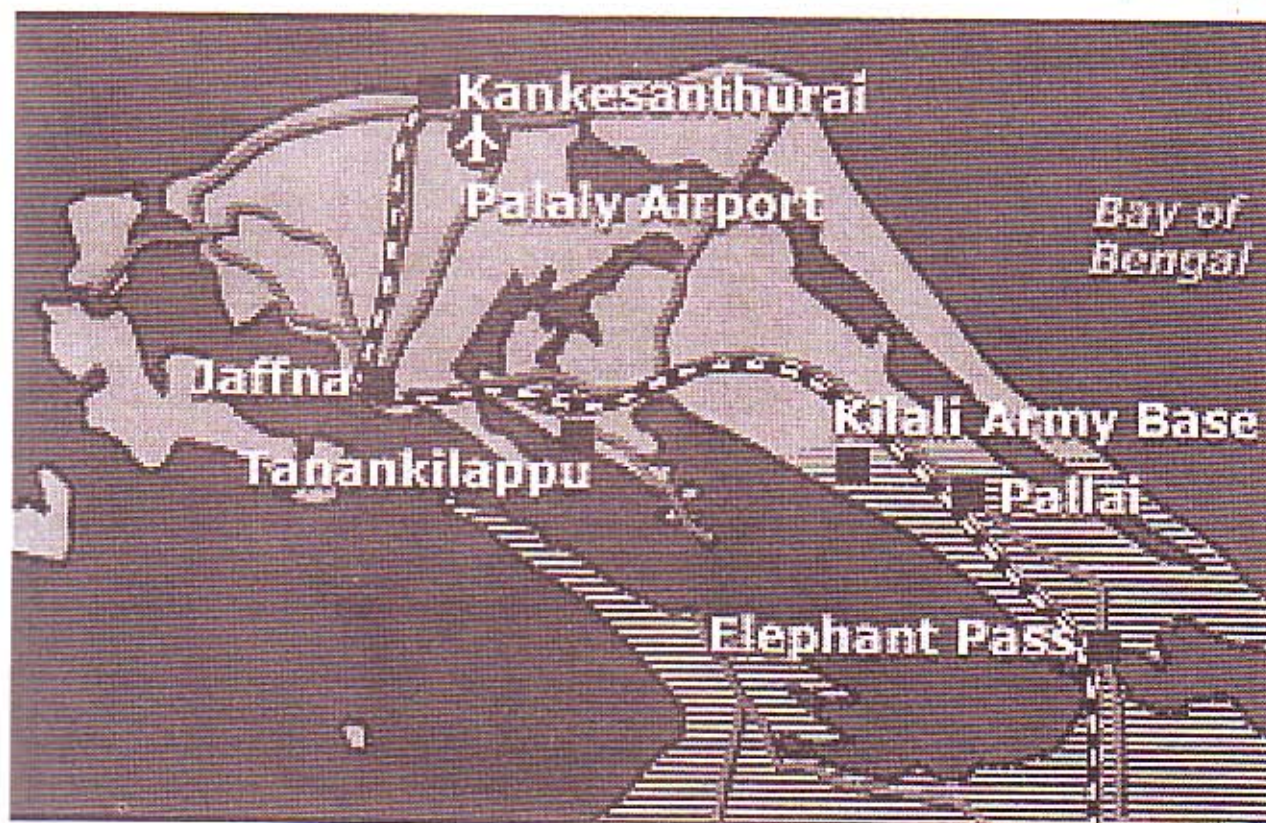
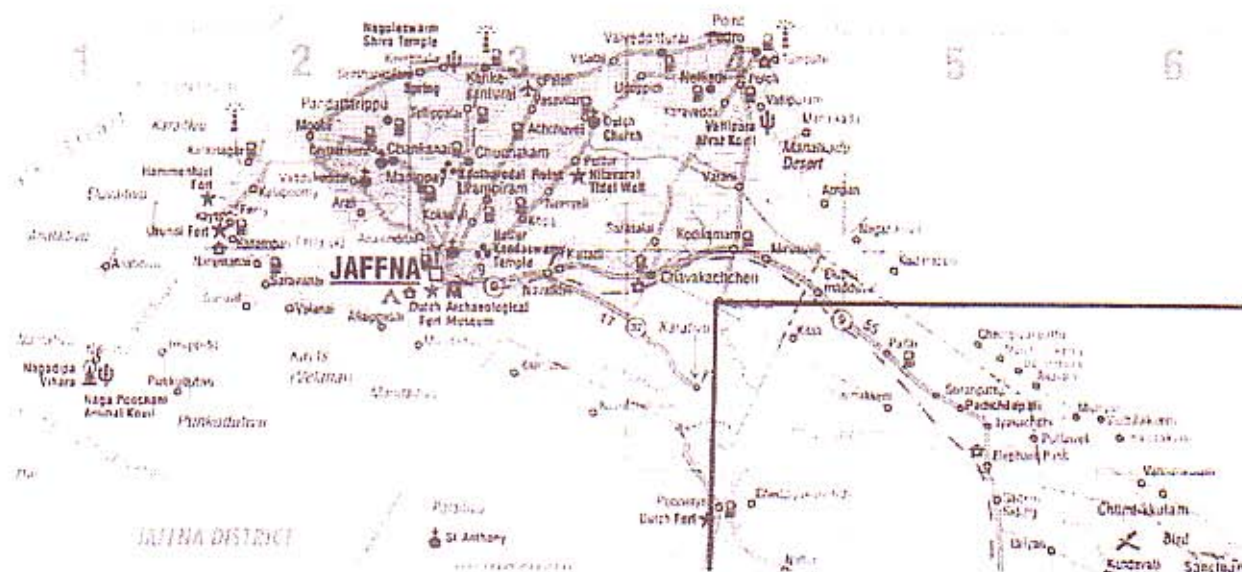


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of what you say, but I'll
defend to the death your
right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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NEWS COMMENTARY

May 26 - With the Tamil Tigers re-entering into the heartland of Jaffna determined to recapture their former stronghold and posing a humanitarian crisis for the civilian population and a threat to the lives of some 30,000 government troops entrapped in the peninsula, the crisis facing Sri Lanka has been well and truly internationalised.

The Sri Lankan government has sought Indian military and other forms of assistance. Even the extremist hardline sections, which had previously viewed any Indian role in the island's affairs with bitter hostility, pleaded for Indian intervention.

Norwegians are already engaged in a mediation role to resolve the conflict by promoting negotiations between the government and the LTTE. On May 22, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway, Mr. Johansen, and Mr. Erik Solheim, the special nominee of the Norwegian government with the mandate to seek a resolution of the ethnic conflict, arrived in Sri Lanka for a 2-day visit. They had detailed discussions with the President, the Foreign Minister and the Opposition Leader. They also visited New Delhi and emphasised the importance of an Indian role in the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Recently, United States top officials visited Colombo and New Delhi and displayed high profile interest in resolving the island's conflict.

Israel was among the few countries to respond favourably to the shopping spree for arms and ammunition, as well as for advanced communication equipment. This led the government to resume diplomatic ties with Israel. There have been reports of the presence of Israeli military personnel who are said to be in the island on a limited role as advisors and to share their expertise with their Sri Lankan colleagues. The government was emphatic that they would not be involved in any actual combat.

On May 18, the European Union issued a statement on the Sri Lankan situation, signed by Portugal as

the present President of the EU. The statement called for an 'immediate cessation of hostilities on a basis agreed by all parties' and urged the LTTE to accept the offer by the government of Sri Lanka to open talks. The statement called for the Emergency regulations to be lifted as soon as possible, and urged 'the governments of the member states of the EU to take steps to proscribe organisations operating on their territory which continue to provide financial and other support to terrorist actions in Sri Lanka'. The statement also contained a call to bring the situation before the UN Security Council.

It has also been reported that the British government was on the point of raising the issue of the Sri Lankan crisis in the UN Security Council, but was dissuaded from doing so by the Indian government.

The much publicised reports that have dominated the media for a number of days about the prospect of imminent direct Indian intervention in the ongoing armed conflict in Sri Lanka has so far not materialised. However, units of the Indian military - navy and airforce - are said to be on red alert ready and waiting in country's southern cities for orders to leave for Sri Lanka at short notice.

There is much confusion as to the extent and nature of the assistance Colombo has asked and as to what Delhi has agreed or prepared to offer. What role India is going to play is not yet clear. However, Delhi has firmly ruled out direct military assistance and intervention. Colombo has sought in the face of the relentless advance of the Tigers into the Jaffna peninsula following the fall of the Elephant Pass military base complex on 22 April. Statements by Indian politicians, including the Prime Minister and Defence and Foreign Ministers indicate that India is set against direct military intervention, though they say that they are ready to provide humanitarian assistance to evacuate the 30,000 government troops trapped in Jaffna, mainly at the sprawling

Palaly military base.

The LTTE also in an apparent diversionary move fired mortar bombs late on 24 May at Kalladi army camp, just south of the eastern city of Batticaloa in which six civilians, including children, were killed and three wounded.

In another move as intense fighting in the outskirts of Jaffna continued, the LTTE announced in a statement issued on 26 May that it "will observe atemporary ceasefire between 10am and 10pm Saturday May 27 to facilitate the evacuation of civilians to safe areas from battlezones of the Thenmarachchi division of the Jaffna peninsula to safe areas."

India's External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh during a visit to London on 24 May is said to have discussed the Sri Lankan situation, and the developments in the Jaffna in particular, with his British counterpart, Robin Cook. A report attributed to Mr Singh said, "Mr Singh is notifying friendly countries the circumstances under which India will render humanitarian help to Sri Lanka and explaining India's stand on all related issues. There is no question India considering any military role, nor are we trying to seek UN or Commonwealth intervention." A report attributed to the British Foreign Office spokesman said that UK was supporting the efforts of the Norwegian government to initiate a peace process, adding that, "We recognise the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and believe that the problem the problem can only be solved through negotiations."

