

USD900 million in World Bank Aid for Sri Lanka

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## Tamils in UK rally, demand direct British aid to IDPs in Vanni



SEVERAL thousands, largely British Tamils, assembled outside the British Parliament Monday between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. to demand action against indiscriminate aerial bombardment of Tamils by the Sri Lankan government and to urge the British government to urgently take direct action to help save lives in Vanni.

More than six thousand

attended the rally, according to an estimate by the organizers, the British Tamil Forum (BTF).

The rally date coincided with the day Members of British Parliament return after summer recess.

John McDonnell MP (Labour) for Hayes and Harlington and Virendra Sharma MP (Labour) for Ealing, Southall and who is also

the current Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPG-T) briefly joined the protestors.

They both said that they shared the sentiments of the protestors and condemned the human rights violations carried out by Sri Lanka.

The British parliamentarians said that they assist in persuading

other MPs to support Tamils position for direct help by the British Government.

The protestors shouted slogans and carried placards saying, 'Britain, Impose Sanctions Against Sri Lanka', 'Britain, Please Help Now! Better Late Than Never', 'Sri Lanka, Stop The Bombing of Tamils', 'Sri Lanka, Stop the Genocide of Tamils.'

Protesters dressed up as skeletons to depict the suffering of NorthEast Tamils.

Human Rights organizations have expressed alarm as the war continues without the presence of foreign Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), and United Nations (UN) agencies have left on the Sri Lanka government's directives.





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## NEWS



Civilians have moved out of Kilinochchi as the Sri Lankan Airforce targets civilian infrastructure and camps as part of the Sri Lankan military push into the region that housed LTTE political offices

# Civilians flee airstrikes

LARGE numbers of civilians are reported to be fleeing Kilinochchi in the face of more air force attacks.

Although Kilinochchi was the centre of the LTTE administration, most offices have fled the town along with the civilians as the infrastructure came under attack.

The Sri Lanka Air Force last Thursday attacked the Head Office of the Political Section of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the LTTE Peace Secretariat, both located close to each other at the heart of the Kilinochchi town.

The attack also caused damage to nearby houses and the roads.

"Jets engaged the LTTE's headquarters in Kilinochchi," air force spokesman Wing Commander Janaka Nanayakkara said.

Two civilians were killed and five wounded in the air-strike. Two of the wounded were identified as Subbiah Sivalingam, 48 and Thangkavel Ragu, 30, both travellers on the road while the attack took place. The other victims are yet to be identified.

At least one of the civilians killed was at his house in the vicinity.

A local resident undergoing treatment in Kilinochchi's hospital said the situation there was very tense.

"In the morning we heard a

big noise of the fighter aircraft... in the late afternoon there was another air attack," he said.

"We are very scared. Once the doctor comes and takes off the bandages, I am planning to get out of this place."

The Sri Lankan government is urging people to move out from the Vanni region to government controlled areas.

But the hospital patient said that was not an option.

"There is no road. There is no public transport to (government-controlled) Vavuniya, we cannot go there."

Another resident told the BBC nearly everyone had left Kilinochchi town.

"Some people are paying 10,000 to 15,000 rupees (\$90-135) to hire lorries and move out.

"But many people don't have that money and are moving out on bicycles or auto rickshaws. They are taking very little with them.

"All the shops and hotels are closed," he said. "People are living under trees. They don't even have a mat to sleep on. There is no electricity."

The government's top civil servant, or government agent, in Kilinochchi district, Nagalingam Vedanayagan, confirmed that there were more attacks on Kilinochchi town on Friday.

"Shelling and other attacks are taking place in Kilinochchi," he

told the BBC Tamil service.

"To escape the fighting people are moving towards the east. Most of them have been moving out."

Meanwhile, the Sri Lanka Air Force continued its targeting of key civilian infrastructure, bombing damaged a key sluice transporting water to thousands of acres of agricultural lands.

SLAF bombers also dropped bombs in the vicinity of the UNICEF office located at Kaneasapuram in Kilinochchi and the Centre for Women's Development and Rehabilitation (CWDR) was also heavily damaged in the air strike.

Neighbouring house sustained heavy damage in the attack.

The SLAF bombers also attacked a civilian settlement near Vettimanai, a counselling aid center for mentally ill women, causing tension and panic among the few patients who were being transferred from the centre at Kanakapuram.

The SLAF bombers disappeared from the sky as they came under LTTE anti-aircraft fire. However, the buildings have sustained heavy damage.

Relentless daily air strikes are accompanying a ground push into Kilinochchi and other LTTE-controlled areas across the front that spans the north of the Indian Ocean island country.

## NEWS

# Worsening humanitarian situation as support disappears

INTERNATIONAL aid agencies pulling out of the Vanni in early September has exacerbated the already difficult life of those who had displaced to the region, local reports said.

With the impending monsoon, assuring access to fresh food and reliable shelter has become a priority for both the remaining local agencies and the displaced alike.

"The most pressing needs of these people are security, health, water, shelter, sanitation and food," Anthony Dalziel, ICRC deputy chief in Sri Lanka, said.

The United Nations and other aid agencies withdrew from the Vanni last month after the Sri Lankan government ordered them out of the war zones.

Though many protested at leaving the civilians as their situation was worsening, all eventually left as their own security became precarious.

The government said it could not guarantee their safety.

Analysts suggest the government wants to avoid more incidents like the killing of 17 aid workers as the fighting was moving into Muttur in August 2006, a massacre that has been blamed on Sri Lankan government troops.

Whilst there had not yet been any reports of food shortages in the Vanni, ICRC officials said there were areas of concern.

The withdrawal of aid agencies has already resulted in a mass reduction in food supply to the Vanni region.

This week a United Nations convoy of fifty-one trucks was finally allowed through the Omathai checkpoint, accompanied by UN staff, but locals said this was nowhere near enough.

"We hope this will be the first of many such convoys," a World Food Programme (WFP) spokesman told BBC.

"We are not talking about starvation in the north, but we are talking about people whose ability to cope after heavy fighting over the last month has been seriously eroded."

According to the Sri Lankan Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, Mahinda Samarasinghe, this is "just the beginning of a consistent strategy" to ensure there is sufficient food supplies for the displaced people in the Vanni.

But aid workers say the government is reluctant to allow the convoys through.

The attempt to fix explosives onto one of the trucks, an act that has been condemned by the UN, was cited as a clear attempt to obstruct the convoy.

Though no group has claimed responsibility for the attempted attack, reporters note that the explosives were placed on the truck while it was being monitored by the Sri Lankan military.

"The convoy will transport



The shortage of food has been slightly eased by a UN convoy of 51 trucks into the Vanni, but the amount delivered was minuscule compared to the needs of the region after over 200,000 displaced flooded in, fleeing Sri Lankan military advances

and distribute food to four locations to the east of Kilinochchi, where the majority of displaced civilians are thought to have concentrated," according to a press release issued in Colombo by the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sri Lanka.

Civilians - both those already displaced and those who used to reside in Kilinochchi - are fleeing further east towards Mullaitivu as the Sri Lanka Army approaches the town that used to be the operational headquarters of the LTTE, the BBC reported.

They had already started moving to avoid aerial attacks by the Sri Lankan Air Force, which press reports said had been targeting civilian areas for the last few weeks.

Although the government has urged civilians to move into Vavuniya, which is under government control, the vast majority are deciding to head deeper into LTTE controlled areas, local reports said.

"They are setting up camp in the Darmapuram area, about 15 km from Kilinochchi, where there is water because of irrigation canals," IPS quoted civilian sources in Kilinochchi as saying.

"But toilet facilities will be a big problem because everyone is using the open grounds," the

sources had cautioned.

There were more attacks on Kilinochchi town on Friday, the government's top civil servant in Kilinochchi district, Nagalingam

Vedanayagan, confirmed.

"Shelling and other attacks are taking place in Kilinochchi," he told the BBC Tamil service.

"To escape the fighting people

are moving towards the east. Most of them have been moving out."

Additionally with the continual aerial bombardment, the move-

*Continued on p15*

## United Nations food convoy reaches displaced

LAST Thursday, a United Nations convoy of trucks carrying urgent food supplies crossed into the Vanni, after having been detained at a crossing point for days.

The UN convoy of 51 trucks, carrying 650 tons of food and accompanied by seven UN international staff, crossed at Omathai, on its way to civilians caught behind the lines of confrontation, according to a press release issued in Colombo by the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sri Lanka, carried

The food is the first to be sent since the UN and other aid agencies were ordered out of LTTE-held areas by the government in early September.

The international humanitarian workers who accompanied the

convoy returned to Vavuniya, which is under government control, after the trucks got through.

