

# TAMIL GUARDIAN

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## NEWS



Though Sri Lankans have marched against the government, they continue to support its war efforts

## 'Sri Lankans may turn against war strategy'

Shani Raja  
Bloomberg

SRI LANKA'S government needs to deliver on its vow to cripple the Tamil Tigers this year or lose support for a conflict that is slowing economic growth, defense analysts said as labour unions planned a general strike.

"People say they'll suffer the hardships as long as the government can finish the war," said Iqbal Athas, a Colombo-based correspondent for Jane's Defence Weekly.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) "military machine has yet to be badly dented" and the group may have at least 10,000 fighters.

President Mahinda Rajapakse's government pledged to defeat the LTTE in the northern Wanni region this year after evicting them from the east a year ago.

The Tamil Tigers operate from jungle bases in the north, where they repulsed a major army offensive in the late 1990s.

Pressure on the government to negotiate with the Tamil Tigers may build if military operations stall.

Workers in ports, transport and agriculture were among those striking over cost of living increases after consumer prices in the capital, Colombo, rose the most in at least four years and at the fastest pace in Asia.

The war is weighing on the economy, Sri Lanka's Central Bank Governor Nivard Cabraal said at a business forum.

The International Monetary

Fund has said the nation's economic outlook "depends critically" on an end to the civil war.

Economic growth slowed for the first time in a year in the first quarter as the escalating violence, including bomb attacks in Colombo, curbed spending, while consumer prices in Colombo rose 28.2 percent in June from a year earlier, the statistics department said at the end of last month.

"People are expecting the war to be over sooner rather than later," said Pramod De Silva, editor-in-chief of the state-run Daily News.

"They will welcome either a military or a political solution as soon as possible."

The military's efforts to control "terrorism" in the north have allowed people in the south to consider strike action, Rajapakse said in comments, the newspaper reported.

Some groups are using the stoppage to "gain political mileage," he said.

Losing control of Eastern Province was the worst defeat suffered by the LTTE in its 25-year struggle for a Tamil homeland in the north and east of the island nation. The Tigers will have a hard time regaining the region, Athas said.

The Tamil Tigers are confined to just two northern districts in Wanni, Sri Lanka's Defense Affairs Spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said in a telephone interview from Colombo.

The government is on course to delivering a major blow to the "terrorists" this year, he said.

"Everything is going according to our strategies and plans."

The Tamil Tigers have lost the ability to fight as a conventional army after being weakened by recent government offensives, Army Chief Sarath Fonseka said earlier this month. The military is making progress toward eliminating the Tigers by mid-2009, he told reporters.

The war may have reached a stalemate, said Athas.

Attacks are on the rise in all three "cleared" eastern districts, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Amparai, and the Tamil Tigers have been "periodically" targeting the northern Jaffna peninsula, mostly under the government's control.

The Tamil Tigers have also launched attacks in the Sinhalese-dominated south of the island, demonstrating that they can operate deep within government territory.

Last year, the Tamil Tigers showed they had developed an air capability, using light aircraft to bomb a military base near Sri Lanka's main international airport. The air wing consists of five propeller-driven aircraft, the military says.

The military has targeted Tamil Tiger leaders since taking over the Eastern Province, killing the group's political chief.

The LTTE accuses the air force of bombing civilian areas and says the land and air attacks amount to genocide.

The LTTE said last September that any peace process must be based on a homeland for the Tamil people, in the same way the ethnic-Albanian majority in the former Serbian province of Kosovo gained independence.

## NEWS

# War of words over strike

THE Sri Lankan government and the main opposition parties on the island ended up disputing whether a general strike in the capital on July 10 had been a success or not.

While Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) said that the token strike it launched with the support of the main opposition United National Party (UNP) on Thursday was a success, the Sri Lanka government led by President Mahinda Rajapaksa claimed in the parliament that the strike ended in 'utter failure' due to lack of support from the working class.

Sri Lankan public sector unions, backed by the opposition parties, threatened to cripple all state services in a July 10 general strike for a pay increase, but the government said it could not meet their demands without hurting its war effort.

Speaking before Thursday's strike, union officials said a majority of the country's 1.2 million public sector employees would participate in the strike, which is expected to hit government services from transport to health, after a requested salary increase of 5,000 rupees (\$46.4) a month was rejected.

"The trade unions will definitely go ahead with the planned strike, despite suppressing acts by the government," said K.D. Lankantha, president of the All Ceylon Trade Union Federation and an opposition parliamentarian representing the JVP.

"Cost of living is rising rapidly and the state sector employees are unable to live with their present salaries. But the government has failed to grant a better salary increase."

Last week the government offered a 1,000 rupees-a-month pay increase for state employees, but the trade unions rejected the hike as "grossly inadequate".

High oil and food prices have caused Sri Lanka's cost of living to rise rapidly, while the International Monetary Fund and analysts have also blamed high state expenditure for stoking inflation.

Annual consumer price inflation rose to 28.2 percent in June, its highest since the current index began in 2003.

In an effort to stave off the strike the Sri Lankan government argued that the trade union action would help the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Defence Spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella commenting on the strike said the government could not increase public sector salaries without damaging its ability to fight a civil war against the LTTE.

"We don't have provisions in the 2008 budget for such an increase. We would need an extra 50-60 billion rupees (\$465-555 million) for the rest of the year," he said.

"What you can cut is the defence expenditure. But we will not cut defence expenditure at

this decisive moment."

In the capital posters sprung up overnight saying the strike would benefit the LTTE.

Earlier Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva told parliament that the strike would demoralise the security forces who have made significant gains in the war front by recapturing some of the LTTE-controlled areas in the north.

However the JVP rejected claims that the strike would impact the war.

Addressing the picket, JVP rail union leader Sumathipala Manawadu made clear that the JVP unions would bend over backwards to ensure that the strike did not affect the war.

"We are not against the war. We were the people that supported it directly. We donated blood for the war. We gave one day's wage for the war. We are ready to sacrifice everything for the war. It is false to say that the one-day strike will be an obstacle to the war. Are not the war operations being waged on Saturdays and Sundays and public holidays?" he said.

The government was also accused of fear mongering in its attempt to scuttle the one-day strike as it claimed to have information that the LTTE could set off bombs in the South during the week of the strike.

At a press conference on July 7, Media Minister Lakshman Yapa Abeywardena said that the LTTE would launch a major attack to mark "Black July"-the vicious anti-Tamil pogroms in July 1983.

"In such a situation would it be reasonable to call workers out?" he said. "We have received information and it is our duty to protect the state institutions".

Media and Information Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa who was also present at the media conference, accused the trade unions of calling the strike to undermine military gains in the war. "Some elements in the opposition want to reverse what the security forces have so far achieved," he declared.

As part of the campaign of intimidation, the military and police have boosted their numbers, particularly in the capital and surrounding suburbs. Over the past week, the security forces intensified their cordon-and-search dragnets in largely Tamil areas.

Lakshman Hullugalle, director of the Media Centre for National Security (MCNS), warned in the Island on Monday that "special security measures would be in place countrywide... to meet any security contingency" caused by the strike. Hullugalle specifically identified "terrorist attacks" and "attempts to intimidate employees who report for work" as actions that would be targeted.

In the North, the general strike organised by public sector work-



Though there is dispute over the success of the strike, there is no dispute that the cost of living is up

ers fizzled out without any significant impact on the daily activities of the public following threats from the Sri Lankan army (SLA).

Though tension prevailed in the peninsula in the morning, the situation turned normal late morning, with a heavy intimidatory presence of SLA troops spread across the peninsula.

The troops fanning out across the province warned Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) officials across the peninsula that the services should be operated as usual. As a result normal services resumed after 7:00 a.m.

The troops from the various military camps in the peninsula visited the schools in their vicinity cautioning the principals to

make sure that all students attend school Thursday. The principals were told to submit complete details of the teachers and students who failed to be present Thursday.

In addition SLA officials contacted all Heads of departments and Government corporations in North over the phone asking them to furnish details of those who failed to report for duty.

The JVP hoped up to 200,000 public servants of the 1.1 million government sector employees would strike, crippling transport, health, port and the education sectors.

However, according to government sources most services were operational without a serious disruption.

A heated argument ensued between the parliamentarians of the government and the opposition whether the strike was successful or not.

JVP trade union leader K.D. Lankantha claimed that 70 percent of the teachers and medical staff attached to the trade union and 60 percent of the railway employees participated in the strike.

But, UPFA parliamentarians demanded the JVP trade union leader resign his parliamentary seat claiming that the strike has failed.

Lankantha had challenged in parliament Wednesday that he would resign the post of National Trade Union Centre and his parliamentary seat if the token strike failed.

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## NEWS

# Sri Lankan economy suffers as war continues

THE ever increasing military expenses from the long dragging war combined with poor economic policies and record commodity prices has hit the already teetering Sri Lankan economy hard.

Recently released figures show the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) falling whilst inflation continuing to rise to record levels. Government budget deficit widened as the cost of defence, oil and food rose sharply whilst share holders pulled out of the fledgling stock market and tourists cancelled trips to the island.

Consumer prices in Sri Lanka hit 26.2% in May from a year earlier, after increasing 25 percent in April, on higher food and energy costs. According to HSBC Global Research, Sri Lanka has the highest annual inflation in Asia.

"Even by its own history, inflation in Sri Lanka is on the high side," the international bank said in a report titled 'Sri Lanka Inflation: How high will it go?' published on May 15.

Whilst the report said a large part of the increase in inflation can be explained by surging global commodity prices as Sri Lanka is a net importer of food and oil, it also blamed poor economic management the island's economic woes.

Pointing to a history of high inflation, averaging around 11% year-on-year since 1990 the report suggested that policy management has not been consistently successful in controlling price pressures in the economy.

The report further added that "inflation is going to remain elevated for some time," and any fall will only materialize in the second half of 2009, provided international commodity prices level off and "the Central Bank of Sri Lanka achieves its aggressive reserve money growth targets for 2008."

The record inflation is driven by food and energy costs.

Sri Lanka has been struggling to pay high global oil prices, which have hit levels above \$145 this month compared with the island's 2008 budget estimate of \$85 per barrel.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka said the oil price alone would increase the country's trade deficit by \$500 million to \$4.47 billion this year. "The overall deficit increased to 93.4 billion rupees (\$867.4 million) from 74.3 billion rupees due to increased public investments," the treasury said in the report.

The treasury report further

added the deficit from its operating activities in the first five months had surged to 23.4 billion rupees (\$217.3 million) from last year's 11.62 billion rupees.

"The main reason for the deviation was the shortfall of revenue receipts," it said.

In addition to the sky high commodity prices, the spiraling defence expenses have also taken a toll on the Sri Lankan economy. The government allocated around 18 percent of its 925.1 billion rupees budget this year to defence spending, after quitting an internationally brokered ceasefire and pledging to destroy the LTTE.

Sri Lanka's economic outlook 'depends critically' on an end to the island's 25-year civil war, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The growth in Gross Domestic Product also dropped by 1.4% to 6.2% in the first quarter compared with 7.6 percent in the fourth quarter, less than the median forecast of 6.4 percent in a Bloomberg News survey of 10 economists.