The opposition Congress Party has come down heavily on the Indian government for its "shabby handling of the Sri Lankan crisis." The party's foreign affairs spokesman Mr K Natwar Singh described the government's attitude as "strange and inimical" to India's long-term interests. "Far too long they kept saying hands-off Sri Lanka with the result that now Norway, China and Pakistan have become active in the island nation." He said that the hostility of some of these countries against India was not a secret, "In

my opinion He said that the Prime Minister expressed India's support for Sri Lanka's unity and sovereignty, should have said India did not support Eelam, and given support in practical ways."

Still afresh are also the bitter memories of the recent past when Indian troops were sucked into a failed military mission to resolve the island's conflict between government forces and the Tamil Tigers during 1987-90. Having prevailed upon Colombo to enter into the July 1987 Indo Sri Lanka Accord providing for a certain degree of autonomy for the country's Tamil community living predominantly living in the north-east of the country, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi sent in the Indian Peace Keeping Force to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Accord and the ending of the armed conflict. However, what followed was a bitter and protracted military confrontation between the IPKF and the Tamil Tigers, who in the meantime had struck an alliance with their bitter enemy, the Sri Lankan government headed by President Premadasa who supplied money and military hardware to fight the IPKF. Premadasa and the LTTE demanded the departure of the IPKF which left at the end of March 1990 having suffered an enormous number of casualties - 1200 dead and over 5000 injured.

There is no doubt that New Delhi is taking a very cautious approach and declining military support to its beleaguered nearest southern neighbour for several reasons. Vajpayee's government, though dominated by the BJP, is a coalition of several regional parties which constitute the National Democratic Alliance. The conflicting positions of the constituent parties of the NDA doubtless reflect the current confusing, and at times contradictory, stance of New Delhi.

"Some sections within the BJP have a mistaken view of the conflict in Sri Lanka as a religious one between the Buddhist majority Sinhalese and the minority Hindu Tamils and that the latter, being Hindus, deserve the support of the Hindus

of India," a columnist from Delhi said adding, "These elements do not take into account of the fact that there is a substantial Christian component within the two communities."

Then there is the factor of Tamil Nadu where political parties seek to exploit the Sri Lankan Tamil issue. Two parties, MDMK led by Vaiko Gopalasamy and the PMK led by Dr Ramadas have been outspoken supporters of the Tamil Tigers. The ruling DMK led by M Karunanidhi, though reluctantly, has to make the "proper politically correct" noises not to be outdone by the MDMK and the PMK. Then there is the Samata Party led by Mr George Fernandes, occupying the powerful position of Defence Minister in the Vajpayee government. He has been reputed to be an undisguised supporter of the cause of the Tamil Tigers. Mr Fernandes, as Defence Minister, no doubt would wield a considerable degree of influence in matters relating to the prospect of any military involvement in Sri Lankan affairs.

But New Delhi also does not want to be completely left out in the current efforts to resolve the Sri Lankan crisis, particularly when other countries are seeking to move into the vacuum.

With the much desired Indian military support not forthcoming, Colombo now appears to favour the involvement of other countries along with Norway to make a joint effort in resolving the crisis in the island. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, said on 23 May that he saw the possibility of a "joint effort" by Norway, India and the US to bring the government and the LTTE to the negotiating table to solve the ethnic conflict in the country. Asked if there would be a joint Indo-Norwegian effort because Norway was already on board and India had expressed an interest in getting on board, Mr Kadirgamar said: "That could be. It would be an effort whereby India is involved in the process with Norway. The USA is also saying that they would like to be involved in the process in a suitable capacity, but always through India, with the consent of India".

Mr Kadirgamar further said that Norway had no problem about accepting India on board and it was keeping India informed on Sri Lanka's request. The US too had said that India's concerns in the region would have to be addressed. Asked how long it would take for this consortium of peace makers to take shape, the Lankan Foreign Minister hinted that there was no problem as far as these three countries were concerned.

It is clear as crystal that Sri Lanka is eager to have India on board because the latter is perhaps the only country in the world which has a stake in seeing that Sri Lanka is not divided and its territorial integrity and unity maintained.

While the LTTE has accepted Norwegian, it is doubtful whether it would agree to a community of countries including India and the US playing a role in the peace process precisely for the reason that these two countries set against the creation of a separate state in the island.

As if to reiterate their stand on this issue, India and the United States on 24 May ruled out support to any independent Tamil State carved out of Sri Lanka and said there was no military solution possible to the ethnic strife in the island. "The US does not support any kind of independent State in Sri Lanka," US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering asserted and was joined by the Indian Foreign Secretary Lalit Mansingh who said "that remains our position too."

Rejecting the possibility of any military solution, Pickering, who had wide-ranging consultations with Mansingh, said Washington supported any constructive role by India in Sri Lanka.

Answering questions whether any evacuation of beleaguered Sri Lankan troops was imminent, Mansingh told reporters that so far there had been no request from Colombo in this regard, adding that according to reports with New Delhi heavy fighting was still raging between Government forces and LTTE.

Pickering, who also held discussions with Defence Minister George

Fernandes, said "everything must be done to avert a humanitarian catastrophe" in Jaffna peninsula. "Humanitarian considerations are paramount in the current situation to avoid innocent civilians being caught in the crossfire," he said adding that the US was watching the situation in the island nation carefully and was supporting the Norwegian role to broker peace.

In the meantime, the Tigers have given the deadline of 25 May for the troops to surrender, and if they do not the Tigers have promised to attack the base warning that the government would be responsible of the "disasterous consequences." The deadline passed with reports that the Tigers were engaged in pitched battles against troops in the Chavakachcheri area of the peninsula, 15 km east of the Jaffna town. A LTTE statement issued on 24 May said that their forces had launched a new offensive and were advancing towards Meesalia, a small town situated on a key highway between Chavakachcheri and Kodikamam. A government statement claimed that troops backed by airforce jets and artillery had repulsed a big attack on the army's defences near Sarasalai and Meesalai. The LTTE also in an apparent diversionary move fired mortar bombs late on 24 May at Kalladi army camp, just south of the eastern city of Batticaloa in which six civilians, including children, were killed and three wounded.

In another move as intense fighting in the outskirts of Jaffna continued, the LTTE announced in a statement issued on 26 May that it "will observe a temporary ceasefire between 10am and 10pm Saturday May 27 to facilitate the evacuation of civilians to safe areas from battle-zones of the Thenmarachchi division of the Jaffna peninsula to safe areas."

The plight of the civilians who are caught in the peninsula, especially in the Jaffna town area, is a matter of grave concern. Although in the first days of the renewed fighting, there was not much of a movement of people outside the town, this situation had changed by May 20 when thousands of people began

moving out.

There have been no telephone lines open to Jaffna since early May. Up to mid-May there was a possibility to telephone Jaffna from Mannar, but later this link too was severed. Due to this situation, thousands of family members of civilians living in the peninsula are unable to find out what has happened to their relatives.

Following the commencement of air attacks, people began to leave the Jaffna town to move to Walikamam West. The LTTE radio also issued a warning asking people to leave before they began shelling in the direction of the town. In mid-May, there were some reports of evacuees in Pandateruppu, and on May 20, the UNHCR reported that there were about 4000 persons living in very cramped and unsanitary conditions in 5 community centres in Manipay. On May 16, MSF reported several civilian deaths, and there were reports of some civilians killed when a bomb fell on a Home for the Aged at Kaithady.

As the clashes between the security forces and the LTTE continued, most international agencies including the UNDP withdrew their staff from the peninsula. The UNHCR, ICRC and MSF (Medecins Sans Frontiers) remained in place, with 25 expatriate workers remaining in the peninsula up to May 19. Following the increased shelling of Jaffna town, workers for both the UNHCR and MSF moved to areas outside the town. According to reports, only some staff members of the ICRC remained in Jaffna town by May 23.

There are reportedly shortages of essential medical supplies, and even predicted shortages of food and other essentials if the fighting continued with the same intensity into the end of May. MSF had warned in late April of an impending medical emergency due to changes in procedures for transport of essential medical supplies to north.

Several UN and other international agencies issued appeals calling on both parties to the conflict to respect the principles set out in humanitarian law regarding the treatment of civilians in conflict situations. ●

Battle for Jaffna

Tigers Poised To Recapture Lost Stronghold

D B S Jeyaraj

A serious crisis with international ramifications is now brewing in the north of Sri Lanka. The ascendancy of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on the military front has raised a question mark over the possible fate of 30,000 Sinhala soldiers currently deployed in the Jaffna peninsula. Although proclamations from Colombo are repeatedly "confident" most observers of the military scene are of the opinion that it is only a matter of time before the Tigers establish control all over the Peninsula. If and when that situation is imminent a massive "Dunkirk" type evacuation is deemed necessary. It is yet unclear as to how this exercise would be conducted and whether India would do it. Also it is not clear as to whether India will engage in such a move with the concurrence and cooperation of the LTTE or whether it will do so in a hostile climate. If in the latter the situation is quite dicey and a 1987 scenario may very well occur again. Also the impact of a total "surrender" by the Government in the North on the Sinhala South and its possible backlash against Tamils living in the South are also worrisome factors.

Jaffna or Yarlpaanam in Northern Sri Lanka is now the main theatre of conflict. The LTTE or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is now focussing its energies and attention on Jaffna described by its political adviser in London, Anton Balasingham as "the cultural capital of the Sri Lankan Tamils". After its string of victories in the northern mainland of the Wanni and later in the south-east of the Jaffna Peninsula the LTTE is now advancing further upwards with the ultimate objective of establishing control over the whole region. Although there have been several stages of fighting the entire operation code-named "Oyatha Alaigal" or unceasing waves continues still. It is apparent from LTTE literature that these "lashing waves" will "cease" only after

"engulfing" the Jaffna City in particular and the Peninsula in general.