"The convoy will transport and distribute food to four locations to the east of Kilinochchi, where the majority of displaced civilians are thought to have concentrated," the UN statement noted.

Aid agencies estimate about 200,000 people have been displaced by fighting in areas held by the Tamil Tigers.

Azeb Asrat from the UN's World Food Programme says there are a large number of people in Tamil Tiger areas who have been displaced by the fighting.

"The food is needed," he said, "because 200,000 internally displaced people are waiting."

"The last distribution was done around 15 September, so it's already two weeks that people have been without food."

The convoy initially consisted of 60 trucks, but nine lorries were not allowed to proceed after the security forces allegedly discovered explosives, global positioning system sets and a large number of batteries.

United Nations officials in Sri Lanka deplored the placing of explosives by an unknown group on a truck that was due to join a UN food convoy in the north of the country.

In a statement, the UN reiterated that humanitarian operations and personnel must be protected at all times, in line with international humanitarian law.

## NEWS

# DMK, AIADMK harden stance on Sri Lanka

AS A protest organized by the Communist Party of India attracted the support of many political parties and drew thousands of people across the state both the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and the opposition All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) hardened their stand on the Sri Lanka.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi addressing a public meeting support of Eelam Tamils on Monday, October 6, declared that the DMK will be forced to consider withdrawing from the central government if it does not take decisive steps to stop attacks against Tamils in Sri Lanka and Indian fishermen by the island's naval force. "The final decision in the matter will be taken by the DMK's highest policy making body - the general body," Karunanidhi added.

During a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, he demanded India lodge a strong protest with the island's diplomatic mission in New Delhi. "The chief minister stressed that the Sri Lankan high commissioner be summoned and told that India condemns the genocide of the Tamil minority and (that) its navy is killing innocent Indian fishermen," an official statement released by the Tamil Nadu government stated.

"The prime minister has promised to carry out the chief minister's wishes," the statement said.

"The prime minister was also requested to do the needful to ensure the immediate end of attacks on Indian fishermen at the hands of Sri Lanka's defence establishment," the statement added.

Jayalalitha, the leader of main opposition AIADMK, on Saturday, issued a statement castigating the central government for collaborating with Sri Lanka in the alleged genocide of Tamils in the island nation and called for immediate stoppage of all military aid to it - especially in the view of its navy allegedly carrying out attacks against Indian fishermen. She alleged that the Indian government had remained not just a passive witness but was an active collaborator by supplying arms, providing radars and training to the Sri Lankan armed forces and urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to call up his Sri Lankan counterpart and convey his displeasure over the killing of Tamils in the island nation and attacks on Indian fishermen.

"After the disastrous IPKF

misadventure and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian government had taken a decision that it would not get involved in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. But now, we have the same government going all out to help the Sri Lankan armed forces," she said. Jayalalitha said though it was not uncommon for one nation to offer training or supply arms to another country, in the case of Sri Lanka, the question arose as to who its target was.

"The Sri Lankan government may well claim that its Army is shooting only at the LTTE's fighters. But, claims made about the death toll indicate that it is not just the LTTE fighters who are being mowed down, but a substantial part of the hapless Tamil population as well. So, in essence, Indian arms and ammunition sent from India are being used against the innocent Tamils of Sri Lanka," she said.

"The Sri Lankan armed forces have also killed Indian fishermen in the sea. All the time, the Indian government has been saying that this matter has been taken up with the Sri Lankan government. But, no tangible action has been taken so far by the Indian government," she alleged. "We are not asking for an armed invasion of Sri Lanka. What we look for is that the Indian Prime Minister should call up his Sri Lankan counterpart and make his displeasure known in clear terms," she stressed.

Earlier Karunanidhi also opposed a proposal for joint patrolling of the Palk Straits by the Indian and Sri Lankan navies to prevent attacks on Indian fishermen. He expressed his opinion in an official letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, copies of which were released to the media.

Karunanidhi was reacting to reported discussions between External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and his Sri Lankan counterpart Rohitha Bogollogama in New York during which the proposal for joint patrolling was mooted to resolve the issue.

"While I have repeatedly stressed on the need to strengthen our security on the international maritime border line by giving adequate facilities to the Indian Coast Guard and the navy, we have also made it clear that joint patrolling was not feasible," Karunanidhi said.

An estimated 800 Indian fishermen have died at the hands of Sri Lankan Navy since India ceded Kachchatheevu to Sri Lanka.



## Congress on defensive, Sri Lanka unmoved

AS anti-Sri Lanka protests gained momentum and political parties in the state of Tamil Nadu joined forces to express their support for Eelam Tamils, the ruling Congress party went on the defensive by stating it had always worked for the protection of Sri Lankan Tamils.

Meanwhile Sri Lanka brushed aside the Tamil Nadu protests as a

non-issue and declared it will continue with its offensive in the Northeast.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) last Thursday said all Congress governments at the Centre had taken steps to prevent atrocities against Tamils in the island.

In a statement, TNCC president K V Thangabalu denied CPI

leader D Raja's remarks that barring the Congress, all parties in Tamil Nadu had expressed solidarity with the Sri Lankan Tamils.

He said many parties in Tamil Nadu were mistaken that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government led by Manmohan Singh had not taken any

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## NEWS

# Tamil Nadu parties voice support for Eelam Tamils

PUTTING aside political differences, Tamil Nadu political parties joined hands in voicing support for Eelam Tamils at a State-wide protest fast organized by the Communist Party of India (CPI) demanding New Delhi to withdraw military assistance to neighbouring Sri Lanka.

Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) Tamil Desiya Iyakkam, Puthiya Tamilagam and Viduthalai Chiruthaikal Katchi (VCK) participated in the fasting campaign held on Thursday October 2, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, in Chennai and district capitals across the state of Tamil Nadu were attended by thousands of people.

A wide range of Tamil leaders were present at the stage at Seappakkam demanding the Central Government of India to stop not to provide military assistance to the Sri Lankan government, to exert pressure on Colombo to stop the military offensive and to resume peace talks to find a political solution.

Tamil Nadu CPI Joint Secretary C. Mahendran, Communist Party of India (Marxist) State Secretary N. Varadarajan, Chairman of Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam led by Actor Vijayakanth, Panruti S. Ramachandran, MDMK General-Secretary Vaiko, Tamil National Movement Leader Pala Nedumaran, Viduthalai Chiruthaikal Kadchi (VCK, Liberation Panthers Party) President Thol. Thirumavalavan, Puthiya Thamizhakam Leader Dr. Krishnasamy, World Tamils Organization President, Ira. Janarthanan, former Congress leader Thindivanam Ramamoorthy and Latchiya Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (LDMK) Leader Vijaya T Rajendhar were among the political figures of Tamil Nadu who took part in the hunger strike at the stage and also addressed the audience.

Several artists and poets from Tamil Nadu and three Tamil National Alliance Parliamentarians, Maavai Senathirajah MP, Sivajilingam MP, Suresh Premachandran MP and V.I.S Jayapalan, a Tamil poet from Eelam were also among the participants at the stage.

CPI National Secretary D. Raja, in his address, charged that New Delhi was clandestinely assisting Sri Lanka in its war against Tamils and questioned what the Indian personnel who came under attack in the North of Sri Lanka were doing there.

"This struggle which expresses the sentiments of the entire Tamils has to continue and we will unite in the struggle continually," D. Raja told the participants.

"This issue cannot be brushed aside as an internal affair of Sri Lanka. The offensive against the Eelam Tamils will affect India too."

"This is not a demonstration in support of a particular organization or a leader but one that is held in sympathy of the Tamil people and the CPI has no other inner motive in this struggle," he declared

Raja, labelling the Rajapakse led Sri Lankan Government as a 'tyrant state' for its continued military action against the Tamils on the island nation, said that the Rajapakse government had always talked about military solutions to the ethnic problem, unmindful of its consequences. This had only made Rajapakse turn into a dictator, he charged.

He also blamed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Government for not raising its voice against the killing of Tamils.

"There is a need to protect the Tamils in Lanka. The refugee problem still persists. Thousands are living in camps in Tamil Nadu. The Tamils in Lanka should get their social, economic and political rights," he said.

"The situation demands that the Indian government explain its position. There are reports that three Indian soldiers were injured in the war between the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE. The Indian government has not reacted so far. It must make it clear whether it is clandestinely helping the Sri Lankan Army. We will not allow any assistance to the Sri Lankan Army from Indian side," said Raja.

"India remains silent on the strategic agreement between Sri Lanka and the US. Neither did it protest against the attacks on Tamil fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy."

