrown in the water bodies and rivers on which most of the surrounding villages depend for their day to day utilization of water. Bodies were thrown in the sea. At least some people known to me stopped eating fish for some time. People were horrified by the occurrences. Breakdown of normal life and rule of law affected every avenue of socio economic life of the people.

The areas of the conflicts in early 1971 and late 1980's are the most degraded part of the Sinhalese geography. A map of degradation of the environment in Sinhalese areas will coincide with the map of the above insurgencies. The land degraded by the century old practices of slash and burn and other forms of land extensive agricultural practices coupled with extensive cattle grazing, overlapped by destroyed jungle and destabilized beaches are the areas of the socially penalized rural poor. They have not been abducted and murdered and dumped into the sea. They still exist as the hotbed of the next insurgency. No military strategy can destroy it. In fact the then Government started mechanized logging of Sinharaja (the largest rain forest of Sri Lanka which was the base of the 1971 JVP insurrection) after the insurrection. This was abandoned in 1971 after mounting protests of scientists and NGO's.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF COMMUNAL POLITICS AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA

Communalism and environment

Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts are basically a manifestation of ethnic competition for land resources and power. The parliamentary and non-violent agitation of the tamils for regional autonomy commenced in 1949. From the beginning the environment of the north and east provinces became the important victim of the ethnic conflicts.

Tamils have a geographic contiguity in the north and east provinces. They consider this region as their traditional home land. The then Singalese government, led by D. S. Senanayake wanted to counter Tamil agitation for federalism by destroying the basis of federalism — the geographic contiguity of Tamils. He promoted the theory and practise of state aided colonization in the north and east

provinces as an answer to the federal demand. He also believed that those who control Trincomalee control Sri Lanka.

This was the theoretical background of state sponsored Sinhala colonization in Tamil dominated areas. The natural jungle that existed as a buffer between the Sinhalese dominated south west and the Tamil dominated north east provinces became the first casualty. Tamils also started counter colonization and ad hoc settlements in the north and east provinces in the name of defending the mother land. Such settlements of the Tamils was not much successful in the east. But in the north Tamil national movements were able to push the poor landless section of the population of Jaffna peninsula to the Vanni district.

In the history of environmental degradation of Sri Lanka the 1950's and -60's was a very important period because of the intensification of competition to establish Sinhalese and Tamil settlements in the north east provinces.

State aided Sinhalese colonization completely changed the ethnic character of the eastern province.

Changing ethnic ratio in the region of Batticaloa and Amparai district (old Batticaloa district):

Ethnic group	1901	1953	1963	1981
Sinhalese	5.22	11.46	16.85	21.81
Tamils	55.13	47.98	46.36	43.44
Muslims	37.33	38.80	35.24	33.45

Similar changes have taken place in Trincomalee district too.

The old Batticaloa and Trincomalee district (present Batticaloa and Amparai district) was devastated by the indiscriminate destruction of the environment by ad hoc settlements of Sinhalese. This created the first communal violence at a local level in the old Batticaloa district in mid 1956. Sinhalese labourers and would be settlers of the Gal Oya irrigation settlement

project and Tamil villagers were involved in these first communal riots.

Fight for the environment and land resources by the Tamil farmers of eastern province, and the fight of the Jaffna Tamil middle class for the professional, commercial and other economic avenues and opportunites and for power sharing coincided with, and motivated the growth of, broader Tamil nationalism. 40 years of struggle for equality and devolution of power on regional grounds consolidated the unity of the Tamils.

In the early periods Tamils and Tamil speaking Muslims found a common cause against the Sinhalese colonization in the eastern province. Then the Government started to manipulate the Muslim leadership of the east with the help of the southern Muslim leadership and successfully created a rift. This made the division of the old Batticaloa district in 1961 possible. The old Batticaloa district was divided to create Amparai district in order to carve the hinterlands, jungles and the Muslim dominated southern part of the district away from Tamil dominated areas. This complicated the situation and intensified the conflicts by reducing the carrying capacity of the Tamil and Muslim dominated coastal areas of the east. This was the beginning of the Tamil

Muslim clashes in the east as the result of the cut throat competition between Tamils and Muslims for the left-out resources in the degraded eastern coastal strip. This has given a new dimension to the ethnic problems.

The ethnic situation became tense due to these developments and the continuous refusal of the Sinhalese government of any sort of devolution of power.

Since 1977 local and nationwide communal riots with the involvement of the Sinhalese security forces became frequent. All the Sinhalese versus Tamil communal riots ended up with mass displacement of Sri Lanka and Indian Tamils. This was followed by voluntary encroachments, extensive clearance of jungle and vegetation in crown lands. This was carried out by individuals and NGO's to start ad hoc refugee re-settlements. In many places in Vanni district poor sections of the refugees who have nothing other than their labour, started felling and selling fire wood whenever they found no other work. This caused further destruction of the environment.

SOME MILITARY ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE NORTH AND EAST PROVINCES

Among the 8 districts of the north and east provinces, Jaffna — apart from a brief period during the IPKF presence — has functioned as the main base area of the Tamil militants. During the IPKF presence the Vanni jungle became the main base area of the LTTE. Tamil militant movements never established similar liberated zones like less administered areas in the eastern province, even though they have established their strong presence in the less urban and the jungle clad peripheries of the east.

The entire north east provinces are situated in the dry zone. More than 80% of the Sri Lankan jungles are also in the dry zone areas. Almost all of this dry zone jungle overlaps the ethnic borders and nearly half of it lies within Tamil dominated areas. This has enabled the Tamil militants to utilize the jungle in the Tamil areas and successfully extend their activities in most of the dry zone jungles in Sinhalese areas. These jungles also extend very close to the sea outlets to Tamil Nadu.

The eastern province is a very narrow coastal strip with a concentration of entire Tamil

and Muslim populations close to the coast and the Sinhalese colonizations in some areas in the western peripheries. Sandwiched between Sinhalese areas and the sea, the eastern province created several challenges to the Tamil militants. These problems were also intensified by the environmentally degraded nature of the Batticaloa district and by the diversity of the ethnic geography.

The few geographic advantages Tamil militants have is the less developed and peripheral nature of the adjoining Sinhalese areas, peripheral jungles and the hindrance of the free movements from urbanized coastal areas to the interior caused by the numerous lagoons, water bodies and river systems and streams.