There is however some confusion in media circles when referring to Jaffna. There is a tendency to treat it as a single entity when it is not so. Geographically Jaffna is the name for the northern peninsula. It is also the name of the district. Jaffna district consists of all the areas in the Peninsula and the outlying Islands except for the Pachchilaippalli Assistant Government Division. The latter belongs to the Kilinochchi district. Both Jaffna and Kilinochchi districts together comprise the Jaffna electoral district. There is also Jaffna the electoral division known as electorate in the earlier voting system. Then there is Jaffna city. The Jaffna city or municipality consists of the Jaffna electoral division as well as areas from adjoining Nallur electoral division. Ariyalai and Colombothurai for instance are part and parcel of the Jaffna municipality. So technically the LTTE is in Jaffna City after entering Colombothurai or Ariyalai. Yet some news reports state that the Tigers are closing in on Jaffna City. What is meant here is the heart of Jaffna city or what was the "old" Jaffna town prior to it being made a municipality. Cognizance of these differences about Jaffna will be helpful to understand the current fighting better.

After the fall of Elephant Pass, the LTTE went on to take Pallai on the Jaffna-Kandy road or A-9 highway. It also took towards the North-East and Puloppalai to the North-West of Pallai. The Tigers also went further north on the A-9 highway to reach the Southern outskirts of Eluthumattuvaal. It also advanced up the South-Western coast to reach Kilaly. On the Eastern coast the LTTE targeted Nagar Kovil. The Sri Lankan armed forces began strengthening their defences in a diagonal line that extended from Kilaly to Nagar Kovil via Eluthumattuvaal. At the same

time the LTTE had also established fixed positions in Keratheevu and Southern Thanankilappu in the South-west of the Peninsula. Also it had a presence in Eastern Ariyalai in the places around "Munai" or point including the settlement scheme "Poompuhaar".

The Elephant Pass debacle along with the clear cut military ascendancy of the LTTE had caused grave apprehensions about the future of the Sri Lankan armed forces in the peninsula. If the LTTE succeeded in advancing further and besieging the Palaly-Kankesanthurai base complex the military supply lines between Jaffna and the rest of the country would be placed at great risk. After the recent change in the military equation, Palaly airport and Kankesanthurai harbour were the only viable entry and exit points for Air and Sea communication. If the LTTE juggernaut rolled on relentlessly and interdicted this link, the physical safety of 30,000 troops in Jaffna was greatly imperilled. It seemed that a "Dunkirk" like evacuation was necessary to relocate these troops. Speculation was rife that India would have to intervene and ensure this.

Even as a huge controversy arose in India about this issue the LTTE offered a "temporary ceasefire". The Tigers stated that their ceasefire would enable the Sri Lankan government to evacuate the "beleaguered troops" safely through the good offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross and avoid further "escalation of violence and a bloodbath". Calling upon the Sri Lankan government to "respond positively without delay" the Tigers also hinted at "a permanent ceasefire" in the future that would "create cordial conditions for peace talks and a negotiated political settlement". The LTTE also held out a warning that the government will "bear total responsibility for the disastrous consequences of heavy military casualties if it rejects our proposal for deescalation and continues the war effort".

Whatever the motives behind the LTTE offer, it seemed to open a "window of opportunity" for deescalation of the conflict. While the government could not be expected to accept all the terms of the offer, analysts felt that Colombo would accept a ceasefire in principle and then negotiate further. But the Sri Lankan government reacted quickly and defiantly. The offer was

rejected out of hand as "psychological warfare". There would be no withdrawal. Instead the government urged the army to fight on. The government position was that the people of Jaffna could not be abandoned.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga attempted to restore morale by issuing a special message of enthusiastic hope to the soldiers at the frontline. Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte announced in Parliament in Sri Jayewardenepura that "we would fight to the last man".

Analysts point out that the LTTE "offer" had been drafted in a manner that offered no face saving way out. It was an ultimatum demanding total surrender without explicitly stating so. The government could not cave in simply. Also the retention of Jaffna was of paramount importance to the political fortunes of the Peoples Alliance government. The PA's record of governance has been quite dismal and in recent times the only effective "plus point" had been the taking of Jaffna. It was the PA's "jewel in the crown". If the government was seen as abandoning Jaffna it was likely to affect the PA in the Parliamentary elections to be held anytime after August this year. Besides if the government was perceived as letting go of Jaffna without a fight there was a possibility of anti - Tamil violence breaking out in the Sinhala dominated areas. It has also been pointed out that what is at stake here for Colombo is not the future of the state but that of the incumbent regime.

Apart from these reasons there was a view in government circles that the LTTE had overstretched its limited resources. It was felt that the Tigers lacked the wherewithal to sustain the current levels of pressure. Also that it was short of manpower and firepower necessary to take over the Greater part of the Peninsula including Jaffna city and the Palaly-Kankesanthurai base complex. Therefore the ceasefire offer was interpreted as a stratagem of the LTTE to cover up its deficiency and a bold gamble aimed at getting the army out without fighting. There was also optimism that after obtaining fresh quantity of arms and armaments, valued by Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar at US\$800 million dollars, the military situation would tilt against the LTTE.

The Sri Lankan government also unleashed a massive aerial bombardment spree within and without the peni-

insula. The bombing was ostensibly aimed at preventing the LTTE from inducting its cadres from the mainland into the peninsula. More importantly it was also a "search and destroy" mission against LTTE heavy artillery. In recent times the Tigers have used long range artillery and armoured cars extensively and successfully in combat. The Sri Lankan Air Force scoured the skies in search of these. The objective was to destroy these before the LTTE could move them and reach positions within firing range of the Palaly - Kankesanthurai base. In spite of intensive bombardment there have been no claims by Colombo of targetting the LTTE's artillery or armoured vehicles. On the other hand there have been instances where the Israeli built K-fir jets of the Lankan airforce have been way off the mark as in the case of the Pallikuda bombing near Pooneryn on the mainland where five civilians were killed. So severe has been the plight of civilians that the LTTE appealed to them to construct bunkers to protect themselves during bombing sprees.

Observers have detected a "pause and pounce" strategy in the LTTE. The Tigers do not fight on continuously without a break. Instead they conduct intermittent assaults, resting in between. Despite this obvious pattern in the LTTE fighting mode temporary lulls were misinterpreted in Colombo circles as signs of weakness. In a dangerous exercise of self delusion sections of the Colombo media projected the viewpoint that the LTTE "wave" had ebbed. The pause and pounce tactic was mistakenly seen as LTTE's lack of manpower. There was a confident assertion that the critical period for the government had passed and that it had "turned the corner". Events that unfolded proved how dangerously wrong this assessment was. The temporary calm before the storm ended on May 10th. In a tri-pronged deceptive exercise LTTE cadres attacked simultaneously the Kilaly, Eluthumattuvaal and Nagar Kovil defence lines. The assault in Kilaly was particularly severe as the main camp was assailed from three different directions. But ultimately these maneuvers proved to be part of an elaborate diversionary tactic. The "real" action was close to Jaffna city. This was also on three fronts but within proximity of each other.

A simultaneous offensive was launched on all three fronts by the LTTE.

The first was when LTTE cadres crossed the western parts of the lagoon from Kalmunai on the mainland in the Pooneryn area and reached Ariyalai munai on the peninsula. These cadres advanced further up through Poompuhaar and attacked the army detachment at Maniyan Thottam in Ariyalai. As the army retreated, the LTTE moved through Ariyalai's interior and reached the Nedunkulam junction on the Jaffna-Kandy road. Technically the Tigers were now in Jaffna city. It was only two kilometres more on the Jaffna road to reach the Jaffna district secretariat at Chundikuly. The LTTE moved along Mambalam junction and reached Pungankulam junction where another army detachment was stationed at a community centre-cum-library. Fighting ensued and the army withdrew. There is however a very large camp at the Old Park premises opposite the Jaffna secretariat. Personnel deployed here also entered the combat. Thereafter the LTTE has not moved beyond Pungankulam junction while exchanging fire with the army at Old Park.

The second front was at Navatkuli. It is on the outskirts of Jaffna city. A very long causeway cum bridge across the lagoon known as the Navatkuly palam" is situated on the Jaffna - Kandy road here. This is of strategic importance as it links the Thenmaratchy sector with Jaffna City. Navatkuly has large military installations. Places like a government warehouse and granary and housing schemes etc are now parts of an army camp. Likewise privately owned shrimp processing and hardware manufacturing plants too were incorporated as part of the military complex. After Elephant Pass, a move into Jaffna City by the Tigers was anticipated and Navatkuly, its gateway, was beefed up extensively. A squad of LTTE commandoes known as Leopards raided Navatkuly and established control initially on a two km stretch of roadway that included the vital Navatkuly "bridge".

The third front was at Thanankilappu. The shortest points between the Peninsula and Mainland on the Western lagoon is Keratheevu and Sangupiddy respectively. The LTTE was already in possession of both. There is a road that proceeds from Keratheevu and reaches Navatkuly along the coast. This is somewhat parallel to the A-9 Highway. The Keratheevu-Navatkuly road branches off at Thanankilappu junction

where one goes straight on to Navatkuly through Kovilaakkandy while the other forks off to Chavakachcheri which incidentally is the largest town in the Thenmaratchy sector. LTTE cadres moved in great numbers from sangupiddy to Keratheevu and then launched a twin pronged attack on the defences at Thanankilappu on the one hand and Kovilaakkandy on the other.

As fighting progressed the LTTE claimed successes over both the Thanankilappu and Kovilaakkandy bases. Thereafter the LTTE could have moved further up the Thanankilappu road towards Chavakachcheri town. Doing so would have made the Tigers very vulnerable to Sri Lankan artillery and aerial attack as the winding road goes through wide, open spaces most of the time. Instead of taking that route the LTTE moved towards Navatkuly. After a brief lull the LTTE went along the axis of the Navatkuly road and attacked the smaller camp at Thachchanthoppu on the way. Troops withdrew after skirmishes. Then came a ferocious onslaught on the Navatkuly base with the Tigers encircling and attacking it on three points from the directions of Tha-

chanthoppu, Ariyalai and Navatkuly bridge. After fierce fighting the LTTE announced the capture of Navatkuly.