"The lost rights of the Indian fishermen in the Kachchatheevu agreement should be restored," Raja declared and said: "We wish to point out to the leader of DMK that we are fighting against the Indian State not only for its Nuclear deal; we are also opposing it for the role it plays in Sri Lanka."

D. Pandian, the Tamil Nadu State Secretary of the CPI said the



**Tamil Nadu political parties united in public protests in support of Eelam Tamils, with fasts and meetings calling for the central Indian government to take action against Sri Lanka's genocidal war**

hunger-strike and the support by CPI to Eelam Tamils was not a political maneuver for forming an election alliance in Tamil Nadu. "It is a shame to think about forming political alliance on the death of Eelam Tamils," he said and urged all parties to exert pressure on New Delhi.

Pandian further said that his party would organise an International Conference of Tamils by December to discuss the problems of Tamils in Sri Lanka. He accused the Centre and the DMK state government of remaining indifferent to the plight of fishermen, who were being attacked regularly by the Sri Lankan Navy.

CPI (M) central committee member W.R.Varadha Rajan said that India, through diplomatic channels, must pressure the Sri

Lankan government against launching an offensive against innocent Tamils in the name of waging a war with the LTTE. "Let India tell the Sri Lankan government to find a political solution to the ethnic crisis."

Viduthalai Chiruthaikal Katchi (VCK) leader Thol Thirumavalavan suggested a general strike in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) presidium chairman Panruti S. Ramachandran, who was actively engaged in the Sri Lankan process under the late Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M. G. Ramachandran (MGR) in the mid-80's, said the Indian government should send food and medicines to the Tamils through international agencies

such as the United Nations. "India must intervene on humanitarian grounds," he added.

MDMK general secretary Vaiko said Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi should ensure that India did not give any military assistance to Sri Lanka. Alleging that the killings of Tamils was going on unchecked for nearly 25 years.

Senior CPI leader R. Nallakannu said in Madurai that the Indian Navy, that was supposed to protect the rights of Indian fishermen, was "unfortunately supporting the Sri Lankan Navy."

Tamil Nationalist Movement leader Pazh Nedumaran, Sri Lankan MP Sivajilingam and senior CPI leader C. Mahendram were among those who participated in the agitation.

## EDITORIAL

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## Improving the Tamils

**International support for Sri Lanka's violence is underpinned by a contemptuous view of what the Tamils are.**

Unreported by the international and local media, Sri Lanka's conflict has intensified in the past few weeks. Amid renewed pitched battles between the Sinhala military and the Tamil Tigers on different frontlines around the Vanni, the plight of hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamils in the area - as well as hundreds of thousands more in government-controlled areas - are being deliberately ignored by the (West-led) international community. The occasional expressions of 'concern' and the demands that international aid be allowed in are token moves. The simple fact is that, just as it did from 1995 to 2000, the international community has prioritized the stability of the Sinhala state over the welfare of the Tamils. After all, the latter are held to have brought their suffering on themselves by challenging the state, especially by violent means.

This is why there are two parallel 'worlds' in Sri Lanka. For the Tamils, the present situation is one of crisis, one marked by intense repression and violent attack by the state, displacement and humanitarian suffering on a staggering scale, near total blockade on food and medicine, and so on. This has been the norm for three decades. For the Sinhalese and the international community, on the other hand, this is a period of great optimism and satisfaction: the Tamil rebellion, they believe, is being put down once and for all, whereupon the Tamils' foolish defiance and their ideas above their station would dissipate. It is in this regard that 2008 is no different to 1998. Now, as then, the international community poured money, weapons and expertise into the Sinhala state, precisely so that the LTTE can be crushed and 'peace' secured. In 1998, for example, the World Bank declared, of the Sinhala military's advances against the LTTE: "the government has restored peace in [these] districts"; this week the World Bank pledged US\$ 900m in new aid. The assumption now, as then, was that with the LTTE gone, all that is needed to keep the Tamils content is some development.

What is important here is the two different visions of who and what the Tamils of Sri Lanka are. We see ourselves as a nation, one with a distinct and valuable culture, tradition, language and heritage stretching back thousands of years. Our culture includes fine arts of various forms as well as dynamic popular forms. We see our traditional heritage as one comparable to others with millennia-long histories. However, the international community - especially the Western states - see us as a largely under-developed minority, one sim-

ply not capable of engaging with the intricacies of modern government or governance or, as a former US ambassador put it in 2001, coping with the complexities of globalization. We are held to be under-developed not only in economic terms, but also social, cultural and political senses. Thus, our political demands, our rationales for challenging the Sinhala state, our conceptions of what independent statehood entails and so on are simply the articulations of an unsophisticated, unmodern society and thus need not be taken seriously. Thus what is required is that first we are disciplined and rendered docile and then, given the appropriate training and education to be 21st century world citizens (separately, the Sinhalese will be imparted with the tolerance to accommodate our wishes to use our own language).

What is important here is how Sinhala and international conceptions of who or what the Tamils are have much more in common than appears at a first glance. The mytho-historic narratives of the Sinhalese, including the Mahavamsa, see the Tamils as the remnants of past invaders of a Sinhala island. This is the logic underlying Army chief Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka's assertion last week that the Tamils may remain but should not make undue demands on the Sinhalese. Separately, it is worth noting, as many international scholars have, how Sinhala mytho-historic narratives posit the non-Sinhalese on the islands as somehow sub-human. These logics

are inherent to how the Sinhala military fights the Tamils: indiscriminate bombing and shelling, starvation by blockade, wholesale destruction of towns and cities, etc. Recall, for example, how General Janaka Perera who was assassinated last week, readily razed the Tamil town of Chavacachcheri to the ground in 2000 and in the years before oversaw the abductions, torture and murder of many Tamils - beyond the hundreds that Amnesty International recorded in 1996 alone.

Our demand for an independent Tamil Eelam is based on two distinct aspects: firstly that the Tamils are being violently oppressed by a chauvinistic Sinhala state and have been since 1948 and, secondly, that we are a people versed in the philosophical, conceptual and practical dimensions of modern governance and are thus inferior to none. The basis for the international community's rejection of our demand (whilst often couched in terms of international law, international norms and so on), is ultimately based on a contemptuous view of the Tamils as an unsophisticated, undeveloped minority that is demanding things that it is simply not capable of coming to grips with. In that sense, we are not distinct: the former colonial powers - which includes the United States, as Filipinos know well - and likeminded states are still of the opinion that they know better than the masses of the non-West as to what's in their best interests.



## OPINION

# Factual distortions can destroy the fundamentals of a community

This is a reply to the opinion published last week by Dr. A.R.M. Imtiyaz, titled "Why Tamil-Muslim unity crucial for peace"

**Noor Nizam**

IT is with deep concern and understanding that I made a comparative study of Dr. A.R.M. Imtiyaz's "Tamil-Muslim Relations and Unity for Peace" a paper presented during the conference "Ending the war and bringing justice and peace to Sri Lanka" held at the Steelworkers' Hall in Toronto, September 13, 2008 and the article "Why Tamil-Muslim unity crucial for peace - excerpts" which was published in the last issue of this paper.

In fact, I attended a panel presentation on Sunday, September 14, 2008 where Dr. Imtiyaz highlighted some of his views on his presentation.

While respecting Dr. Imtiyaz as an academic, I am much concerned about the credibility of references and citations presented by selected academics and their vocal presentations with regards to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

I am particularly concerned with the references made to the Sri Lankan Muslim community of the North and North Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, to which I belong though currently domiciled in Canada.

## Cause of conflict

In page 1 of his circulated hard copy and e-mailed paper presented at the conference Dr. Imtiyaz states:

"However, Sri Lankan Muslims claim majority in Amparai district of Eastern province, and regularly develop social and political tensions with the Tamils of the East. Muslims of the North and East became regular victims of ethnic instability that generated ethnic civil war between the Tamils and the Sinhalese".

But Dr. Imtiyaz gives another contradictory view in para 4 of the Excerpts published in the Sunday times article by stating:

"However, they claim they are the majority in the Amparai district of the Eastern province, where exist social and political tension between the Tamils and the Muslims. The Northern and Eastern Muslims became victims of a vicious cycle of ethnic instability that led to the ethnic civil war between the Tamils and the Sinhalese".

These two statements are highly contradictory of each other in the comparative study of academic understanding.

Later in his original presentation, under the sub-heading

"Tamil-Muslim Divide", Dr. Imtiyaz states:

"Sinhalese politicization of ethnic emotions by the Southern parties of Sri Lanka failed the country and it eventually drove the Tamils and the Sinhalese into grisly ethnic civil war.