The military geography of Jaffna peninsula is very peculiar. Jaffna peninsula has no jungle cover. But the geography is extensively diversified with vast urbanized tracts of red soil areas, jungle like clusters of concrete buildings with dense homestead agro forestry, palmyrah groves together with open valleys with paddy fields and depressions, ending up with lagoons, extensive sand dunes and coastal strips. Close proximity of the Jaffna beaches to Tamil Nadu with many mechanized fishing boats and skilled sailors also adds to the strategic nature of the peninsula. Jaffna peninsula also has densely populated areas with a wider middle class to support and finance the ethnic war. This is the base of the prolonged Sri Lanka ethnic conflict.

LTTE'S NEW APPROACH CHANGING ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH OF THE TAMIL MILITANT MOVEMENTS — 1983-1987

Since the beginning in the 1920's, environmental consciousness was absent from populist politics of Sinhalese and Tamil nationalist elements. Most of them believed land settlements in the jungle areas was a wonderful medicine to cure all

the social and economical ailments of the population. Tamil militants also wrongly inherited some of these ideas.

In the early 1980's almost all the Tamil militant leadership invited Indian Tamils of plantation areas to settle in the north and east provinces as a way to solve their problems of statelessness, landlessness and ethnic discrimination. With farsightedness Indian Tamil leadership refused to accept this call.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's individual Tamil rebels started to organize themselves into militant movements. Most of the cadres of the militant groups in the beginning came from Jaffna peninsula. They came in contact with jungle areas in the late 1970's. They have established farms and small camps, mainly for the purpose of training and absconding.

They came to jungles without the familiarity and knowledge of ecological factors involved. Many of them at that time had not developed the awareness of how to make sustainable use of jungle resources to achieve their goal.

After the 1983 riots militant movements emerged as a force in the north and east provinces. They also started to collect taxes from illicit timber fellers as a means of raising funds for their activities. Later some of them got involved directly in timber business. This was the time when the flow and circulation of money in Jaffna district increased by the 1970's boom in cash crop agriculture and the 1980's boom of remittances sent by people who had migrated to the developed west. This skyrocketed the demand for and the price of timber as building material and raw material for furniture in the Jaffna peninsula.

In the early 1980's discussions about the abuses of the jungle environment of Vanni district started mainly among some Jaffna university students. Most of them were sympathizers of various militant movements. Their awareness about environmental pro-

blems was partly created by their university background.

Orientation courses together with the main studies in botany and geography at the University of Jaffna provides lectures on environmental problems. Literature on the activities of the green movements in the west were also available in the university library. These circumstances also helped some students to realize the gravity of the problems. This awareness also influenced advanced cadres of some militant movements in the mid 1980's. Some of those students also later became the intelligentsia of various movements.

Some militant movements responded to this with the enforcement of heavy fines on timber transport, while some other militant movements were still involved in logging, transporting and marketing of timber in a big way.

In the beginning a few pamphlets including a pamphlet released by EROS expressing concern about the environmental abuses, appeared. Later in 1986 LTTE started a poster campaign about protection of jungles and trees.

But most of these developments took place in the comparatively rich north where militant movements have various other avenues of raising funds. This did not affect the poor eastern front for a very long time. Stress on eastern province environment and jungle, which was devastated by state aided Sinhala colonizations, frequent droughts, flooding and by two major cyclones in 1964 and 1978, was heavy during this time.

In the early second half of the 1980's, by physical elimination of TELO in 1986 and the effective enforcement of banning of other militant groups (with EROS as the only exception) in 1987, LTTE gained monopoly over the land and resources including strategic coastal areas and jungles in most parts of

the northern province. In the east also they established partial control.

It is interesting to note that one of the reasons given by LTTE to justify the brutal elimination of TELO cadres was environmental. They accused them of destroying the environment and Tamil Eelam (in the north and east provinces) by logging and marketing of timber from the Vanni jungle.

During the mid 1980's LTTE started to grow into a full-fledged guerilla movement. Their jungle use also qualitatively and quantitatively increased. LTTE developed guerilla bases in the eastern province. But until the development of conflicts with the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) started in October 1987, Jaffna peninsula continued to be the centre of civil and military activities of the LTTE.

With the increase of the guerilla activities based in the jungles, the militants became more and more possessive of the jungle. They had to stop others from freely entering the jungle to fell timber or collect firewood in order to prevent leakages of information.

This is the initial response of the guerillas to the environment. Later they started to understand the vulnerability of the environment and the necessity of protecting it. This was the case of the LTTE northern division also. They started to respond to the nature and jungle environment in the mid 1980's. By arresting timber smugglers and confiscating motor vehicles used by them, they started to crack down on the network of illicit timber fellers.

The presence of militants in the jungle has serious consequences for the wildlife. During the summer militants live close to water holes which are basic for the survival of wildlife. Part of the grazing ground of the wildlife is also taken by militants for their activities. Above all militants also partially depend on the wildlife for food and animal protein. Some

of the wildlife militants used to eat are endangered species.

Some trees and plants such as aricanut, coconut and banana are traditionally used wholly or partly for street and house decoration purposes. This habit of home gardens has been followed by the militants on the coast. Deaths and victories are celebrated with extensive street decorations. Sometimes it extends throughout the north and east provinces. There is also a growing concern about this custom of green decorations.

With the IPKF take-over of Jaffna town, LTTE was forced to withdraw its headquarters to the Vanni jungles. For nearly 2 Years they were forced to live in jungle. This gave them growing familiarity with the jungle environment.

During the brief peace before the outbreak of Eelam war II, LTTE had taken some steps to protect the environment. Their woman's front declared mangrove forest areas of the Jaffna lagoon as protected bird sanctuary. LTTE also controlled over felling of trees in the homestead gardens and other agroforestry. According to a news item that appeared in **The Island** on June 11, 1990, they have totally banned felling of palmyrah had margosa trees in the northern islands. They have first implemented condition on felling of trees in homestead gardens and agroforestry by forcing people to plant double the number of trees before applying for a permit to fell trees. Then they have imposed a total ban in some areas like islands where the environmental degradation is very high.