Meanwhile another LTTE contingent came across in a flotilla of boats from Nachikuda in the mainland and landed at the Colombothurai jetty in the Peninsula. Colombothurai also within Jaffna municipal limits is beyond Ariyalai on the coast. There is however another area called Thundi between both with a large army presence. The Tigers bypassed Thundi by landing straight away in Colombothurai. Thereafter the Tigers have started moving closer to the Jaffna city centre by proceeding along the coast. From Colombothurai the Tigers moved to adjacent Pashaioor and from there to Karaioor now known as Gurunagar. The LTTE met with stiff resistance in both places but succeeded in proceeding quite a distance on the coast. At the same time the LTTE has not moved into the interior of Colombothurai, Pashaioor or Gurunagar but maintain their presence along the coast only, at least for now. This is what has led to conflicting claims where the government says these areas are in its position while the LTTE says it moved

along the coast and took these places. Both sides are partially if not totally correct. The balance however would alter drastically if and when the LTTE decides to move into the interior of Jaffna city in a decisive manner.

More significant and from Colombo's perspective fatal strides were made in the Thenmaratchy sector. After taking Kovilakkandy, another LTTE column went along an interior road through Maravan Pulavu and reached Kaithady situated between Navatkuly on one side and Mattuvil/Nunavil on the other. The village is about six miles from Jaffna City centre and consists of areas on either side of the Jaffna-Kandy road. A sprawling army camp consisting of several houses in the vicinity has been set up at Kaithady junction. Technically it may not be defined as a "base" but it is certainly a key and vital military installation set up at a strategically important spot.

Branching off from Kaithady Northwards is the Kaithady-Kopay road. This road bordered by Chemmani on one side wields its way through sections of the lagoon, paddy fields, palmyra groves and open spaces till it



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reaches the Irupalai junction in Kopay on the Jaffna - Point Pedro road. If one were to proceed straight further along Urumpirai junction would be reached. Urumpirai is on the axis of the Palaly-Jaffna road. A slight change of direction and a short distance covered means Punnalaikattuvan on the outer perimetre of Palaly complex is reached. If one turns at Irupalai junction in the direction of Point Pedro then the villages of Puthoor, Neervely, Atchuvally etc can be reached along the Point Pedro-Jaffna road. All of them provide access through the interior to reach vantage points rendering Palaly extremely vulnerable. If one were to turn in the direction of Jaffna one can cover Kopay, Kalviyan Kaadu, Nallur etc on the Jaffna-Point Pedro road. This would enable the LTTE to move in on Jaffna city from other directions too.

Latest reports from the warfront indicate that the LTTE has after a 12-hour battle overrun the Kaithady camp. Thereafter they have progressed some distance along the Kaithady-Kopay road and reached the large area known as Kopayveli. This is about 12 kilometres from the Palaly base. Thereafter the LTTE has started using 122mm artillery guns with a range of 17kms against Palaly. Shells fell first in Punnalaikattuvan north and then Vasavilaan. All these areas have been acquired by the state and incorporated as part of the Palaly base. Nearly 12,000 acres of prime agricultural land in the Valigamam North AGA division have been annexed to the Palaly-Kankesanthurai complex to ensure territorial contiguity between Airfield and Harbour. Expanding the base also ensured immunity from LTTE attacks. But with the newly acquired long range artillery the LTTE was now targeting Palaly.

By May 20th it seemed certain that the Tigers could now target Palaly effectively. The LTTE claimed that the control tower at Palaly had been hit and damaged. It also claimed that its shells had fallen on the runway as well as several buildings and barracks within the Palaly base and killed a number of personnel. Significantly the Government has denied that shells had fallen on the runway but was silent about other claims. The LTTE also claimed that shells were now falling on Kankesanthurai harbour area too. The harbour was about 5kms away from the airport. It was not clear whether the LTTE was

targeting KKS from a different point along the coast or whether it had further advanced along Kopayveli. LTTE media outlets abroad claimed on May 20th that the government had suspended air and sea traffic at Palaly and Kankesanthurai after its shells fell in those places. The Government has neither denied nor confirmed this. The LTTE too had not stated this officially by May 20th. Later the government claimed that Palaly and Kankesanthurai were fully functional.

A few days later saw LTTE claimed that its shells fell in areas beyond KKS to the west such as Senthankulam, Mathagal, Ilavaalai etc. This meant that the LTTE was now inching closer to Palaly or had moved more lethal artillery like the 152mm guns seized from Elephant Pass within firing range of Palaly-Kankesanthurai. This meant the Army's safety was in greater jeopardy.

A small group of LTTE cadres also infiltrated the Valigamam West sector and was seen in the area with heavy weapons. The army had closed down several camps in this sector in the aftermath of the Elephant Pass fall. These included the ones at Chankanai, Vaddukkoddai and Sithankerni. Upon receipt of information that Tigers were visible in these places a large number of troops converged in Vaddukkoddai, Sithankerni and Chankanai and conducted a cordon and search operation. No Tigers however were netted. The fighting in and around Jaffna has caused the beginning of a displaced persons inflow into this sector.

The possession of Kopayveli as well as progress on the Kaithady-Kopay road has afforded the LTTE great advantage vis a vis Palaly. Apart from reaching strategic positions by proceeding along the road the Tigers can also use the Kopayveli "plains" bounding the all pervasive lagoon and reach Kappoothu in the Vadamarachi sector, Mattuvil in the Thenmaratchi sector, Vatharavathai-Puthoor and Sirupiddy-Neervely in the Valigamam sectors. By May 20th reports indicated that the LTTE was pursuing at least one of these options successfully.

A small road known as Chappattiaan Kulam road running through parts of Kopayveli links Kaithady north with Mattuvil north. The LTTE proceeded along this road and passed beyond the famous Mattuvil landmark, the Pandrithalaichi Amman temple.

Thereafter comes the Mattuvil-Sarasaalai junction. The Sarasaalai junction is commonly known as the Kanaganpuliady junction. Five roads converge here. There is a massive army camp in this area at the building that once housed the Madduvil-Sarasaalai Skandavaro dhaya Maha Vidyalayam school. Many places of worship, schools, warehouses, factories and big buildings etc. have been transformed into military camps in Jaffna. Heavy fighting has ensued between the LTTE and the army at Sarasaalai. The importance of Kanaganpuliady junction renders its control utmost essential to both sides.

Five roads lead out of Kanaganpuliady. Firstly, there is the Madduvil-Nunavil road that merges with the Jaffna-Kandy road at Nunavil junction. It is possible to travel through Madduvil and reach the Jaffna-Kandy road at Nunaavil. Secondly, the Sarasaalai-Kappoothu-Kaligai-Point Pedro road. Thirdly the Sarasaalai-Vembiraai junction road that mounts the Jaffna-Kandy road between Meesaalai and Kodikamam.

Thirdly, another road from Vembiraai junction goes through Manthuvil and joins the Nelliaddy-Kodikamam road at Varany. Fourthly, there is the Chavakac-hcheri post office road through Keru-davil (not to be confused with Keru-davil near Valvettithurai) and Perunkulam that reaches Chavakachcheri town.

Fifthly, there is the Sarasaalai south road that reaches the Puthoor area after crossing the Vannathi Paalam bridge.

The vast potential and possibilities of the strategic Kanaganpuliady and to a lesser extent the Vembiraai junctions made the taking of Kanaganpuliady quite attractive to the LTTE. Fighting was quite intensive. If and when Kanaganpuliady fell to the LTTE and the Tigers took overall control of the linking roads the army would have to vacate Chavakachcheri town and environs. If the LTTE proceeded downwards from Chavakachcheri then the greater part of the Thenmaratchy sector would come under LTTE control. The armed forces will have no choice other than to move out from places like Kilaly, Eluthumattuvaal, Kodikamam, Kachai etc. In addition to Thenmaratchy the Tigers can move far more easily into Vadamaratchy and Valigamam sectors apart from edging closer to Jaffna city from other directions and increasing pressure on Palaly-Kankesanthurai.

All these factors compelled the LTTE to go for Kanaganpuliady. Using the Chappatiaan road the Tigers entered Madduvil North and then launched their attacks on the Madduvil - Sarasaalai sector. The LTTE overran the smaller military posts in the area including one near the famous Pandrithalaichi Amman temple. After heavy fighting the Tigers claimed victory over the army personnel stationed at the Madduvil school. Thereafter the LTTE moved up through Madduvil South, Nunavil etc and reached the Kandy road. Another LTTE column moved along Perunkulam on the Post Office road and marched towards the heart of Chavakachcheri town. A third LTTE column moved along the railway track from the Navatkuli direction and entered Chavakachcheri town from another point. The three pronged offensive met with stiff resistance from the army and after 12 hours of fighting the Tigers announced that they had taken over Chavakachcheri town the second largest next to Jaffna in the Peninsula.

The armed forces however retain a presence in the Sarasaalai-Vembiraai sector yet. On the Kandy road the Tig-

ers have moved into Sangathaanaai but not beyond Meesaalai. Likewise on the Kachchai road the Tigers have covered Mahilambaaveli and Kovilkudiyiruppu but not Allaarai. Even as the LTTE and army exchanged fire in these points the LTTE geared itself up to conduct a ferocious onslaught against the armed forces in Kilaly. The 52nd Brigade as well as a Navy detachment known as "boat squad" are in the well fortified Kilaly area. The LTTE was fighting hard to overrun Kilaly but had not succeeded by May 23rd.

The LTTE strategy of "pause and pounce" seemed directed at major areas in Thenmaratchy like Kodikamam, Kachchai, Kilaly, Eluthumattuvaal, Mirusuvil, Manthuvil and Varani etc. If and when the LTTE dominates Thenmaratchy then it would be in a position to move into Vadamaratchy and the various Valigamam zones easily. It would also find it easy to use the Wanni mainland as a rear base and move its men, artillery and armaments without great logistical problems into the Peninsula. In fact it was already moving men and materials from the Wanni into the Peninsula for several days at night.