This statement again contradicts and nullifies his claim that it was the vicious cycle of ethnic instability that led to the ethnic civil war between the Tamils and the Sinhalese

There had always been harmony between the Tamils and Muslims, specially in the North and North Eastern Provinces. This was true even before the island gained independence from the British. As even Dr. Imtiyaz notes:

"Sinhalese politicization of ethnic emotions by the Southern parties of Sri Lanka failed the country and it eventually drove the Tamils and the Sinhalese into grisly ethnic civil war.

So the alleged ethnic instability between the Muslims and Tamils - which did not exist - in no way contributed or led to the Sinhalese-Tamil conflicts.

Further analysis of Dr. Imtiyaz's statements reveals that one (that Muslims became 'regular victims of ethnic instability that generated ethnic civil war' between the Tamils and the Sinhalese) is a accusation against the Tamils, while another - that there was social tension between the Tamil and Muslims - is an assumption.

The Tamils and the Muslims were in the best of cultural, political, socio-economics and territorial rights relationships at all times and were not in conflict as argued by Dr. Imtiyaz. Various researchers have proven this.

## The Muslim identity

Further in the presentation, Dr. Imtiyaz states that:

"Muslims have their own concerns and issues pertaining to their identity and security. A notable feature of the Tamil-Muslim relations in contemporary Sri Lanka, according to McGilvray, is Muslim desire to develop a non-Tamil identity based on Islam, a religion which strictly calls obedient only to Allah, a profound emotional message that relentlessly resists any forms of obedience to all other human and spiritual powers. Muslims' decision to seek own identity based



**Relations between Tamils and Muslims were cordial and did not contribute to the tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese claims the author**

on the Islamic religion triggered Tamil anger.

But in the excerpts published last week, Dr. Imtiyaz states:

"A notable feature of the Tamil-Muslim relations in contemporary Sri Lanka is the Muslim desire to develop a non-Tamil identity based on Islam, a religion which strictly calls obedience only to Allah, a profound message that relentlessly resists any forms of obedience to all other powers. The Muslims' decision to seek their own identity based on Islam triggered Tamil anger."

These statements are contradicted by other researchers. For example, Dr. Imtiyaz has not referenced Dr. Dennis B. McGilvray, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Colorado, in his original presentation. Dr. McGilvray in the publication titled "Muslim perspectives on the Sri Lankan Conflict", written with Mirak Raheem, contradicts Dr. Imtiyaz's statements.

In Policy study 41, 2007 of the East-West Centre in Washington, Dr. McGilvray states that: "The essential point is that Sri Lankan Muslim politics is not infused with religious ideology or sectarian jihadism. Humanitarian solidarity with fellow-Muslims who are endangered or opposed is strongly felt, as when the 2004 tsunami tragedy struck the east coast, inflicting roughly a third of Sri Lanka's tsunami deaths on a community that is 8% of local population."

Therefore, Dr. Imtiyaz's statement that the Muslims sought a non-Tamil identity based on their religion, and that it was this that "triggered Tamil anger" is, in my

opinion, defamatory of the Sri Lankan Tamil-Muslim political relationship.

## Muslim political alliances

In his original presentation Dr. Imtiyaz states:

"The political establishment of the Muslims supports the Sinhala political leaders for political and commercial purposes: they vigorously oppose the Tamil demand for self-autonomy in the merged North and East and support successive Sinhala-dominated governments' military actions against the Tamils."

The facts arguably contradict this statement. Indeed, in the North and North-East, Muslims were supportive of Tamils and federalism - then.

Again quoting Dr. McGilvray and Mr. Raheem:

"The Federal party retained a degree of popular support over its Muslim population in the North East until the goals of the party became confrontational. Yet even in 1960's and 1970's not all Muslims distanced themselves from the Federal party. For instance at the Vaddukoddai Resolution meeting in 1976, M.H.M. Ashraff, who was to later establish the SLMC as the first successful Muslim political party, reportedly said "If elder brother Amirthalingham [then Tamil leader of the TULF coalition in Parliament] failed to get Tamil Eelam [a tamil-speaking homeland in North east], the younger brother Ashraff will get it"

It is further stated by these two academics that:

"The Federal Party even adopted a resolution at the Trincomalee Convention in 1956 in favour of both a Tamil State and a Muslim State with a Federal set-up."

Another of Dr. Imtiyaz's defective view is his statement in both the presentation and the article is when he states that the Muslims had "deep distrust in S.J.V. Chelvanayakam's federal demand". Again this is countered by Dr. McGilvray and Mr. Raheem, who report of a "Muslim-Tamil Alliance ... [that] emerged in the North East".

Further, Dr. Imtiyaz makes no reference to the fact that it was a Muslim parliamentarian who won the parliamentary seat of Mutur (Trincomalee district) in the 1950's. He made his maiden parliamentary speech in the Tamil language, which is arguably an expression of Muslim-Tamil solidarity, understanding and respect which still remains to date.

It can be argued that some academics are trying to forget this longstanding accord, with the possibility of fanning discord between the two Tamil Speaking communities in Sri Lanka.

## Other challenges

The following statements, made in the presentation and the excerpts, can also be challenged as deceptions that could become disastrous and potentially destroy the fundamentals of a minority community.

1. "The political establishment of the Muslims supports the Sinhala political leaders for political and commercial purposes:

*Continued on p15*



NEWS

# Casualties mount as civilian infrastructure targeted

AS Sri Lankan military attempts to break through LTTE defences in Akkaraayan area and advance towards Kilinochchi continued to be bogged down due to fierce resistance from LTTE forces, Sri Lankan Air Force and Army carried out relentless daily air strikes and artillery bombardment targeting civilian population centres and civilian infrastructure in Kilinochchi town.

In the latest air raid on Wednesday October 1, the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) attacked a civilian settlement 1 km south of Kilinochchi town, close to A9 Road, killing two civilians and wounding 13, around 10:30 a.m.

A 2-year-old girl, a 4-year-old boy, a 16-year-old and seven other females were among the wounded rushed to nearby Kilinochchi hospital.

19 houses were destroyed. Some of the windows of Kilinochchi hospital shattered and shrapnel from the bombs reached the hospital premises, according to reports.

Few days earlier, on Saturday September 27, a civilian was killed and eight, including four children, were wounded in SLAF attack in Iraththinapuram, a suburb of Kilinochchi town.

The ICRC office, which was recently relocated from Iranaimadu junction, is situated around 150 meters away from the

bombed locality.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan defence ministry claimed that the attack was a 'precision air strike' against an LTTE target.

Medical sources at Kilinochchi hospital said an 8-month-old baby, a 9-month-old baby, and two 2-year-old children were among the wounded.

### Infrastructure targeted

In an indication of further escalation of conflict, SLAF also targeted civilian infrastructure in Kilinochchi.

A key sluice transporting water to thousands of acres of agricultural lands in Vanni sustained damage in SLAF indiscriminate bombardment on Friday, October 3, morning around 9:30 a.m., at Paravippaagnchaan, near Kilinochchi town where LTTE's Peace Secretariat is located.

Meanwhile, SLAF bombers dropped bombs in the vicinity of the UNICEF office located at Kaneasapuram in Kilinochchi three times between 3:35 and 4:00 p.m. Centre for Women's Development and Rehabilitation (CWDR) was heavily damaged in the air strike.

Two local employees of the UNICEF, who were inside the

office, narrowly escaped from the attack as the roof of the building was shaken by a bomb that hit the fence of the office, according to initial reports. Neighbouring house sustained heavy damage in the attack.

The sluice at Paravippaagnchaan, located east of the A9 road, channels water from Paravippaagnchaan tank to agricultural lands in Paranthan, north of Kilinochchi.

The tank gains water from the rainfalls and from Kilinochchi and Iranaimadu tanks.