The IPKF/LTTE wars, the exception of the very early period, mainly took place in Vanni, Trincomale, Batticaloa and Amparai district. IPKF also used carpet bombing and systematic shelling in the centres of the dense forests. In some places jungle areas were burned. In this period only LTTE mastered the jungle. Later when they came to an agreement with the Sri Lanka

government, they were also allowed to use the Sinhalese side of the dry zone jungle to stage war and destabilize IPKF and their supporters such as EPRLF and TNA, the paramilitary collectively formed by the anti LTTE fractions of Tamil militant movements.

This period the war extended from the Tamil side to the Sinhalese side of the dry zone jungles. The main battles between TNA and LTTE took place in the depths of Yala National Park. This time LTTE also consolidated in Wilpattu National Park in the north western province. During this time they also developed to control and extended their activities in most parts of the dry zone jungle, even in Sinhalese dominated areas. This extended the Eelam war II to the entire dry zone jungle areas of Sri Lanka.

Environmental concern of the Tamil militants and the Sinhalese security forces, seems to be limited by ethnic boundaries. News about environmental abuses by Tamil militants in Yala National Park appeared in news media in the last week of May, 1990. The news appeared in the Island on May 23, 1990, which described it as follows: "The elephant found dead as it posed a danger to illicit fellers of trees for timbers... around 200 cart loads of timber has been transported regularly... bulldozers have been used in logging operation." According to the press "large herds of deer, sambhur and wild buffaloes were dwindling. These could have been slaughtered by armed youths."

The communal approach to nature and environment is a serious defect in the approach of the Tamil militants and then Sri Lanka security personnel.

Pressure of the Tamil militant activities on the environment of the coastal region is very high since the mid 1980's. With the only exception of the Puttalam lagoon, most of the rich, uninhabited mangrove areas of Sri Lanka are in the lagoon rich coastal area of the north and east

provinces. After destruction took place through the century old human activities, the richness of coastal environment, such as beaches, sanddunes and mangroves exist without much destabilization only in remote areas lacking easy access.

When sea-based Tamil militant activities increased they naturally selected these remote coasts for their clandestine sea based activities. This extension of intensive human activities caused problems to the richest part of the coastal environment. In the name of anti guerilla activities security forces also devastated this area with shelling and aerial bombing.

Similar development also took place in the interior land of the north and east provinces. These provinces have a rich part of the dry zone jungles of Sri Lanka. Both guerilla activities of Tamil militants and anti guerilla activities of the security forces have increased since the mid 1980's. During the IPKF presence the LTTE main body withdrew to the jungle and both LTTE and IPKF's war efforts intensified in the jungle.

The main part of the Eelam war II also took place in the dry zone jungle, both inside and outside the north east provinces. The notable development is increasing control and war activities of the Tamil militants in the dry zone jungles of adjoining Sinhalese areas.

According to the 96th annual report for 1989 by Wildlife and nature protection society, presented on May 18, "Willpattu National Park remains closed for the third year now, and Yala Blocks III and IV remain inaccessible. Only Yala Block I continues to provide facilities for visitation and observation."

Willpattu Bungalow had no occupation as the park was closed and remains inaccessible to visitors. Although the Palatupana (Yala) bungalow had remained accessible till May 1989, the situation had deteriorated in June and July last year. Both these two national parks affect-

ted by the Eelam war II were mostly situated outside the north and east provinces.

Other serious environmental problems caused by the conflict are the outcome of the hostilities between LTTE and Muslim extremists and home guards collaborating with security forces. Muslim and Tamil civilians became the targets. These conflicts caused much of the Muslim and Tamil displacements in the northern province. Eastern displacement caused high stress on the coastal environment. Most of the northern Muslims forced by the Tamil militants to vacate their traditional villages are displaced to the areas around Puttalam lagoon, the one in the area which is supporting the richest coastal environment, including the largest mangrove forest in Sri Lanka.

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DEBT

Making 3rd World Impotent

Sisira Wijesinghe

OSLO

Speaking at the 90th Nobel peace prize anniversary symposium here, Dr. George, associate director of the Amsterdam institute, said that IMF and World Bank initiated debt and structural adjustment programmes in the developing world have deprived Third World nations of most state functions, except the maintenance of public order.

These programmes, she added, have led to a net transfer of capital from South to North, instead of a reduction of the debt. In fact, the overall debt burden increased and caused environmental destruction, unemployment, drug traffic and increased emigration to creditor nations.

'As long as banks which have indirectly benefited from billions in tax payers' money are not affected, they will still continue to receive huge interest payments from Third World debtors,' she said.

'Indeed the attention of many analysts is only drawn to Third World debt in so far as it might affect the global financial stability. The proof is that Latin American leaders no longer now even gather to demand a reduction of their debt burden, which was once an annual rhetorical ritual in those countries'.

Meanwhile, the banks themselves have been 'wildly over-compensated' for their ill-advised lending, she argued. Since the mid-1980s the banks have avoided paying \$40 billion to \$50 billion in taxes by creating 'reserves' for expected losses on their outstanding credits to less developed countries.

* Sisira Wijesinghe is a correspondent for the Inter Press Service with whose permission this article is reprinted.

As a result of the Third World debt crisis, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are the most powerful political agencies in the world, and are not accountable to anyone, according to Dr. Susan George of the Netherlands-based Transnational Institute.

But 'during a nine-year period (1981-1990) debt service received by these banks amounted to well over \$700 billion,' George added.

The 'most powerful monetary giants' have pressed many Third World nations to devalue their currencies when they ran into debt problems, and to export raw materials regardless of plummeting world market prices.

The public sector bureaucracies were reduced, thousands of civil servants rendered jobless, creating unemployment in the private sector as well, while social budgets for health, education, housing and transport were slashed.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has pointed out that half a million children die each year as a direct result of the debt crisis, she said.

Debtor nations 'pay back their debt in ruined livelihoods and lost lives while the elites are sheltered abroad in dollars' marks or francs. Those with foreign bank accounts automatically become rich at home,, said George.

Indebted Third World governments devote 25-60% of their export revenues to debt service and are simultaneously directed to devalue their currency. 'The only traditional function (the banks) allow the local government to remain in charge of

its maintaining internal social control and public order.'