One school of military thought in Colombo felt that the Tigers would put the taking of Jaffna city on hold for awhile and concentrate on taking the Peninsula in its entirety in the coming days. In comparison with the swift pace at which the LTTE progressed in the early days of this campaign, the progress in the current fighting seems comparatively slow. This is likely to be mainly due to logistical reasons. The LTTE needs time to move its cadres and heavy weaponry in sufficient numbers into the upper portions of the Peninsula. This is particularly so in the case of relocating its artillery. Heavy camouflaging is needed to prevent it being targeted by air and destroyed. Also avenues to ensure speedy mobility have to be ensured because the secret of Tiger successes has been its ability to move the heavy guns quickly from point to point in combat. Also fighting positions like bunkers, pill boxes and trenches have to be constructed at vantage points.

Ideally the LTTE would have preferred to "pause" for longer periods, prepare adequately, and then "pounce" but circumstances have compelled LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran

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to expedite his moves after the Elephant Pass victory. Firstly the LTTE leader knows that his recent victories were due to the widespread demoralisation that has set in within army ranks more than any other factor. Therefore he is constrained to extract maximum advantage out of this demoralised mood. To pause too long may give the troops some time to restore at least part of lost morale and regain a fighting spirit. As such the LTTE has to relentlessly keep the military pressure on.

Secondly the LTTE has to reach striking artillery distance of the Palaly-Kankesanthurai complex as soon as possible. By achieving proximity the LTTE can commence and sustain an intensive artillery barrage. An "encircle and enfeeble" strategy similar to Elephant Pass seems somewhat an ambitious project at this juncture. But maintaining an artillery barrage is imperative now for the LTTE. This would help disrupt supplies to Jaffna and retard the army's logistical equilibrium. It would also unnerve the troops, reduce morale and increase panic. Also with Colombo embarking on an expedited worldwide shopping spree for arms and armaments, the LTTE wants to prevent those from reaching Jaffna by a preemptive decommissioning of its one and only conduit the Palaly-Kankesanthurai base complex. Another factor causing concern for the LTTE leadership is the accelerated movement in the international dimension. The LTTE knows that at some point international pressure or possibly intervention will compel both parties to suspend fighting and start talking. If and when that moment comes, the Tigers want to have as much of real estate as possible under their control in addition to contracting and undermining the Palaly-Kankesanthurai military facility. The LTTE may have scant regard for the rule of law, but it knows that "possession is nine-tenths ownership" in law.

If the Tigers are impelled to strike out and "pounce" without enough time to "pause" and prepare, they are forced also to go slow in actual fighting. This is particularly so in the case of densely populated places like Jaffna or Chavakachcheri. Ironically these constraining concerns are very much similar to the factors that cramped the Indian army when confronting the LTTE during "Operation Pawan" in 1987 to take over Jaffna. The Sri Lankan army was not

constrained in this manner when it took Jaffna during Operation Riviresa (Sun Ray) in 1995. Lt. General Amarjit Kalkat who commanded the Indian Army in Jaffna then, explained this clearly in an interview with N. Ram in 1995 (FRONTLINE of Dec 29 1995). Kalkat said that unlike the Sri Lankan army that followed a broad front strategy to take Jaffna, he was hampered by concern for loss to civilian life, limb and property. The Indian army had to avoid civilian casualties and destruction. It could not simply reduce everything to rubble for Territorial gain. Now the LTTE finds itself in a somewhat similar position. The Tigers project themselves as freedom fighters and describe the current war as one seeking to "liberate their homeland from alien aggression". So the LTTE cannot simply launch an all out offensive and simply march in. The Tigers claiming to be fighting on behalf of the Tamil people have to demonstrate their concern for the civilians. They cannot simply fire artillery at random or destroy buildings. They also cannot endanger civilian lives unnecessarily. Already there have been some incidents of civilian casualties in the current fighting due to the use of long-range artillery fire. The most tragic was at Kaithady when shells fell on the Kaithady home for the aged killing 16 senior citizens and injuring 31.

There are also logistical reasons. Propagandists in Colombo may "scream" about the Tigers having unlimited firepower and their reckless use of manpower to the extent of sacrificing cadres in waves. All knowledgeable military observers know this is incorrect. Judicious and economic usage of artillery coupled with unbelievable flexibility and mobility has allowed the LTTE to gain maximum advantage from their artillery. Zealous dedication and indefatigable morale enable the cadres to press on repeatedly in the face of tremendous adversity. There are simply not enough cadres to indulge in human wave sacrifices.

A close examination of the LTTE leader's recent war strategy demonstrates that great care is taken to ensure prevention of loss to Tiger lives. Apart from its strategic superiority and tactical brilliance the element of economical management is also there. It is a case of extracting maximum gains out of minimum resources, material and

human. All these factors restrict the LTTE in conducting an all out onslaught. Even if it wins pitched battles the LTTE would suffer immense losses making the victory Pyrrhic. The overwhelming concern however has to be for civilians. If the LTTE succeeds after demolishing and destroying much of Jaffna or Chavakachcheri and after causing immense civilian casualties it will be accountable to some level at least to international and Tamil public opinion. These inhibiting factors are crystal clear in its current approach. Instead of moving to Chavakachcheri by way of the main Kandy road it is adopting a more elaborate tactic of encirclement that would enable it to take the town with minimum damage and losses. LTTE has also asked the civilians residing in potential battle zones to move into safer areas. Likewise it has scrupulously avoided fighting in the thickly populated interior of Jaffna City. Instead it is encircling the Jaffna municipality along the Municipal limits coast. These are in comparative terms sparsely populated. Though civilians have started moving out from Jaffna to areas like Manipay relief organizations in Jaffna estimate 75% of the population to be remaining in Jaffna still.

Now the LTTE has issued a one-week deadline for the army in Jaffna City to surrender "with dignity and honour". If they lay down arms they are promised safe passage out of Jaffna within 24 hours through Red Cross auspices. This message is being relayed in Sinhala over the LTTE radio "Voice Of Tigers" and also blared through loudspeakers. It is no doubt a shrewd psychological ploy and only time will bear testimony to its effectiveness. Already the Northern Army commander Gen. Janaka Perera has in a TV interview rejected the offer and stated that he would drive the Tigers out from Jaffna.

At the same time this "interregnum" will allow civilians to move out from places that are likely to be affected in heavy fighting. Also the Tigers gain more time to move their artillery, construct fighting positions, deploy cadres and spread out widely. The immediate objectives of the LTTE will be increasing pressure on Jaffna, and the Palaly-Kankesanthurai Complex while acquiring territory in the Peninsula. If and when the time is ripe the LTTE will strike. The temporary pause" will lead to a ferocious "pounce". (23 May 2000)

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Tigers Call Troops in Jaffna to Surrender

The Liberation Tigers on 19 May appealed to the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers in the Jaffna peninsula to surrender "to avoid a bloodbath."

The LTTE said in a statement dated 19 May from its London offices that soldiers who lay down their arms "will be treated with dignity and honour" and handed over to the custody of the International Committee of the Red Cross "within 24 hours". The Tigers have also called upon civilians residing in the Valigamam West and Vadamarachi division of the Jaffna peninsula to move out to safer areas.

The LTTE statement said, "As a genuine endeavour to avoid the conti-

nuing bloodbath and to bring an end to the escalating violence and war, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has made a fervent appeal today to thousands of Sri Lankan soldiers entrapped in the Jaffna peninsula to lay down arms and surrender.

The LTTE has pledged that those who lay down arms will be treated with dignity and honour and handed over to the protection of the International Committee of the Red Cross within 24 hours.

"The call for surrender is being announced by loud speakers at different battlefronts in the Jaffna theatre of war and also by the Voice of Tigers radio.

Explaining the precarious nature of their predicament, the LTTE has been impressing upon the government soldiers that their vital supply lines are cut and their lives are in grave danger. They are being told that the Tamil Tigers want to avoid the human tragedy of heavy casualties of innocent Sinhala youth who are being manipulated and forced to fight a futile war to promote the political ambitions of the chauvinistic elites in Colombo. The LTTE has also given a week's ultimatum for the Sri Lankan troops to lay down arms and surrender.

"In the meantime the LTTE is also making consistent appeals to the Tamil civilian masses to move to safe areas from battle zones allocating specific locations in Valigamam West and Vadamarachi division of the Jaffna peninsula."

India to Act "if necessary"

May 20 - Though previous statements rejected the idea of Indian intervention in Sri Lanka's conflict, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said on 20 May that New Delhi was ready to act "if necessary."

Vajpayee said on the sidelines of a conference with Indian state chief ministers that the situation in Sri Lanka was extremely fluid, and "rapidly changing". "If we have to take any step, we are ready for it, if necessary," he said and added that India was willing to extend all humanitarian help possible.

India had previously ruled out military intervention in Sri Lanka but said it would consider humanitarian assistance, and brokering a peace if approached by both Colombo and the Tamil rebels, who are locked in combat with government troops in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Indian experts say the government is trying to defer a decision on Sri Lanka as much as possible but expect the government will be forced to take a stand if Jaffna should fall into LTTE hands.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was quoted by India's Outlook news magazine as saying

events could force India to play a role in resolving his country's ethnic problem. "It is gearing itself up for assuming a role, one that might even be thrust upon it by events," he said.

"(In) Sri Lanka there is a mood in favour of India coming in and doing something," Kadirgamar said but cautioned that "I don't think that we should expect the impossible from India."

The Sri Lankan minister said: "For a variety of reasons, India makes no bones of its opposition to the LTTE."

India blames the Tamil Tigers for the May 21, 1991 assassination of former premier Rajiv Gandhi following which the LTTE was banned in India. Only recently New Delhi extended the proscription of the LTTE for a further two years.

Kadirgamar said: "India will take whatever action to meet its stated position. If it feels Sri Lanka is seriously threatened, India will, I believe, take necessary action. I can't predict what the action might be, but we can be sure it will be a well-considered one."

On 21 May, Mr Lakshman Kiriella, Sri Lanka's deputy external affairs minister, told reporters at Chennai airport "Details regarding assistance from India have been discussed by my senior,

the foreign minister, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar. It has been worked out."