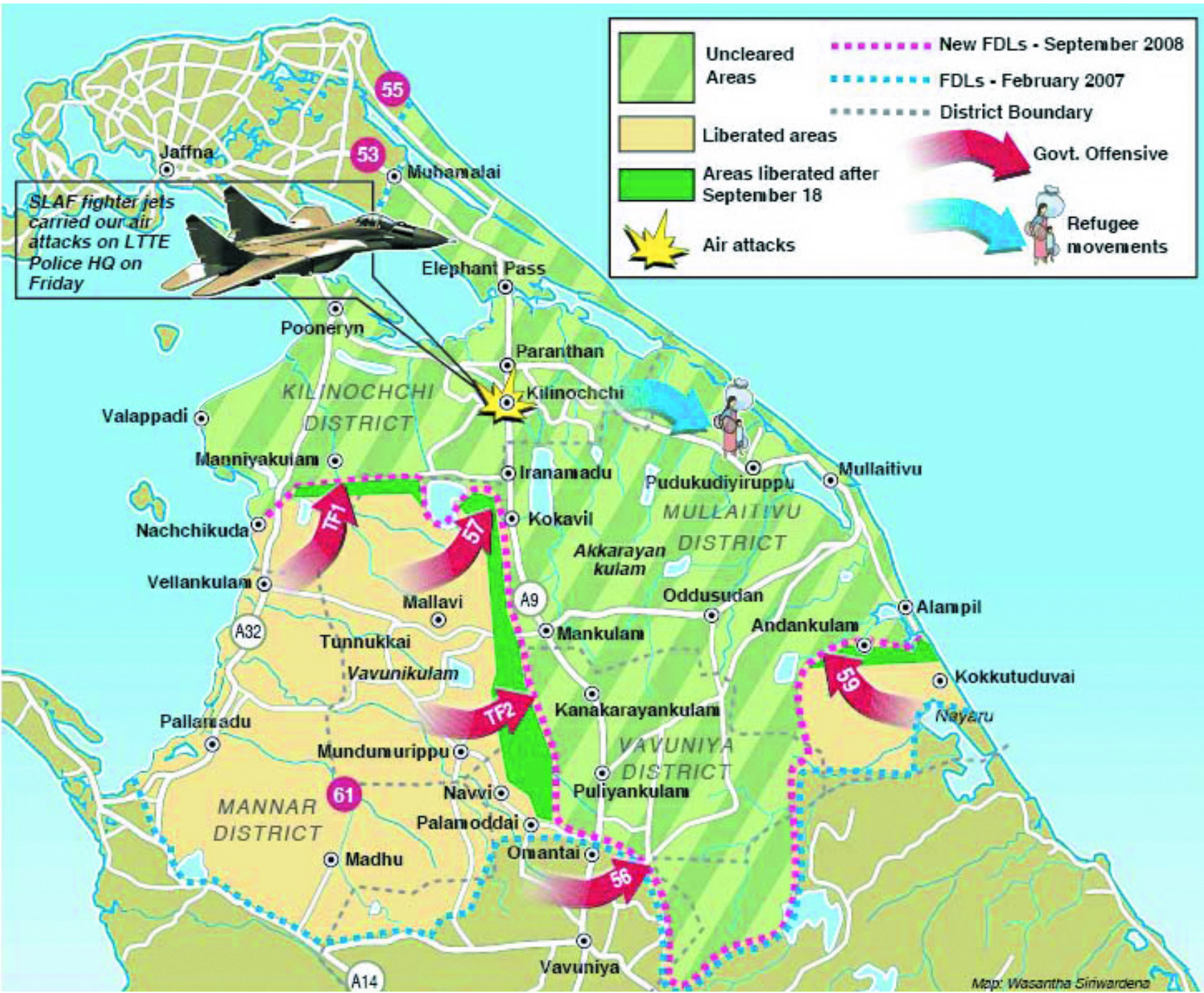
The destruction would cause flooding. 3 huts belonging to IDPs and a small shop were completely destroyed and 12 houses sustained damage.

At Kaneasapuram, seven houses in the vicinity of the UNICEF office were damaged.

In the meantime, the SLAF bombers also attacked a civilian settlement near Vettimanai, a counseling aid center for mentally ill women.

This caused tension and panic among the few patients who were being transferred from the counseling centre at Kanakapuram.

The previous day, on Thursday October 2, SLAF attacked the Head Office of the Political Section of the Liberation Tigers of Tamilleelalam and the LTTE Peace Secretariat, both located



close to each other at the heart of the Kilinochchi town.

The attack, reported around 1:00 p.m., also caused damage to nearby houses and the roads. Two civilians were killed and five wounded in the air-strike, according to initial reports.

Most of the bombs missed their targets and the SLAF bombers disappeared from the sky as they came under LTTE anti-aircraft fire.

However, the buildings have sustained heavy damage as each of the buildings were hit by at least one bomb.

Both the offices have been used by the Norwegian peace facilitators and foreign diplomats in their dialogue with the leadership of the LTTE.

A day earlier, on Wednesday October 1, Sri Lanka Air Force fighter jets attacked the Secretariat of Tamillelam Civil Administration, in Paarathipuram south of Kilinochchi.

The Tamil Eelam civil administration coordinates the administration in Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam controlled areas in almost all civil activities, ranging from ensuring the availability of drinking water to the maintenance civilian infrastructure.

In addition to air raids, the intermittent shelling, targeting Kilinochchi also resulting in

civilians casualties and causing panic among the remaining civilians in the town and its suburbs.

### Hospital moved

According media reports in Sri Lanka, Kilinochchi General Hospital was also shut down on Saturday October 4, being pulled out into a safer area.

The hospital with patients, records and essential equipment, was being shifted to two schools in Dharamapuram and Urthirapuram, and to two small hospitals in Vishvamadu and Pudukudiyiruppu, some 18 kilometres north of Kilinochchi, reported The Sunday Times newspaper.

At present the hospital is manned by some 20 doctors and 235 other staff members.

A large number of patients were ward in the hospital at the time of relocation and some 150 patients were yet to be transferred, the paper further added.

Provincial Health Services Regional Director Dr. T. Sathya-moorthi was quoted by the Sunday Times as saying that they were facing a logistical problem in shifting the seriously ill patients, and most importantly the giant generator which supplies power to the refrigerators in which vaccines, medicines and blood were stored.



The Nation newspaper map (top) shows the latest ground movements of the Sri Lankan forces. Meanwhile LTTE political and administrative infrastructure, such as the LTTE Peace Secretariat (left) and an administrative building (above) have been among the buildings targeted by the Sri Lankan Airforce as the military aims to conquer the heartland of LTTE controlled territory



The 59th anniversary of the Sri Lankan Army's formation was marked with a Buddhist prayer, with offerings to monks and the colours of the various regiments blessed with holy flowers.



British Prime Minister Gordon Brown met Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the UN in New York after which the British International Development Minister welcomed Sri Lanka's recognising its responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance to civilians and its continued co-ordination with humanitarian agencies - even as Sri Lanka ordered those agencies out of the war zones

# USD 900 million in World Bank aid for Sri Lanka

THE World Bank will give Sri Lanka 900 million dollars in aid under its new four-year country assistance strategy aimed at achieving "more balanced and equitable growth" press reports said.

World Bank country director Naoko Ishii said one of the aims of the country assistance strategy (CAS) aid to the island riven by protracted ethnic conflict is to expand economic opportunities in "lagging regions" in the interests of "inclusive and equitable" economic development, reports said.

The bulk of the aid, about 40 percent, will go to improve connectivity, especially rural roads linking farmers with markets, LBO quoted Ishii as saying.

About 30 percent of the aid will be for conflict affected areas but projects will be cancelled if the war prevents them being implemented, she told a news conference Monday.

The CAS for the years 2009 to 2012 will see greater focus on community-based development projects, support for small business, and encouragement of public-private partnerships in infrastructure building.

Ishii said one of the aims of the CAS is to expand economic opportunities in "lagging regions" in the interests of "inclusive and equitable" economic development, reports said.

She was referring to regions away from the capital Colombo that have lagged far behind in economic growth and poverty alleviation, LBO explained.

"The second objective is to improve the investment climate and competitiveness to accelerate economic growth."

Claus Astrup, senior economist of the bank, said the CAS tries to improve the investment climate and confidence in the island economy.

He said there was a need to have a stable macro-economic environment to allow Sri Lanka to attract investments from abroad and about the burden current high inflation is placing on the population, particularly wage earners.



## NEWS

# Attacks against the Army up in Jaffna and East

ATTACKS against the Sri Lankan security personnel in Jaffna peninsula and in the Eastern province are on the increase as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) put pressure on the military outside Vanni also.

In the latest attack in the East, LTTE forces attacked a military post inside the high security area in Kanatalaay in Trincomalee district killing four Sri Lankan military personnel, including Sri Lanka Army soldiers and home guards.

The raid took place at Seranawa on Monday, September 29.

On the same day, a Sri Lankan Special Task Force (STF) trooper sustained serious injuries in a gunfire ambush at Arasadithth-eevu in Paddippazhai, 15 km west of Batticaloa city, according to Sri Lankan police.

A day earlier, a commando unit of the LTTE stormed a joint paramilitary-Army mini-camp at Thikiliveddai, north of Batticaloa, killing six military and paramilitary personnel.

The LTTE unit attacked the base on Sunday September 28, bringing the camp under their control within 15 minutes, LTTE sources told TamilNet.

One PK-LMG, five T-56 type-2 assault rifles, a drum magazine for the PK-LMG, 100 rounds, seven AK-47 magazines, two-hundred-and-twenty 7.62 mm rounds and a holster were seized in the attack.