'Over the past decade, both IMF and the World Bank have assumed dramatically expanded roles, especially in the policy and decision making process of the recipient as a result of the debt crisis.'

'Some Third World governments after learning which side their bread is buttered on have almost stopped trying to obtain more. We now live in a world where the IMF and the World Bank, acting as surrogates for the major creditors, have become the planet's most powerful political agencies,' she emphasised.

Solving the debt crisis means a vital step to making the daily lives of millions of potential migrants worth staying at home for, she said.

'Usually in warfare, one has the choice between fighting and surrender. But in this war, no white flags can be flown because the option to surrender does not exist.'

But if the north continues for another decade, allowing debt to wage undeclared war on the planet, in the year 2000, the 18-year-olds will have known nothing but poverty,

(Continued on page 20)

Panaceas and public opinion

Sham Lal

Even as it strives hard to sell the image of a market-oriented Indian economy abroad, the government has to strain every nerve to sustain its own image at home. It wants to convince the foreign investor that it has the will to make the new policy stick — this is what the Prime Minister means when he says time and again that there is to be no going back on it — and take such follow-up action as may be necessary to make it work. At the same time it is anxious to assure the public of its determination to keep in check the twin dangers of inflation and unemployment which often accompany a transition to a free economy.

It is idle to pretend that the two jobs can be done with equal facility. The question whether the new policy marks a sharp break with the past or only a new stage in an evolutionary process, as Narasimha Rao will have it, is a mere quibbling about words. The real problem for the government is that the measures needed to win the confidence of the foreign investor and the decisions required to allay the fears of the public are at times difficult to reconcile.

The tensions resulting from the contradictory pressures on policy-making show themselves in many ways — in murmurs of dissent in the ruling party, in the government's extreme caution in handling such explosive issues as food subsidies and exit policy and in the alacrity with which it takes one step backward after it has taken two steps forward and finds that the ground under its feet has grown slippery.

A policy of half-measures and uneasy compromises is naturally distasteful to those who are

wholly opposed to the new course or feel that it is not being pursued energetically enough. They have one decisive advantage over the government since they are obliged neither to choose between hard options nor to mobilise sufficient support, both inside and outside the legislature, and thus secure the necessary democratic sanction for what they do. That is why they can indulge in the intellectual luxury of an all-or-nothing approach.

This is not to argue that the government is on the right track or that it somehow manages to strike the right balance whenever its thinking is subjected to contrary pulls.

It is more to emphasise what is all too obvious: that the new policy cannot be carried out in the absence of a national consensus. Whatever the differences of opinion on its propriety, there is no doubt that it can be easily thrown off course by the obstructionist tactics of any well-organised group. Any increase in political turbulence in the present situation can indeed wreck any policy designed to pull the economy out of the morass in which it is stuck today.

What has saved the situation so far is precisely the fact that the overall reaction to the new course has been pretty subdued.

To some extent this is perhaps the result of the low profile cultivated by Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh both of whom make it a point not to provoke or antagonise those who differ from them. But partly it is also due to a growing realisation in the country that there is no painless way of mastering a crisis created by too heavy a debt burden and too unmanageable budgetary and balance

of payments deficits and that, whatever the risks involved in the new course, political instability can only add to these. Among other factors, the new scenario in Russia and Eastern Europe and world-wide scramble for foreign capital have had a sobering impact on the public mood.

This does not mean that the political truce which has prevailed so far can be taken for granted. The hardships suffered by millions of poor and lower middle class families because of the steep increase in the costs of living and the fear of lay-offs which haunts workers in obsolescent plants are a standing invitation to opposition parties to cash in on the growing reservoir of popular discontent. The old ideological hang-ups and the painful business of having to shed old illusions make it particularly hard for the Left groups to reject this invitation. That is why they are so anxious to register their protest against the new policy.

Whether they will go so far as to create widespread industrial unrest is still far from certain since they know that this can only add to the gravity of the economic crisis and to their own difficulties in West Bengal. Even so, the government cannot take any chances. It will have to do what it can to avoid a showdown for nothing can derail the new policy more effectively than industrial strife. The change now under way indeed demands something more than the skill needed to drum up majority support in any division in Parliament. It calls for a national consensus.

This does not mean a prior agreement between the parties on all controversial issues. All it requires, in Nehru's days,

(Continued on page 20)

The new global scenario

General (ret'd) Khalid Mahmud Arif

The loss of one superpower has been the gain of the other. Despite the many imperfections of the communist order, a bipolar world had an in-built element of check on both the superpowers. There was a ray of hope for all mankind that the political and military excesses committed anywhere on the globe will be criticised and condemned if not checked and prevented. The Soviet collapse has removed that safety valve. The United States is now in a position to influence the world affairs through political pressure, coercive intimidation and selective morality.

For nearly half a century communism and capitalism had developed an adversary relationship between them. Communism has now ceased to pose a threat to the West. China, weak and vulnerable, is involved in her internal affairs and has never exported her philosophy to other countries. Tiny pockets elsewhere — Cuba, Albania etc., — may surrender to democracy soon. With communism out of the way the Western attention has been focused on the Islamic countries. An upsurge of religion anywhere is viewed with suspicion in the West. Such countries are subject to political pressure and blackmail from the US led developed states directly and through the international financial institutions which they control.

During the period 1979-1988, the United States had little option but to operate through Pakistan to provide assistance to the Afghan freedom fighters. The U.S. strategic objective was to evict the Soviet forces from Afghanistan. That aim achieved she started to distance herself from the internal conflict of that country. For the Mujahideen the exit of the Soviet forces was only a part of the struggle. Their country

remains in turmoil. For Pakistan, a destabilised Afghanistan remains a source of anxiety. Three million Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan causing considerable burden on her meagre financial resources. An early Afghan settlement is important for regional stability.

Those who feel that India would be prepared to dismantle her nuclear establishment live in a world of their own. It would be suicidal for Pakistan to do so unilaterally. The proposal of a nuclear-free South Asia has been overtaken by time. There is need to discuss a nuclear-weapon safe South Asia proposal now.