"Growth is slowing due to the impacts of the worsening security situation on business confidence and high inflation increasing costs for companies," said Vajira Premawardhana, head of research at Lanka Orix Securities Pvt. in Colombo.

There was further bad news for Sri Lanka from credit rating agencies as Standard and Poor's warned last month it was at risk of a downgrade from its current B+ rating, while Fitch Ratings said it was concerned over Sri Lanka's increasing foreign commercial borrowings.

The government's external debt totaled \$15.3 billion at the end of May, a \$180 million increase from end 2007, the report showed, while its total debt rose to 3,328.8 billion rupees by the end of April, up 18.1 percent from a year earlier.

"The government should curtail its spending," said Chirantha Caldera, a currency dealer at Commercial Bank of Ceylon.

"If your revenue is coming down, and your defence expenditure is escalating, then curtailing spending on capital expenditure like infrastructure should be there," Caldera said, adding the government risked further stoking inflation which was running at an annual 28.2 percent in June.

Sri Lankan shares saw their a ninth consecutive fall last week as worries about the economy and a

## Attempted German bargain

Der Spiegel, a renowned German weekly news magazine, in its 23 June edition, revealed that the Sri Lanka government and the permanent representative of the government of Germany in New York agreed in February to a deal prior to the voting in U.N. General Assembly in May, where Germany would vote for Sri Lanka's re-election to the Human Rights Council, and Sri Lanka in turn will vote for German seat in the Security Council in 2010. The paper said Germany's deal with the Human Rights violator Sri Lanka was 'indelicate', despite Sri Lanka's defeat in the race. "In order to be included again in the Security Council of the United Nations, the [German] government is obviously willing to pay any price necessary," the paper said. "The deal is very fiery because Sri Lanka has aggravating accusations of violating Human Rights," Der Spiegel said. It cited Human Rights Watch's listing of 99 cases in March, that dealt with the disappearance or kidnapping of Tamil civilians, Human Rights officials and journalists with alleged involvement of the Sri Lankan forces. The German foreign office refused to comment on the deal, the weekly said. (TamilNet)

## Four killed in bus attack

Four people were killed and 25 injured when armed men opened indiscriminate fire at a moving passenger bus in the southern town of Buttala, south-east of Colombo, Friday, July 11. The Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) bus, belonging to Monaragala depot, was plying from Buttala to Kathirkaamam and was attacked at Galge. "A group of gunmen hiding by the side of the road near Buttala raked the passing civilian bus with gunfire," news agency Associated Press quoted military spokesman Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara as saying. "The bus driver sped through the ambush, only stopping when he reached safety," he said. Defence officials, who blamed the

long-running civil war with Tamil Tigers kept investors out of the market.

The Colombo All-Share index fell 3.37 points to 2,401.17, its lowest close since January 21. The market has fallen 10.8 percent from an 11-month high on April 23.

"Economic and war worries are the main reason for the fall," said Hussain Ghani, assistant director at Asia Securities. "Investors are waiting for a market-pushing news, but unfortunately nothing has happened. If this situation continues, even better corporate results for the last quarter will also not boost the market."

Sentiment on the corporate sector has been hit by poor eco-

nomics. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for the attack, said the gunmen were hiding in the forests on either sides of the road and opened fire as the vehicle came within firing range. Military spokesperson Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara told media the gunmen took advantage of the fact that large swathes of the area are covered in forests. The day after the attack, Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and police in a joint cordon and search operation conducted along Buttala-Kathirkaamam road arrested six Tamil civilians.

## Civilians wounded in air raid

At least four civilians were wounded at Vaddakkachchi on Sunday July 6 when two Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) bombers attacked a residential area twice. Maniyar Sellathamby, 67, and Rooban, 24, were among the seriously wounded in the air raid. A day later, SLAF bombers targeted Iyakkachchi village, 15 km south-east of Mukamaalai in Jaffna peninsula. A 50-year-old father of five was wounded in his stomach. Another civilian, Sellathurai Kamal, a father of two, was wounded, on Tuesday July 8, when two SLAF bombers attacked Kugnchupparanthan and the adjacent paddy fields along Paranthan - Poonakari (Pooneryn) road. The SLAF fighter jets dropped bombs while he was watering his paddy field. Medical sources at Kilinochchi hospital said the doctors were struggling to avoid amputation of his left leg as he was badly wounded below the knee. The TamilNet correspondent who visited the attack site in Kugnchupparanthan said that the bombardment has caused extensive damage to the agricultural lands in the 5th canal. (TamilNet)

## Journalists under attack

Sri Lankan journalists are facing increasing attacks over their reporting of the conflict, according to Amnesty International. Hundreds of local reporters and cameramen protested outside

Rajapaksa's home earlier this month demanding an end to a spate of killings and assaults on journalists, Agence France-Presse reported. Some journalists fear a crackdown if the victory promised by the government doesn't materialize. "The media has come under very staunch criticism for expressing views which are not of the government," said defence correspondent Iqbal Athas. "Anybody who doesn't tow the line is called a traitor. You can draw the inference on what's going to come." Alleged human rights violations against journalists by the government are being "blown totally out of proportion," a government official said. The sources of such allegations are largely non-governmental agencies with LTTE sympathies, he added. (Bloomberg)

## British Commission employee attacked

A British High Commission employee and a journalist were assaulted in Sri Lanka on June 30, prompting media groups to say they feared it was the latest in a series of attacks against journalists. A Sri Lankan attached to the commission and a defence journalist at the Sri Lanka Press Institute were attacked by a group in their car in the capital Colombo, witnesses said. Both were wounded but hospital workers said they were not in danger. The High Commissioner condemned the "despicable act" and urged the government to bring those responsible to justice. "We will be working with the authorities to do everything that we can, to make sure that happens," Peter Hayes said at the private hospital where they were being treated. Journalist and media rights groups say the government has done little to stop the violation of media freedom and attacks against journalists in Sri Lanka. "This is related to the suppression of media," said Sunanda Deshapriya of the Free Media Movement. "We hope the government will do something to stop this. If government can't do that, we should hold government responsible for the attack." (Mirror)

nomics data.

Sri Lanka attracted fewer holidaymakers in June, the island's main tourism promotion authority said Friday, blaming the drop in the number of visitors on the country's ongoing ethnic conflict.

Arrivals in June fell 9.3 percent to 27,960 from 30,810 reported a year earlier and totalled 224,363 in the first half of 2008, down 0.2 percent from the same period a year earlier, Sri Lanka Tourism said. The number of visitors from Britain and Germany -- both key markets -- fell five percent each in June to 5,304 and 1,317 respectively over the same period a year earlier.

The number of leisure travellers from neighbouring India

declined 28.8 percent in June to 5,664, as against the same period last year.

"It's the conflict that is keeping tourists away. There are frequent bomb attacks and it is natural they would be cautious to travel here," an official from the tourism authority said.

Many countries in the west have cautioned their nationals against travelling to Sri Lanka, where fighting between government troops and Tamil Tigers has escalated since the start of the year.

Tourism is the fourth biggest revenue generator for Sri Lanka's 27-billion-dollar economy, behind remittances from expatriate workers, clothing and tea exports.



## NEWS

# LTTE leader pays homage to Black Tigers

TamilNet

LTTE leader Mr. V. Pirapaharan participated in the Black Tigers commemoration day events held in Vanni on July 5.

356 Black Tigers have laid down their lives, 254 of them in sea operations, during the last 21 years since 05 July 1987, when the first Black Tiger Captain Miller, drove an explosive laden truck on Sri Lanka Army (SLA) troops garrisoned at Nellyadi Central College in Vadamaraadchi in Jaffna, the LTTE said.

Last year, Black Tiger commandos stormed the Sri Lankan airbase in Anuradhapura in LTTE's first combined Black Tiger and Tamil Eelam Air Force attack, destroying more than 10 aircraft.

LTTE's media unit released edited photos of LTTE leader paying homage to Black Tigers who died in their missions.

Senior Commanders of the LTTE and other Black Tigers were present with Pirapaharan at an undisclosed location in Vanni.

76 of the 254 Black Sea Tigers who have died were female commandos. 81 male and 71 female Black Tiger commandos have died in ground operations.

Six music albums were published by the head of the LTTE Intelligence Wing S. Poddu, Special Commander of the Sea Tigers Col. Soosai, Head of LTTE's Military Intelligence Ratnam, Political Head B. Nadesan, Head of LTTE's military academies Col. Aathavan and a commander of the Sea Tigers Naren in the event, Tiger officials told media in Vanni.



## Priyanka meeting Nalini was 'humanitarian gesture': LTTE

LTTE's political wing chief, V Nadesan in a telephonic interview to Times Now television, said Priyanka Vadhra's visit to the Vellore prison to meet Nalini a few months ago was a "humanitarian gesture."

"This visit was a purely humanitarian gesture. Nothing else."

Asked about the petition filed by Nalini, sentenced to life in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, seeking premature release, Nadesan said the LTTE believed that holistic changes will take place.

"We firmly believe holistic changes will take place and Indian government will recognize the legitimate aspirations of Tamil people and their freedom struggle," said Nadesan.

"And Nalini's release will start the holistic change."

The LTTE, which was indicted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, continues to be banned in



**Priyanka Gandhi Vadra**

India.

Facing a concerted military offensive by the Sri Lankan army in its stronghold of Jaffna peninsula, Nadesan expressed readi-

ness for ceasefire and peace talks with the island government.

Nadesan said that the LTTE was ready for a ceasefire. He accused the Sri Lankan government of "abrogating" the six-year-long ceasefire which came to an end early this year.

37-year-old Nalini had moved the Court after her plea for release on the ground of good conduct and having completed over 17 years in jail was rejected by the Tamil Nadu government.

Nalini was initially sentenced to death along with her husband Murugan, and two others. Her sentence was later commuted to life following an appeal by Congress President Sonia Gandhi.

Prior to Nalini's petition seeking early release, Rajiv Gandhi's daughter Priyanaka Gandhi Vadra met her at the Vellore Central Prison in March, 2008.

## Cautious steps

POPULAR South Indian magazine 'Kumudam' in its editorial urged the Central government in India to act cautiously in decisions relating to Sri Lanka and not to unwittingly assist the enemy.

A translation from the Tamil follows:

The planned attendance of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the SAARC summit and the deployment of Indian military personnel for his security has become a controversial issue.

The agreement of Sri Lankan government to the presence of 3000 Indian soldiers in Colombo has further raised suspicions.

We have forgotten neither the attack on late premier Rajeev Gandhi by a Sri Lankan soldier nor the atrocities committed due to the counter productive decision to send Indian Peace Keeping Forces to Sri Lanka.

Therefore we cannot be complacent in matters of security for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

However, there has been no response from the government to questions posed by the opposition as to whether the Indian troopers sent to provide security to the premier will stay back to support the racist Sri Lankan state.

At a time when the Sri Lanka's war against Tamils escalates, who will benefit from the Indian weapons? Who will bear the brunt of these weapons?