Mr Kiriella flew to Whitefield near Bangalore to speak at a function organised by the Sathya Sai Baba Foundation. He did not talk to reporters in Bangalore.

"No political connotations should be drawn from my visit", Mr Kiriella said. Sri Lankan chief of defence staff, General Rohan de Silva Daluwate, too had recently visited India, apparently also to seek the Baba's blessings. The General too had gone to Whitefield.

There has been speculation that India was readying to launch itself into the Lankan crisis in some way. Gen. Daluwate's hush-hush visit to Thiruvananthapuram, headquarters of the southern air command, could have been to oversee preparations for India's assistance to his forces.

Fifteen thousand Indian troops have been moved to Thiruvananthapuram, and residents of Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts say there has been nightly movement of aircraft along the Thiruvananthapuram-Colombo air corridor.

However, the Indian Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, said on 20 May that India could not be compelled by anyone to play a role in resolving the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and reiterated the country's stand on non-military intervention.

Commenting on the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar's statement that events in Jaffna might force India to play a role, he said New Delhi had already made its position clear. "There is no question of New Delhi intervening militarily, though we can provide humanitarian

aid including helping in evacuation," Mr. Fernandes told reporters after addressing the South Asia Conference on "Legacy of Mahbub-ul- Haq: Human Development" organised by the Institute of Social Sciences here.

Replying to a question, he said there was "no question" of providing

military assistance to the Sri Lankan Government to fight the LTTE. On Pakistan supplying arms to Sri Lanka, he said "it is nothing new".

"Sri Lankan military officers have been taking training in Pakistani institutes as they do here. I find nothing new in this."

Norwegian Delegation Visits Colombo

As fighting between the security forces and the LTTE continued and the international community called for a peaceful settlement of the dispute, Norway, which is acting as a facilitator for the proposed talks, has announced that a top-level three member delegation will visit Colombo on 22 May for discussions.

The delegation will be led by the new Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Raymond Johansen. He will be accompanied by Special Advisor, Mr. Evik Solheim and executive officer, Ms. Kjersti Tromsdal.

A press release from the Norwegian Embassy in Colombo said they will be visiting Sri Lanka "for familiarization and discussions on the situation in the country".

The delegation will hold meetings with President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and the Leader of the Opposition Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The Embassy said that the delegation would also meet other members of the government as well as representatives from civil society during their three-day stay in the island.

The Norwegian delegation was expected to have wide ranging talks with the Sri Lankan government and opposition party leaders. These discussions were expected to cover the present war situation, examine whether there was any possibility of starting talks with the LTTE as earlier envisaged and what role other countries like India could play in such talks.

Solheim, who is co-ordinating Norway's bid as facilitator, said earlier in Oslo that he was not discouraged by the latest LTTE offensive, but warned peace was still far off.

"It is clear the situation in Jaffna is acute," Solheim said adding, "But we cannot let our work depend on day-to-day developments in war or politics. We have a long term perspective."

Eric Solheim, visited New Delhi and after discussions with external affairs minister Jaswant Singh on the situation in the island said on 11 May that no solution to the ethnic conflict was possible without India's "positive role".

"In no way can the problem be solved without India playing a positive

role," he told reporters after the meeting but parried queries on what specific role New Delhi should play to end the crisis in Jaffna.

An external affairs ministry spokesman said Solheim shared India's approach that the solution to the ethnic conflict lay with the Sri Lankans themselves in a manner by which all communities could realise their aspirations within the context of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

US under secretary of state Thomas Pickering is also expected in the island shortly. The Norwegian peace effort in the protracted ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has the support of many countries including the United States and India.

KKS Port and Palali Airbase Crippled, Says LTTE

The Sri Lankan military has suspended operations in Jaffna's only sea port and cancelled flights from the single airstrip on the peninsula after both came under direct artillery fire, the Liberation Tigers said in a statement datelined 19 May from its London offices that its guns had hit the runway at Palali airbase and military installations at Kankesanthurai (KKS) port. Meanwhile, advancing columns of LTTE troops captured the areas of Madduvil and Sarasali today, the organization said, adding that fighting was raging at the strategic Sarasali junction.

However, the military has denied the claim by the Tigers that the KKS port and the Palali Air Base has become non-operational and asserted that they fully functioning.

The LTTE statement said, "Thousands of Sri Lankan troops marooned in the Jaffna peninsula faced grave log-

istic problems of supply as the Tamil Tigers intensified artillery bombardment on Kankesanthurai (KKS) harbour and Palaly air base, the only life lines of supply to the Sinhalese army by sea and air.

"Several Sri Lankan military personnel were killed as volleys of artillery shells fell on military positions in the KKS harbour last night and this morning causing panic and chaos among government troops. As a consequence the government suspended operations in the harbour and cancelled all civilian and military traffic.

"The air base and military installations at Palaly came under intense artillery assault for the third day today. Military positions and the runway have been hit regularly posing grave danger to air traffic. Scores of soldiers have been killed and injured in the artillery

(continued on next page)

India, A Key Player In Lanka's Conflict, Says United States

THE United States believes that India is the key outside power in the ongoing Sri Lankan conflict and that anything to be done by the international community must be done very much with India, according to a top official in the Clinton administration.

US Assistant Secretary of State, Karl Inderfurth who is in charge of South Asian Affairs said that the United States was concerned that the ongoing fighting in Sri Lanka could bring on a "humanitarian crisis" and would therefore like to see an early end to the hostilities in the Jaffna peninsula.

The US would also favour a solution within the framework of Sri Lankan unity and territorial integrity.

Spelling out the administration's view of the current crisis in Sri Lanka, Mr. Inderfurth, made categorically clear in an interview with the Hindu correspondent in Washington that the United States would not entertain any notions such as that of the LTTE of a separate state of Tamil Eelam.

"We would not, nor do we believe that the international community would, recognise a unilateral assertion of independence." The United States, he said, was closely consulting with the Indian Government and was supportive of the Norwegian initiative to facilitate negotiations between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE.

(Continued from page 14)

barrage. "In the meantime, columns of heavily armed Tiger commandos who overran military bases at Kaithady yesterday advanced further deep into Chavakachcheri sector last night bringing vast tracts of territory under their control. Large areas of Madduvil and Sarasali have fallen to the LTTE. Heavy fighting is still raging at the strategically crucial Sarasali junction.

"In a meticulously planned pincer movement, the LTTE fighting formations are encircling Chavakachcheri town, the capital of Thenmarachi division where several thousands of troops are encamped. The LTTE has been appealing to the Tamil civilians in the Chavakachcheri sector to move to areas of safety."

Mr. Inderfurth also said that the U.S Under-Secretary of State, Thomas Pickering, who is visiting New Delhi later this month will also be going to Sri Lanka. He emphasised that the United States had "long believed in the need for a negotiated political solution to the Sri Lankan conflict, one that would include constitutional reform and devolution of power." In this regard, the United States supported the Norwegian initiative.

Mr. Inderfurth recalled that along with the U.S. Under-Secretary of State, Thomas Pickering, he had met the Norwegian special envoy, Erik Solheim, who had briefed them about the Norwegian peace initiative in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Inderfurth said Mr. Solheim had informed them of the "willingness of the Norwegian Government to play the role of an honest broker, listening to both parties and trying to bridge differences." Mr. Solheim had clearly "felt that the fighting in the Jaffna peninsula was a setback in terms of an immediate effort... this would have to resolve itself in some fashion" before the Norwegian peace initiative could proceed.

Mr. Inderfurth said the Norwegian special envoy had impressed the American officials "with his knowledge of the situation in Sri Lanka and his commitment to performing his role." He said he had noted Mr. Solheim's remark during his later visit to New Delhi that India was the only external power with a role in the resolution of the Sri Lankan conflict.

Asked whether the Clinton administration would go along with that view, Mr. Inderfurth said: "We believe that India is the key outside power and that anything to be done by the international community must be done very much with India."

The United States was well aware of the legitimate interest that India has in Sri Lanka and respected that. The administration also recognised that the Indian Government was "moving cautiously to determine the most appropriate role for India to play and we certainly understand India's desire not to become involved militarily."

He said the Clinton administration

appreciated India's willingness to consider humanitarian assistance if the need arose and would likewise be willing to extend such assistance.

What was significant in the current situation was that there was now a "community of concerned countries" which had expressed their view of the Sri Lankan crisis and that Sri Lanka was "clearly in the forefront of the international community's consumes at this point," Mr. Inderfurth said, pointing to the statements made by the European Union and U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, as instances of this international concern.

Asked why the United States was not explicitly throwing its weight behind the Kumaratunga Government's package of peace proposals that the United States had said was necessary for a resolution of the conflict, Mr. Inderfurth said, "We have long said that we believe that President Kumaratunga's proposals would serve as a basis for a political settlement taking into account the interests of all the Sri Lankan people... while we do not want to be in a position of endorsing one package or another... it's not for the United States to do that, it's for the Sri Lankans to do so."

He added that the United States had urged opposition UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, to work with the Kumaratunga Government. "We were encouraged after the national election when Mr. Wickremesinghe stated that his party would sit down with the Government to start discussing whether or not a consensus could be developed..."

Would the United States offer assistance to the Sri Lankan Government if the military situation in the Jaffna peninsula deteriorated further and the Sri Lankan army found itself trapped?

Mr. Inderfurth's response was: "No request has come from Sri Lanka for the assistance of the United States... we are clearly concerned about the situation and as with other Governments, including India, we will look at the requests if they are made... we would not want to see a humanitarian crisis unfold." He said the Clinton administration was especially concerned about the safety of civilians in the Jaffna peninsula and that it had "urged both parties to observe relevant international standards of conduct with respect to both combatants and civilians and to facilitate humanitarian relief efforts."

Chavakachcheri Captured, Says LTTE

May 20 - Chavakachcheri, the second largest town on the Jaffna peninsula, fell to the Tigers on 20 May, after 12 hours of heavy fighting, the LTTE said in a press release from its London offices. The troops of the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) were fleeing towards Kodigamam, the last SLA-held position in the Thenmarachchi sector, the Tigers said.