The Iraq war was avoidable. General Schwarzkopf has publicly admitted that it was fought to strengthen Israel. The two member Commission of Inquiry for the International War Crimes set up by Ramsay Clark has observed that "the Bush administration systematically manipulated controlled and distorted the media and the Press coverage of the Gulf war and did not allow the correct picture to reach the people. It has accused Bush and his administration for committing the "biggest war crimes of the century". These included the inhuman mass burial of the Iraqi wounded soldiers against all norms of civil behaviour.

The Gulf war witnessed a decline in the status of the United Nations Organisation. The UN Security Council became

a glorified debating society willing to surrender its authority to a mighty hijacker. The collapsing Soviet Union accepted the American dictates. Just one veto vote might have averted that war. Herein lies a danger for the peace in the future. If one country becomes the judge, the jury and the arbiter, any international order based on such a logic may lead to a new disorder.

The international equilibrium has changed. Previously, to contain the former Soviet Union, America wished to befriend China. The Soviet collapse has now put the American heat on China, at least temporarily. China is too large a country to be ignored for too long. She is ideally located to influence events in the world in general and in the CIS, Japan, India and South-East Asia in particular.

The Soviet collapse was a blow to the Indian foreign policy. Much to the delight of Washington, India and U.S.A are busy developing a multi-directional relationship which was never so close ever since India gained independence. These relations are being expanded in the political, economic and military fields. Politically, the U.S. Indian honeymoon is projecting India as a regional power and building her up as a counterweight to China. To keep exploiting the American sensitivity India may delay the settlement of her border dispute with China.

As a *quid pro quo* India no longer criticises the American military presence either in the Gulf region. In the economic field America has helped India in securing loans worth \$8 billion from the international monetary agencies to overcome her financial difficulties. The collaboration in the military field includes training facilities, sale

of hardware to India, joint planning, mutual surveillance of target areas and sharing of intelligence covering areas lying between the sensitive Persian Gulf region in the west and no less sensitive China in the east. America has also provided to India dual-purpose high technology computers to be used in her weapon-oriented nuclear and missile programmes. A flurry of top-level high and low visibility visits between the military brass of the two countries has set the parameters of their military cooperation.

The developing Indo-U.S. connection has further emboldened India to browbeat her neighbours. Her interference in Sindh, Pakistan, continues unabated. She accuses Pakistan of providing help to the disputed state of Kashmir who have risen in revolt against the denial of their fundamental rights to decide their future. A state-sponsored terrorism has been let loose on them by India in which people are killed, women are raped, houses are demolished and the international human rights agencies are denied entry in the state to investigate the atrocities committed by the administration.

Kashmir and Punjab are the self-inflicted injuries which are hurting India. She wants to externalise her internal problems by falsely implicating a foreign hand. Hindu fundamentalism is on the rise in India. This is evident from the composition of her parliament. India is also facing a danger of disintegration from within. Sikkim, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Punjab are symptoms of such a process. In her own interest India should learn a lesson from the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Her neighbours wish her well in maintaining her unity in their own interest. They would like to have a stable and friendly India in the subcontinent to enable this region to fight its common enemy — poverty.

China would come under increasing American pressure on one pretext or the other. The reasons could be human rights

violations, the issue of copyrights and patents or the export of some technologies which do not find favour with the United States of America. For India, the era of *Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai* is dead and closed. She has now joined the American bandwagon to encircle her Asian rival. The other links in this chain are Japan, South Korea, Burma and Tibet. Remember the Nobel Prize award to the distinguished Burmese lady and the recent meeting of the Dalai Lama with the British Prime Minister? India, Burma and Tibet can be used as a base to create trouble in China.

India had a strong bilateral relationship with Iraq. The Gulf war had as much isolated India from the Arab countries in the Gulf region as she was earlier isolated during the decade long Afghan struggle against the former Soviet Union. The new developing U.S. connection may be used by India to penetrate the oil-rich Gulf countries to further her long-term strategic goals in the region.

The people of Algeria have been denied their right to choose a government for themselves through the process of free ballot. The prospect of a rightist government coming to power was not acceptable to the powers which call the political tune in that African country. Surprisingly, the Western countries have not reacted sharply about the demise of democracy in Algeria. The reason is not difficult to assess. Selective morality is at work.

The U.S. Iran relations remain unsatisfactory. The U.S. military presence in the Gulf is a source of concern for Iran. For the duration of the American presence in the Gulf region Iran's relations with America are unlikely to undergo a significant change.

The collapse of Yugoslavia has put to test the effectiveness of the European unity. It also highlights the usefulness of the effective internal leadership. That

country is different from what it was under Tito.

Such are the obtaining realities. Politically, America has emerged as the only pre-eminent power, at least for the present. Economically, despite the strains on the American economy, a tri-polar world has come to the fore with U.S. sharing the honours with Germany and Japan.

The two economic giants Germany and Japan are knocking at the U.N. door for permanent seats in the Security Council. Japan has recently passed a law permitting her for the first time since 1945 to send her military forces abroad as a part of the U.N. peace force.

Germany and Japan had financially supported the U.S. led military operations against Iraq. These two countries will play increasingly important roles in the world affairs, even when they are not military powers yet.

In the prevailing geo-strategic scenario Pakistan's foreign policy has come under stress. The world events have moved faster than her anticipation. Beset with internal political difficulties, the external developments have been relegated to the back burner. During the Gulf war, a gap existed between the government response and the public expectations aroused by vested interests. The government launched a damage control operation a little too late. The war placed Pakistan in an unhappy situation. She sent military forces to Saudi Arabia and was yet called a reluctant partner in combat, a feeling which continues to linger in the Gulf region.

Pakistan-U.S. relations are at a low ebb. It is not uncommon for the two countries to differ with each other but there is no need for them to be hostile or acrimonious. Prudence demands that the issues under dispute be discussed quietly and comprehensively through diplomatic channels and not in the Press. Notwithstanding Pakistan's cur-

rent economic difficulties, the stoppage of the American aid is not the end of the world. The United States has played this game before and Pakistan is used to facing such a pressure. Such a jolt is not without a silver lining. It gives a much needed reminder that all foreign aid has strings attached to it and there is no substitute to standing on one's own feet.

Pakistan's response to America should be mature and dignified. If America wishes to discontinue with the aid let her do so. It would be wrong to compromise principles for the sake of expediency. Pakistan respects the laws of other countries. The Pressler Amendment impinges on the sovereignty of Pakistan and, therefore, she has every right to condemn it. Would America like any country to legislate a one country law directed against her?