As Sri Lanka turns to other countries including China and Pakistan for assistance, any decision taken by India will have international significance.

The painful lessons India learnt in the past by intervening in the Sri Lankan conflict should not be forgotten.

At this crucial point in time, India should act carefully to ensure no harm befalls the Tamils in Sri Lanka whilst protecting her sovereignty.

Our assistance should not result in strengthening the enemy. (Translated)

## EDITORIAL

## TAMIL GUARDIAN

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## Concrete Realities

## Why is the demand for Tamil Eelam more strident than ever before?

In the last of a recent series of mass rallies by the Tamil Diaspora, thirty thousand expatriates in Britain turned out last weekend to emphatically reiterate a simple message: the Tamil people want their independence. A week earlier, seventy five thousand Tamils in Canada had done the same. Before that, there were record turnouts at rallies across all the other Diaspora centers. The Pongu Tamil rallies of 2008 reveal the structural changes within Sri Lanka's crisis today.

Firstly, the idea of a single multiethnic island state is demonstrably all but dead. In its place is a militarized Sinhala dominated state in which ethnic polarization is not only at its most acute ever, but is inexorably deepening. Just as the vast majority of Sinhalese have - for over a decade - consistently voted for the more hardline of Sri Lanka's main political parties, the Tamils' have been rallying to the Eelam project as never before. Secondly, they are doing so despite massive repression - not only in Sri Lanka but also in the self-styled liberal democracies of the Western world. Proscriptions of the LTTE have been followed in many Western countries by undisguised intimidation of their Tamil residents (as civil liberties groups point out, the Tamils are not alone in this regard). Indeed, it is this international repression - which is contemporary with massive ongoing support for the Sri Lankan state, even when its persecution and Sinhala chauvinism is unabashedly naked - that has done most to compact Tamil sentiment towards the Eelam project. International support for Colombo has also helped consolidate southern support for militarily crushing the Tamil rebellion and reimposing Sinhala hegemony. The implications of all this for Sri Lanka's armed conflict are obvious.

Undoubtedly, the Pongu Tamil rallies - like all those rallies before - will have no discernable effect on international attitudes towards Sri Lanka's conflict - at least for now. Despite the repeated efforts by the Tamil Diaspora to argue their case - of state oppression, of racial persecution, of a slow genocide, the West-led international community has decided it knows better what Sri Lanka's crisis is about: terrorism against a flawed democracy. There is a stubborn refusal to accept the racist logic at the heart of the Sri Lankan state and a proclivity to reduce the crisis to the LTTE's armed struggle. There are, of course, self-serving interests (economic, geopolitical and others) that make this particular 'problem definition' eminently more palatable than the Tamils' argument. Beyond this, there is the arrogance which says that

Third Worlders like us, unable to appreciate cosmopolitan visions because of our tribal passions, simply don't understand how wonderful the liberal peace could be. But no matter, it will be delivered to them by development agencies' 4x4s - preceded, of course, by the battle tanks of the Sri Lankan Army.

Having decided for us that what the Tamils really want is economic opportunity and cultural freedom - as opposed to national liberation from state oppression - the international community has decided to escalate its long-standing support for the crushing of the LTTE. For the past two years the Rajapakse regime has been given a green light to smash the LTTE and discipline the rebellious Tamils. Progress has been far slower than envisaged at the outset. International confidence in the military project is shaky, but remains. As ever, we shall desist from making military predictions; instead, firstly, we point to the self-evident lessons of anti-insurgency campaigns of the past few decades the world over and, secondly, note that the deepening ethno-political crisis (quite apart from the LTTE) in Sri Lanka. In short, there will be no peace without justice here.

Whilst the international community continues to grumble about the 'intransigence' of the LTTE - meaning the Tigers continue to insist that an independent state is the only way Tamils will have lasting security from Sinhala oppression - the international community has shown absolutely no interest in whether the Sri Lankan state will actually accept the Tamils as equal to the Sinhalese. As we have often argued, this is the only basis in which there can be a lasting solution within a united Sri Lanka. Will the Sinhala state accept that Buddhism does not have a 'first and foremost' place in the island and that the state's purpose is not to 'foster' Buddhism? Will it accept that the Tamils are one of the constituent nations of the island, that they - like the Scots in Britain, the Quebecois in Canada, the Kurds in Iraq, the Kosovans, the Eritreans, and others - have a homeland in the Northeast? Undoubtedly not. But that is not the Tamils' problem anymore. The more important question for us is: will the international community accept that there can be no peace in Sri Lanka, liberal or otherwise, unless these things happen? Not, as we noted earlier, at this stage. There are too many benefits to sacrifice just for the sake of the Tamils' 'grievances'.

This week British Foreign Minister Lord Malloch-Brown is visiting Sri Lanka. He first met with President Mahinda Rajapakse and his brother, Defence Secretary Gothabaya

Rajapakse. It must be recalled that over the past three years, these two men, along with the rest of the Sinhala military leadership, have presided over the one of the most sustained and vicious campaigns of military repression of the Tamils in Sri Lanka's history. A clutch of UN officials, international human rights groups and numerous local voices have highlighted the extra-judicial killings, 'disappearances', torture and other atrocities that Sri Lanka's armed forces and paramilitary allies have carried out. These are the individuals that have command responsibility the deaths of many thousands of Tamils - as well as the massacres of thousands more in airstrikes, artillery bombardments and other attacks. However, given the staunch international support for the Sri Lankan state in its campaign of violence, Lord Malloch-Brown's photo opportunities alongside them is symbolically apt.

The past few decades have seen several cases of murderous states enjoying international - especially Western - support whilst persecuting and wiping out ethnic groups. When Saddam Hussein's regime gassed the Kurds, when Indonesia's military slaughtered East Timorese, when Ethiopia tried to wipe out the Eritreans, when whites ruled over blacks in Rhodesia and South Africa, they did so with the active support of the liberal democracies of the West. A number of despots - Pinochet, Marcos, Saddam, and Mugabe amongst others - have long enjoyed staunch Western support during much of their rule. The point here is that Western lectures to the Tamils on 'terrorism', 'extremism', 'human rights' and so on need to be considered against the manifest hypocrisy of Western geopolitical practice.

Despite the rhetorical calls for 'negotiations', for 'a political solution', and so, the international community couldn't care less what happens to the Tamils, provided their respective interests are served by the state. Even when it comes to 'development' of the East - or, for that matter, the south - what is important is that the economic benefits that might accrue to international actors should not be disrupted by the instability of 'terrorism'. It is within this logic that the Sinhala state, no matter how despotic, will remain a vital partner of international activity in Sri Lanka. In short, neither the Sri Lankan state nor the international community are interested in a lasting political solution. Rather, they are concerned with imposing a militarized stability on the Tamil homeland so that a specific economic program - ostensibly for our benefit, but in reality for theirs - can be rolled out.

## OPINION

# Once bitten, never shy

A covert war against the LTTE is underway as India deepens its military engagement with Sri Lanka

**PC VINOJ KUMAR**  
Tehelka

SETTING aside domestic Tamil sensitivities, the Indian government appears to have involved itself in a full-fledged proxy war in Sri Lanka.

While claiming to have adopted a hands-off policy with regard to its neighbour's continuing ethnic conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the forces of the Sinhalese government, India is extending the latter its covert support.

This was revealed by Sri Lanka's army chief, Lieutenant General Sarath Fonseka, last week during an interaction with members of the Foreign Correspondents' Association in Colombo.

"Eight hundred of our officers are trained (in India) every year; free of cost," Fonseka is reported to have said. "India gives them an allowance for the duration of their courses there. The support from India is huge."

Fonseka's remarks came on the heels of a high-level Indian delegation's visit to Colombo at a time when the government troops and the LTTE are locked in a fierce battle in northern Sri Lanka.

The Indian officials' trip was kept a close secret. According to media reports, even the Lankan foreign ministry came to know about the visit of India's national security adviser, MK Narayanan, defence secretary Vijay Singh, and foreign secretary Shiv Shankar Menon only hours after they landed in Colombo on an Indian Air Force plane.

Fonseka, who survived an assassination attempt last year, has vowed to achieve a military victory against the LTTE. His confidence stems from his military success against the Tigers in the Eastern provinces last year and covert Indian support to his war efforts.

Fonseka, President Mahinda Rajapakse and his brother and defence secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse together form the powerful Colombo triumvirate that advocates a military solution to the ethnic strife that has claimed over 70,000 lives in the last three decades. In March, Fonseka made a six-day state visit to India, during which he met with top defence officials.

Military relations between India and Sri Lanka have developed over recent years even



India's concern over Chinese involvement in Sri Lanka have lead to increased Indian military activity on the island, reminiscent of 1980s

though the two countries have not entered any formal cooperation agreement. While many in Delhi support such an agreement, it has not seen the light of day due to stiff opposition from political parties in Tamil Nadu.

At present, however, India appears to have cast aside all neutrality in the Tamil-Sinhala conflict, and adopted a policy best encapsulated by an unnamed mil-

**Sections of those sympathetic to the Lankan Tamil cause see striking similarities in present developments to the 1980s, in the run-up to the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord in 1987, when JR got India embroiled in a fight with the LTTE**

itary officer to a news agency on the eve of Fonseka's Delhi visit: "India wants to ensure that the Sri Lankan army maintains its upper hand over the LTTE."

India's training of Sri Lankan army personnel has never been officially confirmed by either country, until Fonseka's boast last week. More details of the military cooperation are, however, emerging.

According to a July 1 report in The Times of India, in 2008-2009 alone, over 500 Lankan army personnel are to be trained in Indian institutions like the Counter-

Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School at Vairengte in Mizoram and the School of Artillery at Devlali in Maharashtra.

According to the report, about 100 gentlemen cadets will receive training at the Indian Military Academy at Dehradun, 39 officers at the College of Military Engineering at Pune, 15 in the School of Artillery at Devlali, 29 in the Mechanised Infantry Regimental Centre at Ahmednagar, 25 in the College of Materials Management at Jabalpur, 30 in the Electronics and Mechanical Engineering School at Vadodara, and 14 at the Military College of Telecommunication Engineering at Mhow.

Support does not stop at training alone. India has been supplying 'defensive' military equipment to Sri Lanka, including the indigenously manufactured Indra radars.

Officially, India claims it does not supply offensive weapons to Sri Lanka, but there are strong possibilities of a secret arrangement being in place already.

However, in June last year, when MK Narayanan publicly cautioned Sri Lanka against purchasing arms from China and Pakistan, he also said it could approach India for any help it required. Narayanan's statement could have meant only one thing, that India was ready to meet Sri Lanka's arms demands.

India's relations with Sri Lanka is seen by many from the perspective of the Chinese geopolitical strategy in the region. Sri Lanka has moved closer to China in recent years, and Rajapakse, who came to power in 2005, has been particularly adept at playing

the China card against India.

Sri Lanka figures prominently in Chinese naval strategy, being part of China's "string of pearls" (or strategic bases) starting from the South China Sea and extending through the Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean and on to the Arabian and Persian Gulfs.