In the months August and September alone over 50 Sri Lankan soldiers have been killed in the Eastern province.

In August, 23 SLA troops were killed when LTTE cadres triggered a claymore device targeting troops traveling in a military vehicle in Batticaloa district.

In September at least 26 Sri Lankan security personnel were killed and another 26 wounded in separate attacks carried out by LTTE forces in different locations.

Since the Sri Lankan Government announced the 'Liberation of the East' on July 11, 2007 there have been several attacks against security forces which have increased in frequency in the past few months.

The government recently tried to brush off the attacks by referring to them as isolated incidents.

The Sri Lankan defense establishment claimed these incidents were isolated attacks and that they are 'natural' in places that have been 'newly liberated'.

These attacks would not go on for long, they claimed.

However, analysts feel that the escalating attacks on Sri Lankan security personnel outside theatre of war in Vanni is putting severe pressure on the Sri Lankan military, which is facing an acute



**As Sri Lankan government troops advanced along a trench in the forward defence line in Kilinochchi, sporadic attacks against the forces in Jaffna and the East increased, as the LTTE stepped up pressure outside the Vanni theatre of war. Photo AFP / Getty Images**

shortage of personnel, to protect areas under its control whilst continuing the offensive in Vanni.

The personnel shortage is clearly evident in Jaffna peninsula, informed sources claim.

With relocation of large number of Sri Lanka Army troops to the Northern Front Defence Line (FDL) areas and outer districts, the Army is allegedly facing difficulties in carrying out prompt cordon and search operations in Jaffna peninsula.

On Monday September 29, a unit of SLA soldiers was attacked by a group in military fatigue near

a Saiva temple in Maasiyappiddi area and the soldiers had called for assistance from their camp.

Although the SLA field bike unit arrived at the scene within a short period, the cordon and search was delayed by nearly two hours due to lack of troopers. SLA had requested all camps located from Koozhaavadi to Chunn-aakam, a distance of 8 km, to send five soldiers from each camp.

The soldiers assigned to the task from each of the above camps encountered difficulty in finding transport, and eventually used vehicles belonging to resi-

dents to reach Chunn-aakam, residents said.

The LTTE has also stepped up its attacks on security personnel in the North, in Jaffna peninsula.

The night before the Maasiyappiddi attack, an SLA soldier in Thanangkilappu camp in Thenmaraadchi was gunned down.

Separately, Sri Lanka Army soldiers posted at the electricity transformer area at Vannaaththi Paalam along Aadiyapaatham Veethi in Kokkuvil in Jaffna were fired at on Thursday October 2.

An explosion caused either by a hand grenade or claymore

device was heard from the place of attack, and gunfire followed the blast for nearly ten minutes, residents of the area said. There was no information on casualty or injuries to the SLA soldiers.

An electricity transformer in the same area was set fire earlier.

Similar attacks had been made on electricity transformers in Thenmaraadchi and Vadamaraadchi areas in Jaffna peninsula before.

The SLA soldiers, following these attacks, fenced in all transformers, and have deployed guards 24 hours a day.



## NEWS

# Janaka Perera assassinated, blast kills 28 in Anuradhapura

MAJ. GEN (ret'd.) Janaka Perera and his wife, Vajira, a former Sri Lanka Army officer, were killed in a bomb blast in Anuradhapura Monday morning around 8:45.

Around 28 persons were killed and 80 wounded in the blast, which the Sri Lankan government blamed on the LTTE.

An attacker, strapped with hidden explosives, embraced the former commander killing himself and several others, initial reports said.

Maj. Gen. (ret'd.) Perera was the Opposition Leader of the United National Party (UNP) in North Central Province.

He had been the UNP candidate for the Chief Minister post in 2008 Provincial Elections in North Central Province, which was marred by violence.

## More than 600 Tamils were forcefully disappeared during his in charge of Sri Lankan forces in Jaffna.

In recent months, the celebrated General was a vocal critic of the military strategy pursued by the government and favoured a judicious mix of political initiatives with military manoeuvres to resolve the ethnic strife.

He joined the UNP just before the August provincial election and was declared its chief ministerial candidate.

However, the ruling combine led by President Rajapaksa secured a majority and Maj. Gen. (ret'd.) Perera became the Leader of the Opposition.

Anuradhapura district organiser Dr. Rajah Johnpulle, a Tamil UNP activist whose home and dispensary were set on fire by UPFA supporters in August, his wife, and several UNP activists were also killed in the blast.

They were participating in an opening ceremony of a new UNP office close to the old bus stand in the town.

A journalist covering the ceremony was also killed in the blast.

TV journalist Rashmi Mohamed, a provincial correspondent of Sirasa TV, was covering the opening ceremony of the UNP office in Anuradhapura.

Five media organisations expressed their deep sorrow over his death.

At least fifteen of the 80

wounded were in critical condition.

Over 300 participants were at the site of the blast.

During Eelam War III, Maj. Gen. Janaka Perera played a major role in Jaffna and in Manalaaru (Weli Oya).

After the fall of Elephant Pass Base, he was appointed Overall Operations Commander (OOC) when Major Sarath Fonseka (now Lt. Gen.) was Security Forces Commander in Jaffna.

He retired from the military after being sidelined from becoming the Commander of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) and appointed as the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, first in Australia, and then in Indonesia, following his retirement.

His appointment as the envoy to Australia in June 2001 sparked protest demonstrations in Sydney.

More than 300 Tamils protested outside the Australian parliament accusing Gen Perera of "war crimes".

Sri Lanka was forced to withdraw his controversial posting to Sri Lankan High Commission in Canada, following diplomatic pressure on Colombo on his poor record on Human Rights in his career.

The Tamil community accused him of being responsible for hundreds of deaths and the torture of Tamils in the region during the period he was in charge.

More than 600 Tamils were forcefully disappeared during his tenure as Overall Commander of the Sri Lankan forces in Jaffna.

The human rights group Amnesty International raised similar concerns.

A Tamil village, Mankindimalai in Manalaaru region, was renamed Janakapura, after the SLA evicted Tamils from their village in 1984 and established Sinhala colonies there.

Maj. Gen. (ret) Perera (then a brigadier) was posted for two years in Janakapura as the commander of the SLA's Special Forces with a key camp at Janakapura.

Janaka Perera, one of the SLA's most celebrated officers, was barred from entering SLA camps in April 2008 by the military hierarchy after he criticized the present SLA Commander and the Rajapaksa government for their conduct of war with unrealistic deadlines.

Mr Perera had three children - two daughters and a son - studying in Canberra, Australia.



The remains of Major General (retired) Janaka Perera and his wife and UNP Anuradhapura Organiser Rajah Johnpulle and his wife lying at two separate funeral parlours in Colombo. Photo Pradeep K. Pathirana/ Daily Mirror.

## UNP accuses government

THE United National Party (UNP) is calling for an international level investigation into the bomb blast in Anuradhapura that killed North Central Province Opposition Leader retired Maj. Gen. Janaka Perera.

Speaking to the media in Colombo, General Secretary of the party Tissa Attanayake said they suspected foul play, adding that the investigation by the government could not be trusted.

The UNP has accused the government of ignoring repeated requests for a stronger security detail for Gen Perera. "The government must take full responsibility," Mr. Attanayake. "They did not give him adequate security for political reasons."

"The LTTE, Pillayan Group or any other group or politician may have killed Maj. Gen. Perera, but the foundation for his murder was laid by a top official in the Defence Ministry and the Rajapaksa regime," Mr. Attanayake alleged.

"Therefore, the incident should be investigated at international level," he said. "Pillayan travels in bulletproof vehicles courtesy Rajapaksa government. Karuna is given state protection. However, General Janaka Perera who had rendered a great service to the country and nation died as a civilian without any protection."

"The government should take full responsibility for the killing, following repeated safety concerns raised by him due to threats from the LTTE, Pillayan Group and government politicians," Mr. Attanayake said.

Days before the killing, east chief minister Sivanethurai Chandrakanthan alias Pillayan had been seen in several areas of Anuradhapura and a major search was conducted at the weekend.

"So, how can a suicide bomber enter the town? Whose fault is it that the bomber could not be caught during the search?" the UNP General Secretary asked.

When he had been serving in the army, Maj. Gen. Perera was a hero for the government, but as soon as he was announced as the UNP's election candidate, he suddenly became a traitor, Mr. Attanayake charged. His rival candidate was given hundreds of security personnel, while Maj. Gen. Perera lost even his handful of bodyguards after the election, Mr. Attanayake claimed.