America claims that India and Pakistan are de facto nuclear powers. These two countries, therefore, deserve equal treatment. Nuclear proliferation in South Asia has become a fact of life. Those who feel that India would be prepared to dismantle her nuclear establishment, vast and expanding as it is, live in a world of their own. It would be suicidal for Pakistan to do so unilaterally. The prevailing realities indicate that the proposal of a nuclear-free South Asia has been overtaken by time. There is a need now to discuss a proposal of creating a nuclear-weapon safe South Asia. This would be a pragmatic approach to prevent nuclear blackmail in the subcontinent.

Any technology once spread cannot be erased. Human brains cannot be wiped clean. If the nuclear have states are genuinely interested in a non-proliferation regime they should set the pace and implement their own obligations under Article 6 of the NPT to prove their bonafides. Then alone would they be justified to plead the cause of nuclear non-proliferation.

Foreign policy begins at home. There is no substitute for internal cohesion and unity. Political

differences are a part of a democratic process. These ought to be resolved through democratic means. There is no place for gutter politics in a democratic order. And, regrettably there is plenty of it in Pakistan. The Government-opposition relation have nose-dived. If democracy is to flourish both will have to mend their ways. The government is expected to show tolerance towards the opposition and act fairly towards one and all.

The opposition ought to learn that the government enjoys the

public mandate rule for a prescribed term and that its own place is to occupy the opposition benches for that period. Political battles should be fought politically in the parliament or legally in the courts of law. They should not be taken to the streets. What the opposition did in the parliament on December 19, 1991 did not enhance the cause of democracy. Its undignified behaviour was a matter of shame. Let us rise and do something better. We can do it.

The Guv'nor takes a holiday — no exchange problem

The Guv'nor purrs, his car purrs
At the crossing, waiting for the train
Deep in his cushions, he sees the Tea Maids
Curl colour from the misty glades
Then descend with their pluck.

What are they to him, not nymphs
Nor sirens even though they sing
Tripping bare feet in silver anklets
Past the running spring?

No, just fifty kilos of leaves and a bud
That with luck, may be, will be
With firing & fragrance
(Value added) ten kilos of tea

The Guv'nor thinks (even on holiday)
Fifty kilos for just fifty chinks
Isn't a bad factor input
What's then the snag?
The cost of P says the WB
Is twice the Free MP,
State management they say's the drag

So you need a Private Eye.
(The Guvnor's glass to his own glass eye
Reveals no inflation & whats more
He reports 5 percent growth!
But poverty? That he says is only sloth)
High management overheads?
Change the pillow for the ache in the head
The World Bank saith.

The Guv'nor dozes, seeing dollars fall
From the leaf baskets, and the train clatters past
(Ha, that train needs World Bank attention)
The Nymphs chatter by, as the car horns call
He decides there'll be travellers cheques for all.


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PHOSIX

De-Colonising News

Martin Khor Kok Peng

How we perceive the world's events and trends to a large extent determines our responses. Much of the news that is read worldwide comes from a few agencies or magazines controlled by the West. As a result, there is a dominance of West-centric analysis that often distorts reality, especially where the Third World is concerned.

For instance, the 1980s have been portrayed in the western media as a decade of boom for the "world economy". Yet the economies in most of the Third World were declining due to the debt crisis and falling commodity prices. The Uruguay Round is overwhelming portrayed as a battle over farm subsidies. Yet for the Third World the real issue was the West's attempt to pry open Third World markets for western service companies and for foreign investors by expanding the powers of GATT into new areas. The Panama invasion or the Gulf War are portrayed by the American media as a good versus evil fight, but from a Third World perspective it may be perceived as a demonstration that the West is prepared to use brutal force to get the Third World to 'toe its line' and to ensure continued dominance over world resources.

For the past five years, a group of Third World journalists and citizens' associations have been trying to break the West's media by making available news reports and analyses from the South, and circulating them in both the South and the North.

The *Third World Network* felt that it was not enough to complain about western, media

control, so it started a simple news exchange system by inviting journalists and thinkers (mainly from the Third World) to contribute to a Third World Network Features Service. Today the service provides four features weekly, is published in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi and Bengali and distributed to about a thousand newspapers, magazines and citizens' groups around the world. They appear regularly in countries like India, Tanzania, Jamaica, Uruguay, Kenya and Iran and are also occasionally picked up by established western newspapers such as the *International Herald Tribune* and the *Guardian* (London) and *World Press Review*.

The features are written mainly by Third World writers, development activists and environmentalists, and they bring the activities and perspectives of Third World citizens, associations and thinkers to the world public. The features have for instance given prominence to the grassroots battles in many Third World countries to save the environment from northern financed development projects. They have provided in-depth analysis of economic affairs such as the debt crisis, increasing poverty and the Uruguay Round negotiations, from a Third World perspective. Equally important, they have highlighted the grassroots initiatives of Third World communities and groups in promoting appropriate technology, organic farming, innovative credit systems for the poor, alternative and indigenous health systems and cooperative housing.

Recently, the Third World Network began publishing two magazines, available in either

English or Spanish, the monthly *Third World Resurgence* and the fortnightly *Third World Economics*. Both aim to be a forum through which southern perspectives can be promoted and thus gain a fairer representation in the international market place of ideas, as well as provide a guide to citizens' associations both in the South and North as to what Third World groups, communities and intellectuals are doing and thinking.

Third World Resurgence aims to provide Third World analysis on a wide range of issues including the environment, health and basic needs, international affairs, economics and culture. Its inaugural issue in September 1990 focused on "Seeing Green Through Third World Eyes" and carried articles by Jose Lutzenberger (Latin America's well-known ecologist, now Brazil's Environment Minister) on deforestation and sudden ecological collapse; an analysis by Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva on global warming and North-South relations; by Malaysian activist Mohamed Idris warning of how the political and commercial elite were co-opting the green label to perpetuate their destruction of nature; and reports of how communities in the Third World are defending both the environment and their basic rights. Subsequent issues of *Resurgence* have highlighted how the Uruguay Round is threatening the sovereignty of Third World countries; why the East-West rapprochement has dangerous implications for the Third World; how the Gulf Crisis is perceived so differently when seen from the South as contrasted with the North; the impact of 500 years of colonisation as we approach the

quintcentenary of Columbus' landing in the Americas; and the plight of the world's indigenous people.