Security experts like B. Raman, a former additional secretary of the Government of India,

**While claiming to have adopted a hands-off policy with regard to its neighbour's continuing ethnic conflict between the LTTE and the forces of the Sinhalese government, India is extending the latter its covert support.**

have been expressing concern about the Chinese threat. In a recent column, Raman noted: "The semi-permanent presence, which the Chinese are getting in Sri Lanka, will bring them within monitoring distance of India's fast-breeder reactor complex at Kalpakkam near Chennai, the Russian aided Koodankulam nuclear power reactor complex in southern Tamil Nadu and India's space establishments in Kerala."

While India's need to counter this threat is beyond doubt, sections of those sympathetic to the Lankan Tamil cause see striking

similarities in the present developments to the situation in the 1980s, in the run-up to the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka accord in 1987.

In that period, the then Sri Lankan president, JR Jayawardene, got India embroiled into fighting the LTTE. The consequences of that flawed intervention, and the immense suffering it caused Tamils at the hands of the Indian army, are yet to be erased from the bruised memories of Tamils all over the world.

Discontent over the Centre's policies in Sri Lanka continues to simmer in Tamil Nadu, with various parties urging the Indian government to stop military aid to the country.

The LTTE has also made appeals. Following Fonseka's visit to Delhi in March, the outfit issued a statement against India's growing military aid to Sri Lanka, saying: "While proclaiming that a solution to the Tamil problem must be found through peaceful means, India is giving encouragement to the military approach of the Sinhala State. This can only lead to the intensification of the genocide against the Tamils."

A pro-LTTE Sri Lankan Tamil MP said recently, "We are optimistic even during this darkest hour. The Sri Lankan government will ditch India in favour of the Chinese in due course. Then India will have to change its policy and support the Tamils as Indira Gandhi did during her time."

Whatever may be the future twists and turns in South Asia's highly unpredictable diplomatic world, as of now India cannot disown responsibility for its part in the Eelam tragedy.



## PONGU THAMIL

# London grand finale for Pongu Thamil

AROUND 30,000 people attended the Pongu Thamil (Tamil Upsurge) rally in London at the Roehampton Vale sports ground on Saturday, choking traffic in one of the highways, said the organisers.

A number of British parliamentarians cutting across party lines, international representatives of liberation movements, rights activists, and politicians from Tamil and Sinhala communities addressed the event, and sent messages in support of the event.

Even by conservative estimates, nearly 150,000 Tamils of North America, Europe, Africa and Australia have so far demonstrated their support to the cause of Eelam during the last one-month through Pongu Thamil 2008.

The overwhelming response of Diaspora Eelam Tamils to the call of Pongu Thamil was not only impelled by the stepped up sufferings in Sri Lanka, but also was due to suppressed anger over the attitude of the International Community, opined an independent observer reading the mood of the people who attended the London rally.

Dr Bajram Rexhepi, the former Prime Minister of Kosovo and current Mayor of Mitrovica, spoke of the similar history between the Tamils and the Kosovans.

He mentioned that though they had international support, the intransigence of the Milosevic government meant that Kosovo remained oppressed until they fought for their freedom.

Mentioning that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was identified as a terrorist organisation by a number of countries, he said his country was finally freed in 1999, but even then they had to prove that they would not abuse their people's human rights, which they finally succeeded in doing in February this year.

"It was not easy," said the first elected and internationally recognised post-war Prime Minister of Kosovo, adding that "we will show solidarity and support for your struggle."

Professor Thiyagaraj Dasaritha Chetty, Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Qwazulu Natal and a member of the African National Congress restated his government's position that there can be no solution without the involvement of the two principle parties and that no solution can be imposed from outside.

The Liberation Tigers are engaged in an armed struggle as a response to structural failures and though two states may be the answer, that too has problems that need to be addressed, he said. The South African government is willing to help with all efforts that lead to reconciliation and peace, he said.

Liam MacUaid, editor of Socialist Resistance and a member of



An estimated 30,000 Tamils braved the rainy weather to gather at Roehampton Vale for London Pongu Thamil event

Respect, spoke of his family's experience of being forced to leave their home (in Belfast) at the end of the guns of an occupying army. He expressed the solidarity of the workers with all oppressed people, such as the Tamils.

A message of support from Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne of the Nava Sama Samaga Party (NSSP) was read out by local party member Sashie Peiris, in which he expressed his regret at being unable to attend, and his support for the Tamil cause.

Ed Davey, the Liberal Democrats Foreign Affairs spokesman expressed the need to 'get the message' to the Sri Lankan government that they need to get back to the peace negotiating table. He also called for an end to the human rights abuses in Sri Lanka.

Andrew Pelling MP (Conservatives) said the problem in Sri Lanka can only be resolved by negotiation and called on the parties to come back to the table.

Welcoming the efforts by Britain that resulted in Sri Lanka being removed from the UN Human Rights Council, Virendra Sharma MP (Labour) stressed that there was no quick fix.

"Sri Lanka is not just a failed state", said the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils. "There is more."

Mr Sharma said he understood that the crowd felt Tamil Eelam was the only solution and promised to work with the British government to force the Sri Lankan government to take steps towards solving the conflict.

Mike Griffiths, the General Secretary of the Trade Union UNITE said while he understood the Tamil suffering, there was great ignorance of it among the British populace.

Stating that many peoples cry

for self-determination, he said Tamil voice are raised in the same cry at events like the Pongu Thamil gathering.

Pledging to re-double his efforts to restore peace in Sri Lanka, Mr. Griffiths called on all those gathered to do the same.

Comparing her experiences as a migrant to Britain, Siobhan McDonnagh, Labour MP, spoke of understanding Tamil experiences and thanked the Tamils for their contributions in Britain.

Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP (Liberal Democrats) called for there to be many more opportunities to hear Tamil voices expressing their opinion. "It is deeply important to anyone concerned with human rights and justice that we get a political solution that recognises the cultural and linguistic identity," she said. She urged all parties to return to the negotiating table and called for an end to human rights abuses.

Dawn Butler MP (Labour) spoke of seeing the Tamils "walking with purpose for a purpose" to attend the event. Stressing that governments must listen to the sound of so many Tamil voices, she stated her belief that change was possible.

"We will make a change together," she pledged.

Messages of support were also received from Tony Benn MP (Labour), Robert Evans MEP (Labour), Stephen Hammond MP (Conservatives), Simon Hughes MP (Liberal Democrats), Susan Kramer MP (Liberal Democrats), Joan Ryan MP (Labour) and Roy Padayachie (South Africa's Deputy Minister of Communications).

Independent sources said that more than 25,000 people attended the event and the estimation by the Metropolitan Police was bet-

ween 20,000 and 30,000. A small number of police were present, as were security officials organised by the event organisers to ensure the event was peaceful and crowd control was maintained.

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentary S. Jeyanthamoorthy said that Tamils have historically ruled themselves, and that this has been denied them since the colonial times. "Tamils are fighting now to reclaim what is ours," he said.

S. Kajendren, TNA MP for Jaffna, spoke of the war currently being fought on Tamil soil.

"The Tamils are not terrorist," he said, expressing the hope that the freedom of the Tamil people would be achieved soon.

Thaya Iddakarar, British Tamil Councillor, compared the Tamil struggle to the sacrifices the British people were prepared to make in their defence of the Falkland Islands.

Solicitor Matt Foot expressed his shame at being a British citizen when the government, elected on an ethical foreign policy, banned liberation struggles like the LTTE and the PKK.

"Seeing you gives me hope that we can fight," he said.

Other speakers included Suresh Krishna, of the Tamil Councillors Association, former Kingston Mayor Yogan Yoganathan, Merton Mayor Martin Whelton.

The event began with the lighting of the common flame of sacrifice by the parliamentarian for Batticaloa, S. Jeyanthamoorthy, followed by the traditional moment of silent respect.

The folk dance drama that followed was an interactive event, with full participation.

Expressions of support for Tamil Eelam were greeted with overwhelming applause from the

audience, and chants of "We want" roused the crowd to its feet with responses of "Tamil Eelam".

The programme also included traditional Nathaswaram music, the broadcasting of a poem by poet Puthuvai Ratnathurai, and dancing by local youth to Pongu Thamil songs. David Pararajasingham of the British Tamil Forum delivered the welcome address, before the politicians took to the stage to express their support.

Arriving from across the British capital, with some making the journey from outside London, Tamils gathered to reinforce the global call for "motherland, nation, self-rule".

The traffic congestion attendees blocked the main A3 road leading to the event, with the traffic backed up for over a mile even after the event had begun.

As a balloon flew overhead expressing the sentiment that "Tamil Eelam must be free", mini stages set amongst where the Tamils were gathered commemorated the great rulers of the Tamil kingdoms in Jaffna, including Sangkiliyan, Ellalan, Pandara Vanniyan and Princes Kuruvichchi Nachchiyar.

As is now common at all Tamil events in London, a food stall provided traditional foods and soft drinks, while children were entertained with face painting, balloons and flags. Shops around the grounds also sold Tamil Eelam t-shirts and umbrellas.

The large crowd, waving the red and yellow flag in the Tamil colours, braved the weather to turn out in force, with most staying through to the end despite periodic bouts of rain. The red, black and yellow Tamil Eelam umbrellas were not only colourful, but also useful in the British weather.



## PONGU THAMIL



The Sydney event, organised and addressed primarily by Tamil youth, attracted thousands

## Australian Tamils join global rallies

TAMILS in Australia gathered at Pongu Thamil (Tamil upsurge) events in Melbourne and Sydney over the weekend of 5 and 6 July, to lend their voices to the global show of Tamil solidarity.

"Let the International Community hold a referendum to get the will of Eelam Tamils for an independent homeland if it is not convinced of their sentiments shown explicitly through the events of Pongu Thamil all over the world. Australia supported such a referendum in East Timor," said Tamil National Alliance MP, M. K. Shivajilingam, when he came to address the Pongu Thamil event held in Sydney on Sunday July 6.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Gnanam Sivathamby, a former principal said that the International community is ignorant of the fact who are the terrorists and who are the terrorized in Sri Lanka.

"We do not want war. The Tamils are a peace-loving people. We want a peaceful solution. But, we want peace with justice and freedom", said a young member who spoke at the event.

"We have witnessed too much discrimination, too much blood shed and too little justice. It is too late and we have come too far to

compromise on Tamil Eelam" spoke another young member.

Over 3000 Tamil Australians gathered at Mason Park for the event, which was largely organized and addressed by the Tamil youth of Sydney. Many of those who attended were clad in red and yellow and carried pictures of the LTTE leader V. Pirapaharan.

A similar event was held in Melbourne on Saturday at which over a thousand Tamils gathered in Federation Square. The event included traditional Tamil dancing, music and speeches on the Tamil people's struggle for self-determination in Sri Lanka.