The LTTE statement said, "The Sri Lankan army suffered another serious military debacle in the war for the liberation of Jaffna peninsula as Chavakachcheri town, the capital of Thenmarachchi division, fell to the armed forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This strategically important town situated in the heart of the Jaffna peninsula came under the control of the Tamil Tigers after 12 hours of ferocious fighting.

"Columns of heavily armed commandos of the Tamil Tigers supported by artillery and mortar fire launched a multi-pronged attack on the Chavakachcheri town in the early hours of the morning today. Intense fighting continued through the day. Unable to sustain the power and fury of the Tiger assault the resistance of the government troops collapsed late in the evening around 6p.m culminating in a chaotic withdrawal. Defeated and demoralised, the troops are fleeing toward Kodigamam town, the last defence position of the Sri Lankan army in the Thenmarachchi sector.

"In the bloody battle of Chavakachcheri the Sri Lankan army suffered heavy casualties. Dead bodies of soldiers are scattered all over the town area. The LTTE fighters have also recovered a huge quantity of arms and ammunition.

"In the heavy fighting that continued yesterday and last night, the combat formations of the LTTE overran military bases at Maduvil, Nunavil and Sarasalai junction and brought under their control vast tracts of territory in the Chavakachcheri sector. With the fall of Chavakachcheri town and its

surrounding villages to the Liberation Tigers, Kodigamam town stands as the last bastion in the Thenmarachchi division of the peninsula for the fleeing Sri Lankan army."

In another statement on 20 May the LTTE said that the Sri Lanka army positions in MadduvilPanrithalaichchi Amman Kovil, Kanakampuliyadi junction, Madduvil Sivan Kovilady, Sarasalai and Madduvil junction were overrun according to the radio.

These positions are in the southeastern sector of the road from Puththur to

Sarasalai. Puththur is on the road from Jaffna town to Pt. Pedro. It is less than eight kilometers as the crow flies from the Sri Lankan army's Palaly base complex.

The statement added that the latest advance of the Liberation Tigers in Jaffna, threatens to cut off all supply lines to the Sri Lanka army troops in Jaffna's southern sector. The SLA has four garrisons in Kilali, Kodikamam, Kachchai and Chavakachcheri in the Thenmaradchi division.

With the fall of Sarasalai and Madduvil, the Kodikamam - Varani road remains the main viable supply route for the troops in Thenmaradchi. This road is also in imminent danger of being completely interdicted by the Tigers who have advanced into areas very close to it.

Sri Lanka Restores Diplomatic Relations With Israel

Facing a critical situation on the military front, Sri Lanka has sought Israeli help to fight Tamil Tigers who are threatening to retake their former stronghold of Jaffna.

During the first week of May, the government announced that it had re-established diplomatic relations with the Jewish state in a desperate bid to tap into Israel's arms industry.

"I talked to the Israeli ambassador in New Delhi ... and within 48 hours Colombo and Tel Aviv agreed on re-establishing ties which had been under consideration by us ever since we came to office in 1994.

"We have asked Israel to help us militarily," the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar told the press on 15 May.

The move came after India ruled out providing military assistance to Sri Lanka as the rebels closed in on strategic objectives on the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Sri Lanka established a limited Israeli presence in Colombo in 1985 when the then president Junius Jayewardene was in power, but five years later his successor, Ranasinghe Premadasa, asked the Israelis to dismantle their "interest section" maintained under the US

embassy.

Jayewardene said at the time that he was prepared to get help from the "devil himself to fight terrorism."

Before 1990, Israel had sent military advisors and helped set up an elite commando unit for the Sri Lankan police.

Minister Kadirgamar also said seven other countries were also invited to discuss arms sales. "These are no donations. We have to pay up to 800 million dollars. There are countries willing to give us arms at a price," he said.

The minister discounted reports that neighbouring India had played a role in Sri Lanka re-establishing ties with Israel after severing them nearly three decades ago. "I read a report that the Indian ambassador in Washington had talked to the US government about our establishing relations with Israel. That's pie in the sky. There was no such axis," he said.

"As a sovereign state we don't require the help or permission of any other state to establish relations with another state." The Minister also ruled out any form of United Nations intervention. "The Chinese and the Russians will not allow the UN Security Council getting involved in Sri Lanka," he said.

UNHCR Expresses Concern For Plight of Refugees

Geneva, May 19 - The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) says it is concerned about thousands of Sri Lankan civilians who have been displaced by fighting between government and rebel troops in Jaffna peninsula.

The UN refugee agency says most of the displaced people are living with relatives and friends. But, it says those who are camping in communal centers are in a difficult situation.

UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond said UNHCR remains very concerned about the condition of people forced to leave their homes in Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula. While most of the displaced people have found shelter in the homes of friends and relatives, a number of those who are encamped in communal centers are in a difficult situation. Food

has not been delivered and lack of sanitation is causing concern. During a visit to the Manipay area just outside Jaffna town, UNHCR reported that more than 4,000 people are crammed into five communal centers, which have little water and sanitation facilities. Some children were suffering from malaria, chickenpox and diarrhea.

UNHCR staff, along with other aid agencies, are attempting to deliver today (19 May) urgently needed relief supplies to the area. The relief effort has been hampered by a 24-hour curfew which was extended on Thursday (18 May) from Jaffna town and two neighboring areas to the entire peninsula. UNHCR staff, however, are able to move with curfew passes. For two days this week, the curfew was relaxed for three hours. During this period, UNH-

CR staff reported a surge of people leaving their homes heading for safer areas to the north and west of the peninsula. But with the extension of the curfew to the entire peninsula, movement of people has been restricted.

UNHCR staff have been urging authorities both in Jaffna and Colombo to allow people to seek refuge away from the fighting. At Chennai, in southern India, Indian officials today reassured UNHCR that India will continue to open its borders to refugees from Sri Lanka.

UNHCR was told that preparations are being made to receive refugees and that the effort is being supported by the central government in New Delhi. The Indian officials said that few people have arrived from Jaffna and the 400 Sri Lankans who had come to India over the past two months were mostly those from areas unaffected by the current fighting but were apprehensive they may soon be engulfed in the conflict.

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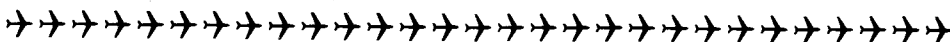
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Civilian Life Must be Protected

As fighting in the northern Jaffna peninsula escalates, Amnesty International on 12 May appealed to the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to respect international humanitarian law.

Previous escalations in this long conflict have brought widespread violations and abuses to the civilian population. "Half a million civilians live in this contested area," Amnesty International said. "Every effort must be made to respect their security."

As LTTE forces are reported to be advancing towards Jaffna town, Amnesty International called on the group

to adhere to the provisions of international humanitarian law, in particular those which protect civilians and members of the armed forces who are wounded or have laid down their arms.

International humanitarian law lays down clear standards in the conduct of any war, and applies equally to all parties to a conflict. Both the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE have a responsibility to uphold these standards.

In an apparent response to the heightened conflict, the Sri Lankan authorities introduced new Emergency Regulations on 3 May 2000, granting the police and armed forces wide powers

of arrest and detention and allowing for restrictions on freedom of assembly, and extensive censorship of the local and international media. This makes assessment of the true situation in the conflict zone all the more difficult.

Amnesty International today reminded the Sri Lankan government of its obligations under international human rights law not to derogate certain fundamental rights, even in a state of emergency. "Even in a national emergency, some rights are fundamental," Amnesty International said. "No one shall be subjected to torture or ill-treatment, and the right to life must also be upheld."

In a recent statement welcomed by Amnesty International, the Sri Lankan government said that steps have been taken to protect the lives of ethnic Tamil civilians in the south of the country, against any possible backlash.

Conditions Grim In Jaffna - MSF

Living conditions in the northern Sri Lankan city of Jaffna have deteriorated rapidly since the Tamil Tiger pushed closer in their offensive against government troops, an aid agency said on 12 May.

Gabriel Turjillo of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) told the press by phone from the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, that a day-and-night curfew had been imposed in the northern city since 10 May.

He said all but a few patients had been discharged from the city hospital - which has about 1,000 beds - because an army camp was nearby, and there was a shortage of medical supplies such as antibiotics and surgical materials.

"The very sick were taken to other hospitals," he said. "The others were taken by ambulances to their homes."

Turjillo said he was keeping abreast of events in the main town of the battle-scarred Jaffna peninsula through radio reports from MSF officers stationed there.

Journalists have been banned from travelling to the war zone and since last month there have been no

phone lines to Jaffna.

Turjillo, who heads the MSF France mission in Colombo, said the Tamil Tigers had come within one km (0.6 mile) of central Jaffna. Residents could hear the boom of the battle, but there was no fighting inside the city.

"The normal pattern for the curfew was from 9:30 p.m. until 4:30 a.m.,

but in the last two days...it was day and night," he said, adding that the curfew was preventing nurses and orderlies from reporting for duty at hospitals.

Turjillo said the curfew was lifted briefly at midday on 12 May to allow people to go shopping, but there was apparently a shortage of food and petrol was not easy to obtain.

Refugees from the peninsula arriving in southern India said earlier this week that the power supply in Jaffna city and its surrounding area was precarious, with a couple of diesel generators mainly supplying electricity to Colombo's troops.

Non-LTTE Tamil Groups For Indian Intervention

As the war in the northern Sri Lanka between the Tamil Tigers and government forces reach a critical point with the Tamil Tigers vowing to recapture its former stronghold, the Jaffna peninsula, non-LTTE Tamil political parties are calling for an active Indian intervention.

India has kept aloof from the Sri Lankan conflict following its ill-fated previous intervention in 1987 when Indian troops were inducted following the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July

1987. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who signed the Accord and sent the troops was himself assassinated by a suicide-bomber in September 1991.

"India's domestic pressures are their own concern. India has a moral responsibility to do something in the present situation," asserts PLOTE leader, D Siddharthan.

"There's no doubt that Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by the Tigers. But in its own interest today, India will

have to either talk to the Tigers or tackle them," adds Suresh Premachandran of the breakaway faction of the EPRLF.