Third World Economics on the other hand aims to fill a long felt need for alternative, Third World oriented news analyses on economic events and affairs both at the international and national levels. Much of the dominant coverage of such critical trends as the debt crisis, the commodity price decline, the growing power of transnational companies, the widening rich-poor gap, the moves towards privatisations and deregulation, are all North oriented and establishment oriented. The fortnightly provides speedy but indepth analysis of current affairs in North-South economic relations. Its early issues have focused especially on providing a blow-by-blow week-by-week analysis of the Uruguay Round talks in Geneva and Brussels. The magazine gave a detailed account of how the GATT talks broke down in Brussels and the implications for the Third World. The magazine also covers a wide range of North-South issues (investment, transnational corporation practices, debt and finance, technology and intellectual property rights, trade and commodity prices) as well as the national dimension of development (poverty, rural development, social inequalities, basic needs problems, and alternative development strategies). *Third World Economics* is meant for development groups, research institutes and economists.

For the specialist, the Third World Network publishes the *SUNS (South-North Development Monitor)*, a daily bulletin on

South-North issues produced in Geneva by veteran Indian journalist and analyst Chakravarthi Raghavan. The *SUNS* had been founded in 1980 and published until 1989 by IEDA. It is widely read and respected by Third World economic diplomats conducting negotiations in UNCTAD, GATT and other fora, and is a valuable resource for policy makers and economic researchers.

(Third World Network, 87 Cantonment Road, 10250 Penang Malaysia, Fax: 804-368106; Spanish editions: Roberto Bissio, Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Miguel del Corro 1461, Montevideo 11200, Uruguay; SUNS: Chakravarthi Raghavan, Palais des Nations, Room C-504, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland)

Making . . .

(Continued from page 13)

austerity and total social disintegration.

'Islamic Jihads and Shining Paths are only the beginning,' she said in reference to armed rebel groups active in the Middle East and in Peru.

The answer is not in encouraging the elites to follow in North's reckless path to growth while the poor try to survive a few more days by cutting down a few more trees. Debt causes poverty and poverty is a luxury we can no longer afford,' she concluded.

— *Third World Network Features/IPS*

Panaceas and . . .

(Continued from page 14)

is an approach to problems which seeks to reduce the area of disagreement. In effect this amounts to keeping the opposition to a particular policy within bounds where it cannot be marginalised. This ought not to be too difficult today when, whatever their public rhetoric, most parties can see how severely limited are the options before the country.

The two main reasons for the increasing debility of the political system are the prodigious increase in the demands being made on it and the tendency of organised groups to seek redress of their grievances outside the limits imposed by it. The problem is by no means peculiar to this country though its size and diversity make it look altogether more forbidding here. In view of the increasing strain on the political system, the only way in which the parties can help it to perform better, is, as Claus Offe, the well-known German social thinker, has cogently argued, for them to find new-ways of cooperating through informal discussions "shielded from publicity."

What is decisive, he rightly contends, is "whether the organised interests affected by state policy are prepared to renounce the *obstructional* potential (which) they possess in great measure even as the interdependencies resulting from a given policy become more and more extensive. The turn of events in this country seems to have put this very question at the top of the national agenda.

The Indian Debate

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar

The recent agitation by some journalists' unions over the running of the *Navbharat Times* has focussed attention on three issues touching press freedom — the relationship between newspaper owners and editors, the extent to which politicians should get involved in press matters, and the right to translate copy. The *Sunday Times of India* asked prominent journalists, owners, lawyers and politicians their views on these three matters, getting away from the specifics of the *Navbharat Times* dispute to the broader issues.

Most owners refused to be interviewed, and this biases our survey against them, but they have only themselves to blame. Most senior journalists upheld the right of proprietors to lay down the editorial policy and make major changes. Cho Ramaswamy was particularly forthright in saying that a proprietor could not be expected to take financial risks merely to promote the opinion of his editor. Girilal Jain felt that the importance attached to the editor's supremacy was a particularly Indian concern arising out of socialist ideas. However, there were differing opinions on the right of proprietors to interfere in day-to-day matters. Many felt it was wrong, would lower journalistic standards, and affect the people's right to know.

India has more than 20,000 journals, most of them small and edited by the owners. Even in bigger journals, owners are progressively becoming editors. So the owner-editor controversy is actually limited to a small (but important) section of the press. The freedom of expression means that anybody is free to start and to edit a journal. In larger ones, owners typically hire staff. Can they be deprived of control because they hire editors instead of doing the job themselves? This would probably be unconstitutional and a departure from international democratic norms.

Freedom to start a journal extends to sectional interests like

political parties, trade organisations and members of a particular religion or region. Nobody suggests that the editor of a political party's journal should be independent of the owner. Nor would anyone expect this of a journal run by any sectional interest. Why, then is editorial independence often demanded for the big newspapers.

The reason for this goes well beyond free expression for owners. There are other issues like the right of the people to know, and the importance of high standards in the press. People need at least some journals where pressures from advertisers, politicians, business interests and sectarian interests are minimal.

However, it is hardly possible to legislate independence for editors in a few elite journals of sectional interests to be controlled by owners. As Christopher Thomas of *The Times* says high standards are best dealt with at the ethical and professional levels. In the long run proprietorial interference diminishes quality and will cause a drop in credibility and circulation.

If owners are deprived of editorial control, Thomas says, many will lose interest in starting new journals, diminishing the number of papers and jobs for journalists. This will worsen rather than improve the freedom of expression.

Another likely outcome would be for owners to appoint family members or supine yes-men as

editors. So the outcome would be a fall in the number of editorships available for professional journalists. Some people, like M. V. Kamath, feel that even knowledgeable owners are not in same class as professional editors. Experience suggests otherwise. Owner-editors like Aroon Purie of *India Today* and Ashok Advani of *Business India*, with no previous experience of journalism, have beaten their professional rivals hollow. There are far more cases of owners succeeding than failing.