Mahenda Rajah, president of the Eelam Tamil Association of Victoria, outlined the oppression of the Tamil's in Sri Lanka. He described the state-sponsored "colonisation" schemes, where Sinhalese settlers were placed in traditionally Tamil areas with the aim of making Tamils a minority, told of the decision to make Sinhala the sole official language of Sri Lanka, and described other state measures that discriminate against Tamils in "employment, economy, education and every other area of life".

Peaceful protests have been met by violent repression. Rajah said: "Tamils have been subjected

to intimidation, torture, rape, unlawful imprisonment ... There have also been cases of targeted killings of Tamil members of parliament, journalists, human rights activists, religious and community leaders, and civilians who speak out against the human rights violations of the Sri Lankan government and armed forces."

Referring to the formation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Rajah said, "Tamils were forced to defend themselves" against the violence. The LTTE had been willing to negotiate with the Sri Lankan government and a peace agreement was signed in February 2002, but the government later withdrew from it.

Rajah urged people to "support us to achieve a lasting negotiated political solution" that would "establish a recognised homeland for the Tamils with full autonomy".

Other speakers at the Pongu Thamil event included Bishop Hilton Deakin, retired Uniting Church minister Richard Wootton, Tamil radio broadcaster Anthony Gratton, aid worker Jason Thomas, Margarita Windisch from the Socialist Alliance and Green Left Weekly, and visiting TNA MP M. K. Shivajilingam.

## Spontaneous show of solidarity in Canada

### 75,000 gather in Toronto

IN a spectacular show at short notice, more than 75,000 Canadian Tamils spontaneously gathered at Downsview Park in Toronto, Canada, for the Pongu Thamil event, forging solidarity for the cause of Eelam, on Saturday, July 5.

It was in fact a response to the oppressive policies of the International Community against Eelam Tamil nationalism, observers said.

### Compelling realities made every fourth person think it was their duty to attend the rally

The Pongu Thamil declaration at the gathering included seeking International Community recognition of Tamil nationalism, Tamil homeland and the self determination of Tamils.

It also called for Canada to reverse the decision to ban the LTTE and the World Tamil Movement.

The resolution also urged the International Community, including Canada, to put an immediate end to the genocide of the Tamils by applying military, economic and diplomatic sanctions against Sri Lanka.

The key speaker for the event

was Australia based Sri Lankan physician Dr. Brian Seneviratne, a member of the Bandaranaike family.

International lobbying, strengthening the military might of the Tamils and influencing the Sinhala people to pressurise Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to come to his senses are the three ways to end the sufferings of the Tamils, he said.

The event started at 3:00 p.m. with the ceremonious lighting of lamps by Paramu Visaaladchi, the mother of the late S. P. Thamilselvan, former political head of the LTTE and Sukunam Pararajasingham, the wife of the late Joseph Pararajasingam, TNA parliamentarian from Batticaloa.

The venue was turned into a sea of red and yellow flags and balloons, while motorists trying to reach the site of the rally clogged many of the main roads.

The time and venue of the event was announced only at 6:00 p.m. on the previous day, to prevent sabotage by the agents of the Government of Sri Lanka, according to the organisers.

The rough estimate of Eelam Tamil population in Canada is around 300,000.

"It was compelling realities that made every fourth person to think it as his or her duty to attend the rally. There is enough message for the International Community to read," said one of the organisers.

## LTTE leader sends congratulations

THE leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Velupillai Pirapaharan congratulated the Tamil Diaspora across the world for rallying together with Pongu Thamil events to strengthen the Tamils struggle for freedom.

B Nadesan, the political head of LTTE conveyed Pirapaharan's greetings when commenting on the Pongu Thamil events organized by Eelam Tamils in the Diaspora in cities across North America, Europe, Africa and Australia in which over 150,000 Tamils have taken part so far to express their solidarity with their brethren back home.

"Even as the Sri Lankan state intensifies its oppressive actions, killing and terrorising Tamils daily, it is engaged in a global campaign of misinformation to

portray the Tamil struggle as terrorism," said Nadesan.

"The Pongu Thamil events attended by tens of thousands of Tamils have exposed the lies spread by the Sri Lankan state to the international community and declared the aspirations of Tamils to the world loud and clear."

The show of solidarity expressed by the Diaspora Tamils have strengthened and encouraged all Tamils in the Northeast of Sri Lanka, he added.

Passing on Pirapaharan's greeting, Nadesan added that the LTTE leader was pleased with the overwhelming response of Diaspora Eelam Tamils to the call of Pongu Thamil and requested the Diaspora to continue their activities to strengthen the liberation struggle.



## PONGU THAMIL



CANADA



CANADA



LONDON



CANADA



MELBOURNE



LONDON



SYDNEY



SYDNEY



LONDON



SWISS



SWISS



LONDON



LONDON





## FEATURES

# India chases the Dragon in Sri Lanka

**Sudha Ramachandran**  
Asia Times

GRIPPED by civil war for over two decades, Sri Lanka is fast becoming a battleground for the two Asian giants - India and China. The looming struggle for influence has Delhi worried as the stage is on India's southern doorstep.

Separated by a narrow stretch of water, the Palk Straits, India and Sri Lanka have generally had good relations, although India has wielded significant influence on the island for decades.

That influence is now being steadily eroded by China, Pakistan and a host of other countries. China's military ties with Sri Lanka have strengthened, as has its role in the Sri Lankan economy.

Last year, Sri Lanka and China signed a US\$37.6 million arms deal for the supply of ammunition and ordnance to the Sri Lankan army and navy.

According to the Times of India, China is also supplying Sri Lanka with Jian-7 fighters, JY-11 3D air surveillance radars, armored personnel carriers, T-56 assault rifles, machine guns, anti-aircraft guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers and missiles.

Chinese economic assistance to Sri Lanka grew five-fold last year to touch \$1 billion, thus displacing Japan as Sri Lanka's largest donor.

There is also a visible increase in China's presence across the island. In the capital Colombo, China is funding the construction of a performing arts theater.

At Norochcholai in Puttalam district, north of Colombo, it is constructing a coal power plant and in the Mannar area China has been awarded a block for exploration of oil and gas.

And at Hambantota, 230 kilometers south of Colombo, the Chinese are building a port at an estimated cost of \$1 billion - over 85% of the project is being funded by the Chinese. The four-phase project is scheduled to be completed in 15 years and work on the first phase began last year. The second phase envisages construction of an industrial port with a 1,000-meter jetty and an oil refinery.

The entire project will include construction of a gas-fired power plant, a ship repair unit, a bunkering terminal, an oil refinery and storage facilities for aviation fuel and liquefied petroleum gas, reports the Daily News, a state-run English daily from Colombo, adding that although Hambantota port has been planned as a service and industrial facility, "it could be developed as a transshipment port in the next two stages to handle 20 million containers per year".

China's rising profile and presence in Sri Lanka has India worried.

For one, China's proximity to

Indian shores has implications for India's security. "The semi-permanent presence, which the Chinese are now getting in Sri Lanka, will bring them within monitoring distance of India's fast-breeder reactor complex at Kalpakam near Chennai, the Russian-aided Koodankulam nuclear power reactor complex in southern Tamil Nadu and India's space establishments in Kerala," writes B Raman, retired chief of the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external intelligence agency.

Besides, there is the impact that Chinese (and Pakistani) arms supplies are having on the Sri Lankan government's approach to the ethnic conflict in the country.

Unlike India, which is in favor of a negotiated political settlement to the conflict, neither Pakistan nor China is averse to the Sri Lankan government persisting with the military option in tackling the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

And while India - due to domestic political compulsions as well as its commitment to a political solution - has been reluctant to provide the Sri Lankan armed forces with offensive weapons, Pakistan and China have had no such inhibitions. They have met Colombo's wish-list for weapons and this has in turn emboldened the government to persist with military operations, including aerial bombing of Tamil areas.

Indian analysts have often pointed out that it is India's reluctance to supply offensive military hardware to the Sri Lankan government that has prompted Sri Lanka to turn to the Chinese and the Pakistanis.

The two have been more than willing to meet Sri Lanka's demands with regard to military hardware. It is not surprising therefore that a grateful Colombo has warmed to Beijing.

Indian officials are drawing parallels between Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

It was India's refusal to do business with Myanmar's generals for years that laid the space open wide for the Chinese to fill. While India and the world ignored the junta, China quickly expanded its economic and defense ties with Myanmar, cementing its influence over the generals.

Similarly, in Sri Lanka, with India reluctant to supply the weaponry that the Sri Lankan armed forces want, it has created a vacuum that China and Pakistan are happily filling.

Unlike India and the European Union, which tick off the Sri Lankan government about abductions and aerial bombing of Tamil areas, China and others are willing to meet its military needs, without asking any questions.



**Sonia Gandhi (L), head of India's ruling Congress Party, meets with Chinese President Hu Jintao (R) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing during an official visit in October 2007, a sign of the strengthening relations between the world's two most populous nations, which analysts feel could be threatened by Sri Lanka's growing relationship with China. Photo Frederic J. Brown / AFP / Getty Images**

Like Myanmar, Sri Lanka today can ignore calls for a negotiated settlement to the conflict thanks to the economic and military support it receives from countries such as China, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

If China's naval cooperation with Myanmar - the reported lease of Coco Island near India's Andaman Islands and its work in modernizing several Myanmar ports - has given the Chinese access to the Bay of Bengal and a presence near the vital Malacca Strait, the massive Hambantota port project on Sri Lanka's southern tip will give Beijing a significant presence in the Indian Ocean.

This is a critical waterway for global trade and commerce, with half the world's containerized freight, a third of its bulk cargo and two-thirds of its oil shipments traversing it.

Indian analysts have often drawn attention to China's encirclement of India, its deepening engagement with all of India's neighbors.

This encirclement has now increased with huge Chinese involvement in Gwadar port in Pakistan, ports in Myanmar and now Hambantota in Sri Lanka.

China's "string of pearls" is tightening around India, says a former Indian intelligence official, referring to the string of

bases in Asia in which China has a presence.

India is understandably worried. Last month, a high-level delegation visited Colombo. Among other issues, India is said to have discussed its concern over the growing Chinese presence in Sri Lanka.

Reports in the media say India is stepping up its military support to the Sri Lankan armed forces.

The Times of India reports that India is "virtually throwing open the doors of its different military institutions to train Sri Lankan armed forces in counter-insurgency operations" and is offering them "specialized naval courses in gunnery, navigation, communication and anti-submarine warfare".

The "twin strategy of arms supplies and military training, coupled with intelligence-sharing and coordinated naval patrolling is primarily aimed to counter China's ever-growing strategic inroads into Sri Lanka," it says.

As in Myanmar, where India has dramatically toned down its criticism of the junta over the past decade and prefers to call for reconciliation rather than harping on restoration of democracy, in Sri Lanka, too, Delhi seems to be slowly looking the other way - at least in public - with regard to Colombo's human-rights violations.

At a recent United Nations human rights review in Geneva, India - unlike several Western countries which attacked Sri Lanka on its rights record, citing arbitrary arrests, abductions, involuntary disappearances, etc - focused on the positive aspects of the Sri Lankan situation.