Separately, the leader of the SLFP (Mahajana Wing) Mangala Samaraweera said the Rajapaksa government should take full responsibility for the attack. The ex-military commander had been facing death threats since the moment he came forward to contest the recent provincial polls, but the government had completely disregarded his safety concerns, Mr. Samaraweera noted. Since the beginning, the present regime had planned to make his life insecure and it had led to his murder, the SLFP (M) leader said.



## FEATURE

# Witness to Thileepan's fast

Adele Balasingham

AS we entered the premises of the Nallur Kandasamy temple we were confronted by a sea of people seated on the white sands under the blazing sun.

Thileepan, the young Tiger leader of Jaffna, took the podium on the 14th September 1987 at the Nallur Kandasamy temple to commence his fast- unto-death as a protest against India's failure to fulfill her pledges, and to mobilise the frustrated sentiments of the Tamils into a national mass upsurge.

Thileepan's non-violent struggle was unique and extraordinary for its commitment. Although an armed guerrilla fighter, he chose the spiritual mode of 'ahimsa' as enunciated by the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi to impress upon India the plight and predicament of the people of Tamil Eelam.

The levels to which the Tamil people or more specifically, the LTTE cadres, are prepared to go for their freedom mirrors not only a deep passion for their liberation, but indicates the phenomenal degree of oppression they have been subjected to. It is only those who experience intolerable oppression of such a magnitude, of being threatened with extinction, that are capable of supreme forms of self sacrifice as we have seen from Thileepan's episode.

Thileepan, who had travelled

to Delhi as part of LTTE leader Vellupillai Pirabakaran's delegation before the signing of the Accord, was informed of the content of the dialogue that had taken place between the Indian Prime Minister and the LTTE leader.

With the knowledge that there was an unwritten agreement between Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Pirabakaran and that it had not been implemented, he felt that his people and the struggle had been betrayed and decided on a fast- unto-death demanding the fulfillment of the pledges.

When news of Thileepan's fast- unto-death and the deteriorating political situation between the LTTE and the Indian Peace Keeping Force reached us, we decided to leave India for Jaffna.

My joy at reaching the shores of Tamil Eelam after so many years was contained by the gloom that hung in the air. Thileepan was a few days into his fast till death and the population of the Peninsula was seriously concerned and wholeheartedly behind the non-violent campaign of a single individual seeking justice from the world's largest democracy. Subsequently, our first priority after our arrival in the Peninsula was to visit Thileepan encamped at the historic Nallur Kandasamy temple, the cultural and spiritual centre of the Jaffna Tamils.

Thileepan's decision to single-handedly take on the credibility of the Indian state was not incongruous with his history of resis-



tance to state oppression as a cadre in the LTTE. He had faced battle on several occasions in defence of Jaffna during Kittu's time and suffered serious abdominal wounds in the process. He was well known for his astute understanding of the politics and mindset of his people and emerged as a radical political leader.

The senior LTTE women cadres often speak of his staunch advocacy of inducting women into the national struggle and is remembered as one of the founding fathers in the promotion of women's issues. With such a history it comes as no surprise that he endeared himself not only to the cadres but the people of Jaffna also.

My husband, LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham, met Thileepan during the pre-Accord talks when he shared a hotel room with him in Delhi and quickly grew very fond of this affable fellow. It was an extremely painful and emotional experience for

Bala to meet him again in Jaffna, in totally adverse conditions, with Thileepan's life slowly ebbing away.

As we entered the premises of the Nallur Kandasamy temple we were confronted by a sea of people seated on the white sands under the blazing sun. The air was thick with collective emotion and solemnity. This fading young man on the platform obviously embodied the political sentiments and aspirations of his people.

But it was more than that also. Thileepan's fast had touched the spirit of the Tamil nation and mobilised the popular masses in unprecedented solidarity. One could sense how this extraordinary sacrifice of a fragile young man had suddenly assumed a formidable force as the collective strength of his people. Thileepan's fast was a supreme act of transcendence of individuality for a collective cause. Literally, it was an act of self-crucifixion, a noble act by which this brave young man condemned himself to death so that others could live in freedom and dignity.

With deep humility, Bala and I mounted the platform to speak to the reposed Thileepan. Already several days without food or water and with a dry cracked mouth, Thileepan could only whisper. Bala leaned closer to the weakened Thileepan and exchanged words with him. Naturally enough, Thileepan enquired about the political developments. We left soon afterwards, never to see him alive again.

As Thileepan's fast moved on in days, he was no longer able to address the public from the podium and spent much of his time lying quietly as his condition steadily deteriorated. As Thileepan grew visibly weaker in front of his people's eyes, their anger and resentment towards India and the IPKF grew stronger. The sight of this popular young man being allowed to die in such an agonising manner generated disbelief at the depth of callousness of the Indian government and the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

All that was required to save Thileepan's waning life was for

the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Dixit, to humble himself and meet and reassure Thileepan that the Indian government would fulfill its pledges to the Tamils. In fact Delhi ignored Thileepan's fast in the early stages as an isolated idiosyncrasy of an individual, but later became seriously concerned when the episode gathered momentum and turned into a national uprising with anti-Indian sentiments. Delhi's concerns compelled Mr. Dixit to pay a visit to Jaffna to 'study the situation'.

On the 22nd September, the eighth day of Thileepan's fast, Mr. Dixit arrived at the Pallaly airport where Mr. Pirapaharan and Bala met him. Bala told me later that Mr. Dixit was rude and resentful and condemned Thileepan's fasting campaign as a provocative act by the LTTE aimed at instigating the Tamil masses against the Indian government.

Mr. Pirapaharan showed remarkable patience and pleaded with the Indian diplomat to pay a visit to Nallur and talk to the dying young man to give up his fast by assuring him that India would fulfill its pledges. Displaying his typical arrogance and intransigence, Mr. Dixit rejected the LTTE leader's plea, arguing that it was not within the mandate of his visit.

Had Mr. Dixit correctly read the situation and genuinely cared for the sentiments of the Tamil people at this very crucial time, it is highly probable that the entire episode of India's direct intervention in the ethnic conflict would have taken a different turn.

But Thileepan's willingness to sacrifice his life in such a way touched the spirit of the people and his unnecessary tragic death on 26th September planted deeply the seeds of disenchantment with the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

Adele Balasingham is a sociologist, political activist and writer who has lived and worked in India and Sri Lanka with the LTTE for more than twenty years. This article is compiled, with kind permission, from extracts of 'The Will to Freedom', her internal study of the armed struggle of the Tamil Tiger movement.

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## DIASPORA



Tamils across the UK marked the twenty-first anniversary of Thileepan's death on 27 September 2008. In Coventry and Leicester, small memorial events were held to mark the sacrifice made by Thileepan when he fasted to death in protest against the failure to effectively implement the promises in the Accord; the accelerated state aided Sinhala colonisation in the Eastern Province; the continued detention of Tamil prisoners under the Prevention of Terrorism Act; the failure of the Home Guards to surrender their arms; the failure to close army and police camps situated in Tamil areas; and the delay in setting up an interim administration for the North and East.



Canadian TYO members fasted for 30 hours to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis in the Tamils areas of Sri Lanka

## 30 hour famine by concerned Tamil Canadian youth

OVER forty concerned Canadian Tamil youth gathered at the cultural hall of the Richmond Hill Hindu Temple to participate in a 30 hour famine (with only water) to create awareness within the Canadian Tamil community about the humanitarian crisis in Vanni, while raising funds for CARE program.

"Now that all international aid agencies and NGOs have left the Tamil areas, we the Tamil diaspora have to take care of our people in our homeland" said Arani Kanagasabai, a participant in the famine.

The famine kicked off at 4 pm Friday, September 26 with commemoration to Lt. Col Thileepan who fasted unto death in twelve days putting forward five demands to the Indian government to meet the aspirations of the Tamil people, during the occupation of the Indian Forces in Jaffna.

The hall continually was filled with members of the Tamil community showing support to the participants. For moral support over ten adults also joined the youth in the awareness creating famine campaign.

Local radio and television promoted the event through regular updates and the Canadian Tamil Radio broadcasted live on

location from beginning to end of the famine.

Out pouring support was noted Saturday as the countdown neared the end, with members of the crowd providing words of encouragement and the entertainment of Vaanampaadikal music group who themselves conducted a 27 hour band-a-thon a week ago for the same cause.

Staff of CARE Program were on site to receive the donations as well as the pledges from the participants.

"The support of the members of the community, media including print, audio visual, radio and television has been overwhelmingly phenomenal and we ask that this momentum be continued until the sufferings of our people end in our homeland" said Sarva Jeyapalan.

As the 30 hours came to a close, each participant got the opportunity to share their feelings with the crowd, which by no doubt left the audience in tears at many instances.