Khushwant Singh says that editors are generally subject to much more pressure in India than abroad. I myself have been an editor twice, and can testify that some proprietors apply pressure to satisfy their political, business and personal interests. In many mofussil towns I have visited owners (and alas journalists are regarded as racketeers. One way to promote excellence unhampered by pressures would be to have journals owned by journalists. like *Le Monde* in France and *The Independent* in Britain. A possible source of funds could be venture capital funds designed to finance high-risk investments — these are just coming up in India. I suspect the biggest problem will be not funding but the willingness of top journalists to forsake high salaries for the risk of a business venture.

Next, the issue of the press versus politicians. To what extent should journalists try and get politicians to support them in their internal struggles against owners? Most people interviewed by us including politicians, felt it was undesirable. The exception was lawyer Rajeev Dhawan, who felt that press freedom included the freedom of journalists from control by owners. Most also felt it was wrong for journalists to get housing

and other perks from the government, as this would erode their independence.

Politicians are usually happy to support agitations by journalists. In some cases, this is for legitimate reasons, but in many cases they want to ingratiate themselves with journalists, hoping to get a good press in return. Most journalists in small towns are compromised by their association with particular politicians, and it is worrying to see that cancer spread to large, national dailies too.

It is tempting for unions to use political connections to raise their living standards and win the industrial disputes. But do the journalists of these unions really believe that, given the right to interfere, politicians will stop at just trade union issues? No,

they will inevitably want to start intervening in editorial matters too, and that will represent a deadly danger to press freedom. Most respondents upheld Parliament's rights to indict journals for breach of privilege, but felt this power should be used judiciously. Ram Jethmalani emphasised the need for Parliament to codify its privileges instead of leaving them open-ended, covering everything.

Journalists can legitimately ask the government to intervene if owners violate labour laws. The worst violations take place in the thousands of smaller provincial journals. According to a recent article in *Sunday Mail*, journalists in smaller Hindi newspapers are hired only as casual workers, sometimes purely on oral contract. The irony is that public attention usually focusses

on large papers that are the highest paymasters and have strong unions that thwart labour law violations.

Finally, the issue of translating English articles into other language. Most people interviewed agreed that it would be wrong to place any legal constraints on this. But V.P. Vaidik of *Bhasha*, the Hindi news agency, voiced the view of many in saying that **translations must not be the staple of any journal. Some also argued that it would impede the growth of vernacular newspapers. However, translations cut the cost of publishing, and are vital to keep alive struggling papers.**

In the long run, I am certain translations will be defeated by original writing in Indian languages.

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Agricultural Extension – the missing link in Janasaviya

Ranjit Mulleriyawa

Janasaviya is the most ambitious poverty alleviation programme yet to be launched in this country. It is in essence a participatory approach to rural development targeted at the poorest and most underprivileged sectors of the population. Janasaviya operates on the premise that the combined delivery of consumption benefits (amounting to Rs 1,458 per family per month), capital and technical assistance for investment and income generation to poor households will enable them to break out from the constraints that poverty creates.

An objective analysis of the Janasaviya programme's performance during the first two years would seem to indicate that results achieved have fallen short of expectations in many areas. Inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the technical assistance component appears to have been major factors stifling programme performance.

Major constraints

Agriculture is the primary occupation of most Janasaviya beneficiaries living in rural areas. Increasing agricultural production is therefore essential for any meaningful improvement in socio-economic status and quality of the rural poor. The biggest constraint to increasing agricultural production in the peasant sector is the **absence of an effective agricultural extension service**. Our village level agricultural extension service has

The Author is an agronomist holding a Masters' degree in agriculture. He also possesses over 25 years' experience in agriculture and rural development in South and South East Asia. No mere technocrat, he has been a small farmer himself cultivating a two hectare plot of land in the dry zone for ten years and experienced the realities of life at grass root level.

never been very strong. However, it has now been rendered totally ineffective following the recent absorption of Krushikarma Viyaptha Sevakas (village level extension workers) into the 'Grama Niladhari' cadre. The Grama Niladhari is now called upon to play two conflicting roles — extension and control. Human nature being what it is, exercising control functions often take precedence over extension! Result? The peasant farmer has virtually no one to advise him on agricultural matters.

Thanks to Janasaviya, credit is now freely available to the poor in areas where Janasaviya is operational. Unfortunately, many of these people are unable to effectively utilise this credit for income generating activities because there is no extension support. Let's take a few cases in point — Ridimaliyadda AGA division in Badulla district has only two Agricultural Instructors to service 6,900 farmer families spread over an area of 370 Sq. Kilometers! Nikaweratiya also has two Agric. Instructors called upon to serve 9000 farmers (4,800 of whom are Janasaviya beneficiaries). These are clearly impossible tasks.

Farmer Extensionists

If Janasaviya is to bear fruit and achieve its laudable objectives, it is essential that immediate steps be taken to fill the void in agricultural extension at village level. A logical solution to bridging this extension gap would seem to be the training and deployment of **farmer extensionists** (similar to barefoot Doctors) to service small, activity centred groups of farmers (Functional groups). The objective in such a community based extension service is **not** to train agricultural experts, but to provide farmer represen-

tatives with adequate basic knowledge and skills needed to improve their present farming systems. The goal in such an approach, is not to develop the peoples' agriculture, but to **teach them a process by which they can develop their own agriculture**.

Janasaviya beneficiaries tend to be the most marginalized, poorest and least articulate segment of our rural population. If their needs are to be adequately met, they require services which are **easily accessible**. A community-based extension service involving trained Farmer Extensionists ensures easy access to extension.

Training Farmer Extensionists

Traditional class room oriented, lecture type training will not do for this type of individual. They would respond best to participatory approaches to training with heavy emphasis on on-farm demonstrations and on-farm adaptive research. Such training is best conducted within their respective communities and it will take at least two cropping seasons to turn out a competent farmer extensionist. Cost of such training will be no more than Rs 15-16 per Janasaviya family per month over a two year period. This is barely **one per cent** of the monthly dole received by each Janasaviya family at present. Should there be any reluctance to even experiment with the above proposal, it would do well to recall the following:

"Progress in human affairs, whether in science, or history, or in society, has come largely from the bold readiness of human beings not to accept piecemeal solutions to the way things are done, but to offer fundamental challenges in the name of reason to the accepted way of doing things....."

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