India fully backed Colombo by drawing attention to the "active role" it is playing in the UN Human Rights Council.

Clearly, the Sri Lankan government has - like the Myanmar junta - learned to exploit the China-India battle for influence to its advantage.

But it is not just the government that's playing the field. China appears to be flirting with both the government and the LTTE.

A recent report in Jane's Intelligence Review says the LTTE has not only purchased small arms and ammunition from the Chinese but also heavier weapons such as mortars and artillery.

While it is likely the LTTE purchased the Chinese-origin weapons from the black market, the possibility of Beijing playing the field cannot be ruled out. In which case, it is not India alone that should be worrying about the growing Chinese presence in the island. The Sri Lankan government has reason for concern.

## NEWS

# Scurried pact for oil off Mannar

CAIRN India, a subsidiary of Cairn UK Holdings Limited, signed a Petroleum Resources agreement to explore for oil and natural gas in the Mannar Basin on Monday, July 7.

The signing took place in front of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at Temple Trees between the Sri Lankan Minister for Petroleum and Petroleum Development Resources A.H.M Fowzie and the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Director of the Cairn India, Indrajit Banerjee.

Commenting on the deal Fowzie said, "Today we signed an agreement with Cairn India, formally offering them the rights to explore oil and gas deposits at block one in the Gulf of Mannar."

According to the minister Cairn handed over a cheque for \$1 million to the government. Eight blocks have been identified

enced, oil and gas exploration is a risk business and success is not always guaranteed."

According to a press statement by the Cairn, the exploration block (Block SL 2007-01-001), which is offshore North West Sri Lanka and covers approximately 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> in water depths of 200 metres to 1800 metres was awarded to Cairn India in the recent Sri Lanka bid round.

However, the agreement has been landed without tenders, press reports quoted sources close to the deal as saying.

The work programme includes proposals to acquire 5,000 kilometres of 2D, 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> of 3D seismic and drill three wells in the initial three years of the eight year exploration period, according to Cairn.

The exploration would begin within 6 months, according to informed they said.

Cairn Lanka (Private) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Cairn India, has been formed and will hold a 100% participating interest in the block.

Expressing gratitude for the support he received from the Sri Lankan president, Mr. Banerjee said that Cairn India was delighted to be the first company to be awarded an exploration license by the GoSL.

Cairn along with its joint venture partners has invested billions of dollars in a variety of projects and developments in South Asia.

Cairn India Limited, a subsidiary of Carin UK Holdings Ltd, engages in the exploration, development, production, and sale of oil and gas in India.

According to Business Week, the company, as of May 13, 2008, had exploration and appraisal interests in 14 blocks. Its oil and gas fields are located in Barmer, Ravva, and Cambay Basin, India.

The company was incorporated in 2006 and is headquartered in Gurgaon, India with additional offices in Chennai, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

It was listed on 9 January 2007 on the Bombay and National Stock Exchanges.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Cairn India was the largest IPO to date in the Indian primary equity markets.

Cairn India currently has a market capitalisation in excess of \$5 billion, ranking as the fourth largest oil and gas company in India.

Indrajit Banerjee joined the board of directors of Cairn India on 26 Feb 2007 and was appointed as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) with effect from 1 March 2007.



Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse accepts a bonus cheque of USD1million from Cairn India Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director, Indrajit Banerjee, as part of the oil exploration deal.

## India and Sri Lanka to sign comprehensive trade pact

**Observers say that the pact between Cairn India Ltd and the Sri Lankan government, which was originally scheduled to be signed on the 10th, was rushed through, fearing reprisals from the Marxist JVP which, along with others, views it as detrimental to Sri Lanka's national interests**

for oil exploration in the Mannar Gulf, with Cairn India getting block-one.

Observers say that the pact, which was originally scheduled to be signed on the 10th, was rushed through, fearing reprisals from the JVP, which has already announced a trade union protest against Rajapaksa government.

"This is a pact for blood in land and oil in sea," a Colombo based observer told TamilNet.

Announcing the signing of the agreement, Mr. Bnerjee said: "Cairn India is delighted to be awarded the exploration licence by the Government of Sri Lanka. The Mannar basin has not been explored in Sri Lankan waters and as such represents a frontier petroleum province."

"I hasten to add that along with the success we have experi-

INDIA and Sri Lanka have finalised a long awaited Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and expect it to be signed on the sidelines of the SAARC Summit to be held in Colombo early next month.

"We hope to have the CEPA signed on the sidelines of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Corporation) summit opening on August 1. This is India's first agreement within SAARC member countries," Gopal K. Pillai, secretary in the Indian ministry of commerce and industry, told Indian media.

The agreement is the culmination of 12 rounds of talks at the level of Joint Secretaries and Secretaries of the two countries and finalised at talks led by Pillai and Sri Lankan Minister of Investment Promotion G.L. Peiris, he said.

Analysts see this as the latest effort by India to keep Sri Lanka within its sphere of influence and fend off growing Chinese economic influence in the island nation.

Commenting on the agreement which covers trade in the areas of goods, services, education and custom corporations that is expected to boost trade and open up services and investment sectors, Pillai said: "It is a good overall agreement in line with our engagement with the neighbouring countries. It will be fully operational in three years."

The first country with which

India entered into a CEPA was Singapore. Currently, India is in the process of negotiating similar trade agreements with Japan, South Korea, ASEAN and the European Union (EU).

**Analysts see this as the latest effort by India to keep Sri Lanka within its sphere of influence and fend off growing Chinese economic influence in the island nation. The pact is going ahead despite concern expressed by some Sri Lankan political parties, including the JVP, that the agreement favours Delhi**

India signed the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Sri Lanka in 1999 and but that was limited to exports of goods.

Since the signing of the FTA, Sri Lanka's trade volume with India increased from \$49 million to \$516 million whilst India's trade volume with Sri Lanka

increased fourfold from \$549 million to \$2.7 billion.

The two neighbouring countries expect the volume of trade in goods and services to rise from \$516 million to \$1.5 billion by the time CEPA is fully operational, in 2012.

"FTA is a win-win situation to both countries. We are really looking at increasing Sri Lanka's trade volume to 1.5 billion dollars by 2012," said Pillai.

Commenting on the signing of the CEPA, Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCISL) President Nawaz Rajabdeen said it could be considered a graduation from the FTA with Sri Lanka standing to gain more than India.

Some political parties in Sri Lanka, including the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) are against the CEPA and feel even the FTA that is in place now favours India and disadvantages Sri Lanka.

Allaying the JVP's fears, Rajabdeen said that some of the short comings of FTA would be corrected before signing the CEPA.

Petroleum products and transport equipment forms almost 50 per cent of the total Indian export to Sri Lanka, while primary and semi-finished iron and steel is also a fast-growing export item. Coffee, tea, edible oil, non-ferrous metal imports, spices and electrical machinery forms the bulk of Sri Lankan export to India.



## FEATURES

# Asia's angry monk syndrome

Megawati Wijaya  
Asia Times

FROM Sri Lanka to South Korea, from Tibet to Myanmar, Asia's Buddhist clergy are in unprecedented numbers exerting their moral authority onto politics, abandoning their detachment from worldly events and giving rise to what at least one academic has referred to as a region-wide "angry monk syndrome".

Agitated ascetics made global headlines last year during Myanmar's "Saffron Revolution", where in their thousands they took to the streets to protest against the military government's policies and perceived mistreatment of clergy members. At the height of the unrest, monks dropped the symbolic gauntlet by overturning their alms bowls and refused to accept donations from government officials and their family members.

This year, over 300 Tibetan monks marched in protest in Lhasa in commemoration of the 49th anniversary of an uprising against Chinese rule and to air more modern complaints and grievances, including calls for the release of monks detained last year after the Dalai Lama was awarded a congressional medal of honor by the United States, for the withdrawal of all troops and security personnel from their monasteries and the re-instatement of monks expelled from monasteries for their failure of "patriotic education" exams that required them to denounce the Dalai Lama.

And over the weekend, thousands of Buddhist monks joined South Korean citizens in candlelight rallies in front of Seoul's city hall to protest the government's controversial decision in April to resume imports of beef from the United States, which protestors believe could be tainted with mad cow disease. The usually apolitical monks' involvement in the rallies exerted additional pressure on the government to review the unpopular decision.

While each monk protest is unique in its demands and character, Buddhist clergymen are making their political voices heard in unprecedented ways and increasing numbers across the region. In the process they are often bringing the Sangha out of detached isolation and directly into the cut-and-thrust of everyday politics. The growing images of Buddhist monks leading political protests cuts a sharp contrast to the clichéd calm and serene robe-wearing ascetic meditating in the pursuit of otherworldly enlightenment.

John Whalen-Bridge, co-editor of a series of books on Buddhism, refers to the growing phenomenon as "angry monk syndrome", a flip way of referring to the clergy's departure from the pursuit of equanimity and raised-fist involvement in the call for

political change and economic justice. Politically active monks are not an entirely new phenomenon. Western observers will likely recall the images of Vietnamese monk Thich Quang Duc, who, in protest against the corruption and repression of the South Vietnamese government, self-immolated himself in June 1963.

Lesser known is the violent role aggrieved ascetics played during the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945), when Chinese monks abandoned their commitment to non-violence for reasons of patriotism. Certain monks at the time even cited Buddhist scriptures to justify killing their Japanese enemies. On the other side of the battlefield, Zen priests were similarly conspicuous as aggressive and visible defenders of imperial Japan and its nationalistic policies.

Monks were also in the forefront of protests in colonial Burma before the country now known as Myanmar won independence from Britain in 1948. After independence, monks were actively involved in the nationwide uprisings against the military junta-led government in 1988, which were eventually crushed by soldiers. There are accounts of monks sharpening bicycle tire spokes and launching them at soldiers during that violent melee.

The recent surge in monk-led political ferment, usually towards the aim of giving voice to the often silent majority, seems to signal a political reawakening of Asia's Buddhist clergy. Well-organized and in most instances peacefully executed, the protests have provided a resounding reaffirmation to the Sangha's social relevance in modern times. It is also a potentially profound political trend, in that monks tend to speak out on behalf of the politically oppressed and economically downtrodden.

That's the majority of the population in many authoritarian-run countries with substantial Buddhist populations. In Myanmar and Vietnam, for instance, monks have led the moral charge against their respective abusive and repressive governments. In more economically advanced Thailand and South Korea, politicized monks are highlighting the gross inequalities and rampant corruption that has accompanied rapid economic growth.

Middle-way protests

What do these scattered protests say about the Sangha's contemporary mindset? Pattana Kitiarsa, an associate professor in the department of Southeast Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, believes the Sangha's role has frequently been misunderstood in historical



Buddhist monks went on the rampage in Colombo recently, trashing local store fronts

and modern context.

"Buddhism and Buddhist monks are often stereotyped as peace-loving, world-rejecting, calm, serene and poised," he said. "However, when monks become or choose to become worldly-engaged actors, they have put themselves in a familiar position of expressing, communicating, acting, or dealing with the mundane world."