Mrs. Pararajasingam, wife of Late Mr. Pararajasingam, TNA Member of Parliament, ended the famine at 10.01pm by providing milk for all the participants followed by the blessings of the priests of the Richmond Hill Hindu Temple.

## DIASPORA

# Bristol shopkeeper battles sword-wielding robber



Daily Mail

THIS was the terrifying scene when a shopkeeper was confronted by a drug-crazed robber wielding a Samurai sword.

His face hidden behind a black scarf, the raider swung the 18-inch weapon at Rameshkumar Rasiah screaming: "I'm going to stab you, I'm going to kill you."

He then leapt up on the counter brandishing the blade.

But rather than flee, 31-year-old Mr Rasiah bravely confronted the thug and managed to grab the sword and wrest it from his grip.

Hearing the commotion from their flat upstairs, Mr Rasiah's sister and her husband, who own the shop, raced to his assistance and helped subdue the attacker using a broom and a length of pipe.

They grappled with 18-year-old Andrew Speed for two minutes before bundling him into a store cupboard where they locked him up until the police arrived.

When Speed was escorted away by officers, he pleaded: "Please, keep them away from me. I won't play up, get me out of here."

After Speed was locked up for the attack, Mr Rasiah, who suffered cuts and bruises to his hand and arm, said he had 'picked on the wrong shopkeeper'.

He said: "I was absolutely terrified but adrenaline took over and I knew I had to stop him from stealing anything."

"He threw cans at me and kept trying to attack me but I was not backing down because I knew I had to protect the shop for my boss."

"Let this be a lesson to all thieves - you will never steal any-



**Rameshkumar Rasiah (l) and Nagaratnam Jeyanthan (r)**

thing while I'm working in the shop."

CCTV captured the raid, which happened just after 5.30am opening time at the convenience store owned by Mr Rasiah's brother-in-law Nagaratnam Jeyanthan in Southmead, Bristol.

After Speed was disarmed, Mr Rasiah, who arrived in the UK from Sri Lanka only a few months ago, tore the scarf from his face and recognised him as a regular customer.

Mr Jeyanthan, 29, who lives upstairs with his wife Suragini and their five-month old daughter, said: "I am very grateful to my brother-in-law for putting himself

in danger. This was the first knife we've seen in four years here and I was shocked.

"I felt like closing the shop but now I think we will be staying because I feel we have the support of the community."

"We don't feel like heroes because we were just doing what everybody else would by protecting ourselves and our shop."

Speed, from Southmead, admitted assault with intent to rob and possession of an offensive weapon. Bristol Crown Court heard that he wanted money to buy more drugs.

He was sentenced to three-and-a-half years' youth detention.



A new Tamil school was started in Bristol on September 26. Parents and students watched as students of the school performed cultural programmes to mark the launch of the school. The event began with a moment of silence, followed by the lighting of the common flame of sacrifice, before the audience was treated to music and dance programmes.



## NEWS

# Worsening humanitarian...

*Continued from p3*

ment of civilians has left many without any appropriate shelter.

"People are living under trees. They don't even have a mat to sleep on. There is no electricity," one resident told BBC.

With many more likely to become displaced, the sight of whole families living in these conditions is likely to become even more prevalent, analysts predict.

The health services available in the region have also become a casualty of the ongoing conflict.

"Local health facilities have moved along with the civilian population and are continuing to provide health services under

extremely difficult conditions," the ICRC deputy told reporters.

"Kilinochchi District General Hospital has been receiving even more patients than usual," Mr. Dalziel added.

Though there have been no health problems yet, "the approaching monsoon rains are cause for concern", noted the ICRC deputy.

Kilinochchi hospital has already moved from its original position, with relocating 18km north of the town on September 27.

Patients, staff and records were moved to two schools as a temporary measure.

The hospital had a severe logistical problem in shifting the seriously ill patients, and most

importantly the giant generator which supplies power to the refrigerators in which vaccines, medicines and blood were stored, Provincial Health Services Regional Director Dr. T. Sathyamoorthi told The Sunday Times.

The hospital buildings had already been slightly damaged in aerial bombardment and shelling in the vicinity, he said.

The UN reports that 45 per cent of university applicants in the Vanni were unable to sit their entrance exams due to the fighting.

The educational prospects of at least 30,000 school children are also affected according to NGOs operating in the area.

# Congress on defensive...

*Continued from p4*

effective steps to resolve the ethnic problem.

Defence Minister A K Antony had taken up the matter with the Sri Lankan government and Prime Minister Singh had voiced his concern over the killings of Tamils at the recent SAARC summit, he noted.

"Don't try to isolate the Congress in Tamil Nadu from the issue," he said.

He further said Tamil Nadu Congress is ready to lead an all-party delegation to Delhi on the Sri Lankan issue, TNCC president K V Thangabalu said on Thursday, two days after a state-wide protest fast organized by Communist Party of India drew

thousands.

"As the president of the TNCC, I am ready to lead an all-party delegation to Delhi to take up the issue," Thangabalu asserted.

"Even during the Congress working committee meet held on September 12 in Delhi, I had made a plea to AICC president Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the need to protect the Tamils in the island nation in the wake of increased military attacks on them," Thangabalu said.

However, the Sri Lankan government, on Friday October 3, said it was not worried about demonstrations being held in Chennai by various Tamil Nadu

political parties calling for the suspension of military operations in the Northeast of the island.

"These small demonstrations supposed to be held in Chennai do not worry us in any way and we have not been officially informed of any such demonstrations," Media Minister Anura Priyadarshana Yapa said.

Yapa said the government was firm in its resolve to defeat terrorism and was not expecting any negative responses to Sri Lanka's military efforts from any country.

"Countries like Britain, Canada, and the United States have also banned the LTTE and we don't expect any of these countries to oppose our action," Yapa added.

# Factual distortions...

*Continued from p7*

they vigorously oppose the Tamil demand for self-autonomy in the merged North and East and support successive Sinhala-dominated governments' military actions against the Tamils".

2. "All of which goes to show that the irrational approach of the Tamil resistance movement towards the Muslims of the North and East was the key component of the Muslim frustration, and thus some (affected) Muslim youth eventually resorted to violence against the Tamils and joined the state security forces, either as low-level cadres or as informants".

3. "The bottom line is that the minorities in Sri Lanka have some special problems. These problems are associated with the issues of identity and existence, and thus they need special solutions".

4. "During the 1983 riots, a Muslim Minister is said to have disgraced Islam by unleashing his

thugs in central Colombo against the Tamils. The Muslims of the Eastern Province were alleged to have got together with the STF in terrorist exploits against the Tamils there".

5. "As a result, Muslims have changed their preferences and strategies to contain the ethnic Tamils' cultural and political domination. This suggests one key rational for the formation of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) in the mid of 1980's, when the Muslims also established some informal contacts with the Sri Lanka state forces".

## Further reading

The following short list of publications will allow any concerned reader to begin revealing the flaws in Dr. Imtiyaz's arguments.

■ The Muslims of Sri Lanka, 1000 years of ethnic harmony 900-1915 AD" by Lorna Dewaraja, (Lanka Islamic Foundation),  
■ The Muslims and Sri Lanka by Ms. Kamalika Pieris, available at

<http://www.missionislam.com/knowledge/srilanka.htm>

■ Sri Lankan Muslims: Ethnic Identity within Cultural Diversity by Prof M A Nuhuman.

■ Ameer Ali, "The Genesis of the Muslim Community in Ceylon (Sri Lanka): A Historical Summary", Asian Studies, Vol. 29, April-December, 1981, pp. 65-82,  
■ M M M. Mahroof, "Sri Lanka: the Arab connection", Journal of Islamic History, New Delhi, 1/2 Oct-Dec., 1995, pp. 305-316,

■ M M M. Mahroof, "Sri Lanka: the Arab connection", Journal of Islamic History, New Delhi, 1/2 Oct-Dec., 1995, pp. 305-316,

■ Article by Farah Mihar in Britain's The Guardian newspaper titled "Britain is failing Sri Lanka's Muslims", available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2006/sep/01/post331>

The author is a Tamil Speaking Canadian citizen, hailing from Trincomalee. He is a teacher and a freelance writer involved in Peace Activities, especially the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

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British Tamils called for action against indiscriminate aerial bombardment of Tamils by the Sri Lanka government and urged the British Government to urgently take direct action to help save lives in Vanni, following the British government's statement that it welcomed Sri Lanka recognising its responsibility to provide humanitarian aid. Later a British Minister provided local Tamils with an assurance that his government's aid would continue to reach needy populations in the Vanni through local NGOs.

  
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