To be sure, individual monks have stood out for their political and social postures. Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh has long promoted so-called "socially engaged Buddhism", which advocates the application of Buddhist principles towards resolving social, environmental and political problems. His grassroots relief organization helped to rebuild bombed villages, re-establish schools and medical centers, resettle homeless villagers, and organize agricultural co-operatives during the Vietnam War, but he was later exiled due to his non-violent anti-war activities.

The jet-setting Dalai Lama, head of Tibet's government-in-exile and winner of the Nobel Peace prize for his non-violent approach to political struggle, is an individual monk of that same socially-engaged mold. As is Taiwan's Buddhist nun, teacher and philanthropist, Cheng Yen, whose Tzu-Chi Foundation is one of the island-state's largest charity organizations with offices in over 30 countries around the world, undertaking activities as wide-ranging as disaster relief, environmental protection and bone marrow donations.

While globally recognized Buddhist leaders have helped to spawn a worldwide movement of engaged Buddhism, recent developments show that the movement is transcending mere individuals and taking on mass proportions. Internationalized and well-informed monks are joining

forces in ever larger numbers to launch mass protests against their respective governments and perceived unjust economic actors.

But does this growing, often political, mass movement contradict the Buddha's teaching to eschew worldly matters and abide in equanimity?

Geshe Jangchup Choeden, a Tibetan Buddhist monk-teacher from the Gaden Shartse monastery in India, says that according to ancient scriptures the "ideal" monk is disciplined and refrains from all actions which might bring him into conflict with the clergy's devotees. But, he asks, "Is it possible to have an ideal monk in the modern world? How essential is the ideal monk in times or at places when and where they are needed to take actions against injustice or for the well-being of the people?"

Whether Myanmar's protesting monks, who mobilized en masse last year against a military regime notorious for its human rights abuses and entrenched corruption, lived up to this ideal is definitely debatable. The government accused many of the robed demonstration leaders as "fake" monks and assaulted and jailed many of them and their followers. Other monks were confined by security forces to their monasteries.

In Sri Lanka, Buddhist monks are clearly taking sides amid the country's deeply polarized and increasingly violent ethnic- and religion-based politics. There they have their own political parties, sit in parliament, and are the strongest supporter of the Sinhalese Buddhist government's campaign to militarily obliterate the mostly Hindu Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) separatist group.

Academic Kitiarsa points to the diverse upbringings, educational backgrounds and monastic practices for varied monk responses. "In reality, there has

never been one singular monk. Only Buddha himself is considered a model monk," he said. "Monks in the 21st century could be militants, activists, magicians, forest-dwelling world renouncers. All these monks wish to have their voices heard in their own ways."

That was clearly the case when Tibetan monks wept and cried out "Tibet is not free! Tibet is not free!" when Western media members visited Jokhang Temple, one of Tibet's holiest shrines, during a government-managed press tour in March.

These extraordinary scenes helped to keep the government's recent security crackdown and continued occupation of Tibet in international headlines ahead of Beijing's hosting of the Summer Olympic Games in August.

There are concurrent worldly risks that the socially engaged movement is in certain instances being manipulated for narrow political purposes.

In South Korea, for instance, where monks have been on the vanguard of the street protests against US beef imports, the demonstrations are now increasingly being driven by liberal opponents of President Lee Myung-bak's new conservative government.

But in countries like Myanmar or places like Tibet, where the moral argument against the prevailing political order is more obvious, monks are in increasing numbers straying from the past middle path of loving kindness towards what some see as a more socially-engaged path towards enlightenment. "There is nothing wrong or undesirable with the Sangha protesting out of their compassion for humanity," said Choeden. "But once their aims are achieved, they should get back as soon as possible to their purpose and avoid drifting into the ways of the world."

FEATURES

‘Conversations in a Failing State’

TamilNet

TOWARDS the end of 19th century, the renowned American writer Mark Twain visited Colombo. While he was admiring the plurality of colour in the native dresses, somewhere in Pettah, he saw native children coming out of an English school, in line, in white uniform and in the same hairdo. 'What an ugly scene', he wrote, being sad at the way colonial institutions depriving natives of their pluralism. More than a century later, Patrick Lawrence, another American, comes to Sri Lanka to record the net results, a failed nationalism and a failed state, as consequences of the loss of pluralism.

Almost unbelievably for a nation with so many advantages and so much promise, it was a legitimate question by 2006 whether Sri Lanka could be called 'a failed state,' writes Patrick Lawrence in his recent book 'Conversations in a Failing State', brought out by Hong Kong based Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in March 2008.

"Sri Lanka is at war with itself, and I had expected as much... It suggested, even then, the notion of a nation as a kind of forced imposition, as an idea no Sri Lankan appeared to grasp-not, at least, with enthusiasm or understanding."

In his opinion, the failure of judiciary in Sri Lanka is the collapse of the last bastion of the state of Sri Lanka. He sees it not as the work of any single individual, but as the cumulative effect of the failure the system that started long back. This and the loss of public space in Sri Lanka are covered at length with many illustrative examples in his book.

Mr. Patrick Lawrence was correspondent, commentator and editor in Asia for more than twenty-five years working for the International Herald Tribune, New Yorker and the Far Eastern Economic Review. The present publication is a result of his study as Senior Rapporteur for the AHRC.

Excerpts from some of his interesting observations follow:

On average Sinhala opinion:

...You think of Sinhalese heritage. I'm Sinhalese, but I'm thinking of the heritage of this country. It so happens that ninety percent of our heritage was built by Sinhalese. The Sinhalese-they left a large amount of evidence to show that they were here for good, as it were. The others never left anything that signified their attachment to this place. What have they left? Nothing. They weren't concerned about living here. They were just traders who went back."

The others: The Tamil population.

Back: Back to Tamil Nadu, to southern India.

Going back is a recurring theme among some Sinhalese. In 1981, just after the burning of the Jaffna Library, a legislator from the U. N. P. said of the Tamils in a parliamentary debate, "If there is discrimination in this land, which is not their homeland, then why try to stay here? Why not go back home, where there would be no discrimination? There you have your culture, your education, universities, et cetera. There you are masters of your own fate... It would be advisable for the Tamils not to disturb the sleeping Sinhalese brother.... Everyone knows that lions, when disturbed, are not peaceful." [...]

What is striking about such versions of events, including Stanley's, is how neatly the past is organized. [...] The concern is simply that Tamils understand the past as they should, and so in whose country they live. [...]

Stanley said, "I don't think there's an ethnic crisis, even though they call it one. It's just a terrorist group trying to create disorder. The Sinhalese and Tamils are very friendly people. It's just not their homeland. They've left no achievements." [Chapter 4]

On Sri Lankan historiography

What about history, then? On this point Shanthi was wrong. Yes, there have been formidable histories of Ceylon and Sri Lanka. Notable in this respect is the work of K. M. de Silva, the historian in Kandy. But de Silva's book, A History of Sri Lanka, is not the history Sri Lankans share. It does not define the past of public space in Sri Lanka-not as people commonly think of it. The past in Sri Lanka has been both despoiled and neglected. And it is the despoiled and neglected past, not history, that Sri Lankans carry in their minds. The paradox is plain: History matters in Sri Lanka, but there is no history.

Instead there is a mythical past, the past of Vijaya, the legendary voyager from northern India who, with seven hundred companions, is said to have come to Sri Lanka sometime in the fifth century B. C., whereupon the Sinhalese became Sinhalese. This is the past of great kings and great stones and great tanks. It is the past of we-were-here-first and ours-was-the-great-civilization. It is not a human narrative; it is not inhabited in the way history is by definition (and certainly not by those we now call the indigenous, who arrived at least ten millennia

			Indicators of Instability											
Rank	Total	Country	Demographic Pressures	Refugees and Displaced Persons	Group Grievance	Human Flight	Uneven Development	Economy	Delegitimation of State	Public Services	Human Rights	Security Apparatus	Factionalized Elites	External Intervention
1	113.7	Sudan	9.2	9.8	10.0	9.0	9.1	7.7	10.0	9.5	10.0	9.9	9.7	9.8
2	111.4	Iraq	9.0	9.0	10.0	9.5	8.5	8.0	9.4	8.5	9.7	10.0	9.8	10.0
3	111.1	Somalia	9.2	9.0	8.5	8.0	7.5	9.2	10.0	10.0	9.7	10.0	10.0	10.0
4	110.1	Zimbabwe	9.7	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.5	10.0	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.5	9.0	7.0
5	108.8	Chad	9.1	8.9	9.5	7.9	9.0	8.3	9.5	9.1	9.2	9.6	8.7	9.0
6	107.3	Ivory Coast	8.6	8.3	8.8	8.4	8.0	8.9	9.5	7.9	9.2	9.6	9.3	9.8
7	105.5	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	9.4	8.9	8.8	7.6	9.1	8.0	8.3	8.7	8.9	9.6	8.6	9.6
8	102.3	Afghanistan	8.5	8.9	9.1	7.0	8.0	8.3	8.8	8.0	8.2	9.0	8.5	10.0
9	101.3	Guinea	7.8	7.4	8.1	8.3	8.5	8.5	9.6	8.9	8.6	8.1	9.0	8.5
10	101.0	Central African Republic	8.9	8.4	8.8	5.5	8.6	8.4	9.0	8.0	8.2	8.9	9.3	9.0
11	100.9	Haiti	8.6	4.2	8.0	8.0	8.2	8.4	9.2	9.0	9.1	9.3	9.3	9.6
12	100.1	Pakistan	8.2	8.5	9.0	8.1	8.5	5.8	8.7	7.1	8.7	9.5	9.5	8.5
13	97.7	North Korea	8.0	6.0	7.2	5.0	8.8	9.6	9.8	9.5	9.7	8.3	7.9	7.9
14	97.0	Burma	8.5	8.5	9.1	8.0	8.9	7.6	9.1	8.3	9.8	9.0	8.2	4.0
15	96.4	Uganda	8.1	9.4	8.5	8.0	8.5	7.5	8.5	8.2	8.2	8.3	7.8	7.4
16	95.9	Bangladesh	8.6	5.8	9.6	8.4	9.0	6.9	9.0	7.4	7.8	8.0	9.5	5.9
17	95.8	Nigeria	8.2	5.6	9.5	8.5	9.1	5.4	9.1	8.7	7.1	9.2	9.5	5.7
18	95.3	Ethiopia	9.0	7.9	7.8	7.5	8.6	8.0	7.9	7.0	8.5	7.5	8.9	6.7
19	95.2	Burundi	9.1	8.9	6.7	6.7	8.8	8.2	7.1	8.9	7.5	6.8	7.5	9.0
20	94.9	Timor-Leste	8.1	8.5	7.1	5.3	6.5	8.5	9.5	7.9	6.9	9.0	8.8	8.8
21	93.6	Nepal	8.1	5.2	8.9	6.1	9.2	8.2	8.5	6.6	8.8	8.3	8.5	7.2
22	93.5	Kazakhstan	7.7	5.4	7.1	7.1	8.6	7.5	9.2	6.8	9.0	8.9	9.2	7.0
23	93.4	Sierra Leone	8.6	7.4	7.1	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.0	8.0	7.0	6.5	7.7	7.0
24	93.2	Yemen	8.0	6.7	7.3	7.2	8.7	8.0	7.8	8.1	7.2	8.0	9.0	7.2
25	93.1	Sri Lanka	7.0	8.6	9.5	8.9	8.2	6.0	8.9	6.5	7.5	8.7	9.2	6.1
26	93.0	Republic of the Congo	8.7	7.3	6.8	6.1	8.1	8.3	8.5	8.8	7.9	7.9	7.2	7.4
27	92.9	Liberia	8.1	8.5	6.5	6.8	8.3	8.4	7.0	8.6	6.7	6.9	8.1	9.0
28	92.4	Lebanon	6.9	8.6	9.0	7.0	7.1	6.3	7.3	6.4	7.0	9.0	8.8	9.0
29	92.2	Malawi	9.0	6.0	6.0	8.0	8.8	9.2	7.9	9.0	8.0	5.4	7.5	7.4
30	92.0	Solomon Islands	8.5	4.8	8.0	5.1	8.0	8.0	8.5	8.5	7.1	7.7	8.8	9.0
31	91.3	Kenya	8.4	8.0	6.9	8.0	8.1	7.0	8.0	7.4	7.0	7.3	8.2	7.2
32	91.2	Niger	9.2	5.9	8.9	6.0	7.2	9.2	8.2	8.8	7.1	6.7	6.0	8.0
33	89.7	Colombia	6.8	9.5	7.4	8.4	8.4	3.8	8.2	6.0	7.4	8.3	8.5	7.0
34	89.7	Burkina Faso	8.6	5.6	6.4	6.6	8.9	8.2	7.6	8.9	6.6	7.6	7.7	7.0
35	89.4	Cameroon	7.0	6.8	7.0	7.9	8.7	6.1	8.5	7.5	7.2	7.7	8.0	7.0
36	89.2	Egypt	7.7	6.5	7.8	6.2	7.8	7.0	9.0	6.7	8.5	6.1	8.3	7.6
37	89.2	Rwanda	9.1	7.0	8.7	7.6	7.1	7.5	8.5	6.9	7.4	4.6	8.2	6.6

Sri Lanka is 25th on the list of failed states this year, its worst ever position

before Vijaya). [...]

There is Vijaya, of course, who enters the narrative by way of a text on a plaque [in the National Museum, Colombo]:

The transition from Pre- and Proto-history to the historical period in Sri Lanka begins with the Indo-Aryan settlers headed by the legendary ruler Vijaya from North India around the 5th century B. C., thus commencing the Sinhalese race.

This is sloppy logic and very sloppy writing-sloppy and provocative. There is the problematic word "legendary." Are we acquiring a notion of history in these galleries, or a creation myth? [...]

Then the problem of "the Sinhalese race." By even the most lenient of definitions, the Sinhalese are not remotely a race. And the scholars of our time are moving further and further away from any such notion: Contemporary thinking is such that the very notion of race is losing its validity. In any case, one has never heard of a heroic adventurer arriving somewhere and "commencing" a race. It is, prima facie, an impossible idea. [Chapter 11]

On the Sinhala-Only Act

Three years later S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike led the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, a party of conservative social democrats, to power,

breaking the U. N. P.'s monopoly. Riding the populist wave, Bandaranaike appealed to the basest instincts of an insecure majority. Hence the main plank in his platform was "Sinhala only" as a national language. It worked, needless to say. He then went on to push through the language law-a measure that, I would argue, stands as the most tragic mistake and betrayal of principle in all of Sri Lanka's history as an independent nation. [Chapter 1]

It is difficult to date the beginning of Sri Lanka's gradual decline toward the status of a failed state. One might say it started at independence, when the elite that took power from the colonial administration failed in the most fundamental task facing it: to bring the vast, excluded majority into the new polity and all its processes, to make citizens of the Ceylonese-to empower them, as we would say today. One could also point to Bandaranaike's language law, which had a devastating effect on the consciousness of the Ceylonese as belonging to a modern, secular, multicultural nation at just the moment such a consciousness needed to be encouraged. [Chapter 2]

On political violence and militarisation:

How did violence, the threat of violence, and the fear these produce among the citizenry,

become so endemic in a society that inherited so stately a thing as the Westminster model? This question, too, can be answered variously.

In 1956, while parliament was debating Bandaranaike's language law, Tamil leaders began a satyagraha at Galle Face Green. Satyagraha is an Indian term meaning, roughly, "support for the truth." The term was much used during the Indian independence movement to describe resistance movements based on Gandhi's principle of nonviolence. Those mounting their satyagraha at Galle Face Green were attacked by Sinhalese supporters of the language law, and eighteen people were injured. It is a tiny number compared with all the casualties that have followed, but perhaps we can date the appearance of violence in Sri Lanka, at least in its contemporary guise, to this small, mostly forgotten occasion.

The dirty war and Argentina's disappeared are well-known around the world. But Sri Lanka's grim descent into violence and near-chaos is little understood outside the country. Foreigners are generally aware that there is a war between the government and the Tamil separatists, but this is usually cast in the simplistic terms of ethnic problems and a war against "terrorists," a word often used to remove the need for any further understanding.

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## NEWS

# Sri Lanka, a case of political inequality

TamilNet

STRIKING a sharp contrast to Colombo's portrayal of Eelam struggle as a terrorist issue, Frances Stewart, the director of the Oxford based Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), looks at the crisis as a case of inequalities in political power between the Tamils and Sinhalese.

In an interview that appeared in Human Rights Tribune, on Thursday, she said: "Horizontal inequalities have political, economic, social and cultural dimensions... Inequalities in political power, which are very important, where one group may have total dominance of the political system, and another group does not have any access, which is the situation more or less in Sri Lanka."

Ms. Stewart said it while answering to a question posed by IPS correspondent Michael Deibert, who interviewed her in relation to a publication of CRISE, 'Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multi-Ethnic Societies', which is to be released shortly.

CRISE, directed by Ms. Stewart is a Development Research Centre within Oxford University, supported by the British Government Department for International Development (DFID).

Answering another question on steps that should be taken by governments and international institutions to address these inequalities and prevent conflict in the future, she said:

"This issue has been surprisingly neglected by the international community. If you look at the normal policies that we advocate, such as democracy, saying that countries have to be democratic and they have to have many parties, we don't think about the implications between groups."

"Democracy can lead to quite a dangerous situation in a multi-ethnic society unless you accompany it with policies to protect groups. If you have one group that is in a majority, they can really suppress the freedoms of a minority group," she said.

"On the political side, what it requires is recognition of the importance of distributing power across groups and not having exclusive power."

A CRISE working paper by Ms. Stewart, titled "Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development," available at the Centre's website, reveals that the research was based on nine case studies, ranging from Africa and Asia to Latin America.

The paper says that Horizontal Inequality has provoked a spectrum of political reaction, including severe and long-lasting violent conflict (Uganda, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Northern Ireland), less severe rebellion (Chiapas),

coups (Fiji), periodic riots and criminality (the US), occasional racial riots (Malaysia) and a high level of criminality (Brazil).

"Where ethnic identities coincide with economic/social ones, social instability of one sort or another is likely - ethnicity does become a mobilising agent, and as this happens the ethnic divisions are enhanced. Sri Lanka is a powerful example; Chiapas another," is one of the conclusions found in the working paper.

However, the main problem in the development analysis of the CRISE research is its basis that Tamils were better placed in development than the Sinhalese under the British rule, said a Sri Lankan development analyst in Colombo when contacted by TamilNet.

The CRISE paper places Sri Lanka along with Malaysia, South Africa, and Uganda and says these are situations where

**Economic autonomy last prevailed in the Tamil areas only under the Dutch, with pearl-diving contracts. The British period marked a decline and eventual disappearance of the foreign trade of Tamils, as their plantation based economy helped only Colombo.**

the politically powerful represent the relatively deprived.

The paper argues that the government policies to bridge the gap in Sri Lanka provoked serious violence because the policies were culturally (language policy) and economically invasive and because of the geographic concentration of Tamils in the Northeast, facilitating a demand for independence unlike the case of the Indians in Fiji.

The paper also compares and contrasts Sri Lanka and Malaysia:

"Both apparently started in a similar situation, with the political majority at an economic disadvantage, but while attempts to correct this situation in Malaysia were successful, they actually provoked war in Sri Lanka."

The paper continues with statistics in education and government employment in Sri Lanka and argues that government policies to bring in horizontal equality by reverting the better position held by Tamils earlier, were successful, but provoked crisis.



Inequalities in political power have led to the demand for Tamil Eelam says Frances Stewart of CRISE

But, according to the Colombo analyst, the better position held earlier by Tamils in education and government service, doesn't mean that they were better developed.

This is again falling a prey to the sophisticated propaganda of the Sri Lankan state to justify its genocidal programme. Not only the international study groups, but even some Colombo-centric Tamil intellectuals have taken the bait, he said.

"Education and government service never meant an economy for Tamils in their own land and never helped the accumulation of capital in the Tamil areas."

"Economic autonomy last prevailed in the Tamil areas only under the Dutch. At that time, there were Eelam Tamils who were able to compete with officials of the Dutch East India Company in getting the pearl-diving contracts."

The British period marked a decline and eventual disappearance of the foreign trade of Tamils. "The plantation based economy of the British helped only the accumulation of capital in Colombo and made Tamils to depend on it," he observed.

The ports and communication infrastructure of the Tamil regions, which were vital for development, were neglected under the British.

"For instance, while railway was introduced to southern Sri Lanka in 1864, it came to Jaffna only in 1905. The coastal highways linking the Tamil areas were never developed. Even the Jaffna - Colombo coastal route was abandoned in British times."

Observing further, he said that

**Democracy can lead to quite a dangerous situation in a multi-ethnic society unless you accompany it with policies to protect groups. One group in the majority can really suppress the freedoms of a minority.**

there was no urbanisation in Tamil areas under the British.

The last population influx to Tamil areas was only under the Dutch, if the Sinhala colonisation schemes are not counted. "The fact that people were moving out from Tamil areas and urban centres since British times only indicate that there was no development."

Talking on education as an index of development, he said that education in Tamil areas were actually developed by the American Mission, whom the British wanted to downplay at that time by sending them off to a region, which was not in their priority.

The kind of education that was developed first by the missionaries and later by the native schools, helped a middle-class formation, produced professionals and was the only option for livelihood, but this was never translated into a sound basis for the development of the Eelam Tamil region, he opined.

"It is a myth that the Tamils were the favourites of the rulers and received advantages under the British. Anyone, who doubts it should read the British government assessment of Ceylon communities in the Donoughmore report of 1928. The coastal Sinhalese were assessed as the most progressive community and not surprisingly independent Ceylon was transferred to them in 1948."

"Had the Tamils been 'the developed' and the 'favourites,' they would have seen Eelam in British time itself," said the Colombo based analyst, who didn't wish to be named due to the naive ban on TamilNet and the prevailing security situation for journalists and academics in Sri Lanka.