For the Douglass Devananda led EPDP, the 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, is still a valid document. Says EPDP Member of Parliament, S Thavarajah, "We don't see a role for India in the present war. But in the event of implementation of a package, India will have to be involved, even if that means militarily."

Of all the Tamil parties, the EPDP has been more demanding, seeking humanitarian and military intervention in Jaffna on the lines of Tanzania's intervention in Uganda and Vietnam's move into Cambodia, both of which were upheld by the United Nations. "The lives of civilians are in danger, the only way to help the situation is by intervening militarily," Wigneswara,

spokesperson for EPDP, said.

Douglas Devananda, leader of the EPDP said he had called up foreign minister Jaswant Singh and requested "some form of intervention: military, humanitarian, whatever you call it". "If Jaffna falls," Devananda warned, "the lives of hundreds of thousands of its residents would be in danger as the Tigers would never forgive them for choosing to live in Jaffna while under army control." He also said that the LTTE take revenge against all members and supporters of other Tamil parties who participated in the local elections.

For the TULF, the intervention they seek is more moderate, but important. The TULF, which met the Indian High Commissioner, Shiv Shankar Menon in Colombo on 12 May, pitched for three main demands: security for the local Tamil population Jaffna, medicine and

food supply, and protection for civilians in the eventuality of a withdrawal by the Sri Lankan army.

Some things perhaps never change, and some lessons of history are meant to be ignored. The Tamil leadership in Sri Lanka, caught up in the whirlpool of the present situation and an exaggerated sense of their country's regional importance, can only reiterate India's obligations towards its smaller neighbour. "Culturally and in every way, we are linked to India. How can they ignore us at this stage?" questions Thavarajah.

But what has dramatically changed is that, even the Sinhala hardline sections, which had previously displayed inveterate hostility to any Indian role in the island's affairs, are pleading now for Indian military intervention in the face of Tamil Tiger advance in the north of the country.

No Going Back, says IPKF Chief

India should not "go back" to Sri Lanka despite Colombo's SOS for military assistance to save its trapped troops facing the LTTE onslaught, former Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) commander Lt-Gen A S Kalkat has said.

In an interview to the Times of India on 7 May, Kalkat said Sri Lanka double-crossed the IPKF by supplying to the LTTE weapons and explosives which were "used against us" and by not devolving powers to the Tamil-dominated North and East provinces under the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord.

Asked about the likelihood of Israel or Pakistan rushing to the aid of the Sri Lankan government, Kalkat said, "Ultimately, the ethnic problem of Sri

Lanka can only be solved by Sri Lankans themselves." But Sri Lankans, he said, were always inclined to seek outside help to deal with their problem. On Pakistan's possible involvement, Kalkat thought Islamabad has too many of its own problems to get involved in Sri Lanka.

However, he said, for a SARRC member to seek extra-regional countries' involvement in their affairs would not be appreciated by other SARRC members. "They know India's views regarding foreign troops' presence in our close backyard.

Q: Does the Sri Lankan army really need outside help?

A: Their troops' presence is three times the number required. They had gone through the sea routes and perhaps

they are finding it difficult to sustain the troops as the road link is closed. Either Colombo is hiding something from public or the troops' morale is too low to fight the LTTE.

Recalling three years of IPKF operations, from July 1987 and March 1990, during which about 1,200 Indian army men were killed and nearly 3,500 injured, Kalkat said, "Sri Lanka is again asking India to deal with the symptom and not the disease."

The former commander refuted that the IPKF operations were a "fiasco". "That is an uninformed perception." Kalkat said, pointing out that under the accord the IPKF's task was to prevent the Sri Lankan forces committing atrocities on Tamils, two lakh of whom had fled to India, and to restore normalcy to the North and East provinces so that democratic processes could go through. After a year of operations, the IPKF had succeeded in both tasks, Kalkat said.

The only way the LTTE could survive was to get the IPKF out of Sri Lanka and for that purpose they embraced their sworn enemy - the Sri Lankan government, which not only welcomed the LTTE with open arms but also provided them with weapons and explosives which were used against the IPKF, Kalkat asserted.

According to him, the "fiasco" was over political issues - the refusal of newly elected Sri Lankan President to honour the commitment on devolution of power to North and East provinces.

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Karunanidhi Distances From the LTTE

With the much publicised successes of the LTTE in the battlefield against government forces and the pressure brought on New Delhi to play an active role relating to the crisis facing the Colombo government, the issue of Eelam and the LTTE has increasingly become a matter of debate in Tamil Nadu.

Though the LTTE is a banned organisation in India, it is no secret that it has many supporters there particularly in Tamil Nadu. The MDMK led by Vaiko Gopalaswamy and the PMK led by Dr Ramadas are open and articulate supporters of the LTTE and its cause.

However the ruling party in Tamil Nadu, DMK led by Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, has kept a respectable distance from the Tigers having previously been accused of consorting with them. But as the Sri Lankan issue became a matter of political focus in Tamil Nadu in recent weeks, Karunanidhi has been sending conflicting signals about his stand and that of his party.

First, in response to a question from reporters on 12 May, Karunanidhi was quoted as saying that he would be happy if Eelam was formed either by means of war or through talks. This remark of the Chief Minister was interpreted as a statement of support to the LTTE and was subjected to much critical comment in the Indian media as reflecting a stance which contradicted India's oft repeated position on Sri Lanka that the ethnic conflict in the island should be resolved within the framework of its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As if reacting to the critical comments, and some say acting in pursuance to a request from the Centre at New Delhi, Karunanidhi came out openly against the LTTE while speaking in the Tamil Nadu State Assembly on 15 May. Signalling a change from his earlier statement, The DMK yesterday came out openly against the LTTE asking how an organisation which had killed prominent Tamil leaders in Sri Lanka could claim to be the saviour of the ethnic minority community there.

The Chief Minister asserted in the

State Assembly that the DMK had "distanced" itself from the LTTE after it murdered important leaders of "Tamil Eelam" movement, A. Amirthalingam of the TULF, Sri Sabarathnam (TELO), K. Padmanabha of the (EPRLF) and Uma Maheswaran of the PLOTE.

"How can a movement, which had killed the leaders of its own race, save Tamils from annihilation," the Chief Minister asked while replying to a question in the Assembly.

The Chief Minister said after the 1983 genocide of Tamils in Sri Lanka, four or five groups had been fighting for their cause. In 1986, when he wanted to distribute some money, collected in connection with his birthday, equally among all the Sri Lankan Tamil groups, LTTE refused to receive its share, he said, adding "this is the kind of link, we had with the LTTE."

Mr. Karunanidhi sought to clarify the statement he had made in the House

on May 12 supporting the demand of a separate homeland for Tamils in Sri Lanka. "I had only pointed out that I would be happy if "Tamil Eelam" was achieved through negotiations," he said.

The State Government had banned a conference by the LTTE supporters at Chidambaram on May 7, he said, adding it showed government's commitment to prevent LTTE supporters from holding such meetings in support of the outlawed organisation.

The organisers, who had originally stated that the meet was for supporting the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils, had tried to change the agenda into one for hailing the LTTE victory at Elephant Pass. "Such activities of LTTE supporters will not be tolerated," Mr. Karunanidhi said.

According to observers, Mr Karunanidhi's remarks amount to finally toeing Delhi's line on the Sri Lankan crisis, after sending a conflicting signal that he would be happy if Eelam was formed after war or talks. Such an open change of stand could have come about, observers feel, only after the Centre sternly told Tamil Nadu to fall in line with Delhi's policy.

Bomb Attack on Vesak Day Condemned

Twenty three, including 16 innocent civilians, mostly Tamils and seven security personnel were killed when a time bomb allegedly placed by the LTTE exploded near a Vesak pandal outside the Mangalaramaya Temple in Batticaloa on 17 May, Wednesday evening.

Nine school children were among the 16 civilians killed and the explosion which occurred about 5.30 pm had injured 69 people including 41 civilians, 18 soldiers and 10 policemen. The injured were admitted to the Batticaloa teaching hospital.

The nine students, Tamils and Muslims from Ayiththamalai, were reportedly on a Vesak sight seeing tour with their Parish Priest Rev. Chandra who was also injured and he is in intensive care at Batticaloa hospital.

The bomb had been planted in an ice-cream box of a bicycle and the expl-

osion had occurred when a boy wanting an ice cream had reportedly put his hand into the ice cream box.

The blast in Batticaloa where the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities live in harmony, seems to be an attempt by the LTTE to trigger an ethnic backlash and bolster their propaganda machine, a government statement alleged.

A curfew has been declared in Batticaloa and all reports of the bombing was censored. The news of the attack was reportedly withheld because the government wanted to take necessary steps to safeguard innocent civilians and prevent any backlash against the act of setting off of a bomb near a temple on Vesak day.

The Vesak pandal and lantern exhibition near the police station in Batticaloa is an annual event organised by the Army and Police.

The precise circumstances of Wednesday's (17 May) bomb attack which killed 29 people, including 22 civilians, in Batticaloa town in eastern Sri Lanka remain sketchy as witnesses have alleged that members of the security forces opened fire after the bomb exploded, killing and injuring people, Amnesty International said in a statement on 19 May.

The statement added, "No one has claimed responsibility for the bombing which also injured 90 people, 64 of them civilians. The majority of the victims were members of the Tamil community who were gathered at a Buddhist temple to watch the celebration marking of the Buddhist festival of Wesak. Several children were among those killed.

"The Sri Lankan authorities have blamed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for the bombing and the deaths and have not made any known reference to allegations that government security forces opened fire, causing deaths and injuries themselves.

"The bomb was reportedly concealed inside a freezer box for ice-creams mounted on a bicycle. It was reported to have detonated after two policemen and a soldier had stopped the cyclist - who ran off - to check the contents of the box.

"Amnesty International condemns the bomb blast in Batticaloa town, which indiscriminately killed and injured civilians, and has called on President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga to institute a full, impartial inquiry into the causes and circumstances of the deaths. If such an inquiry confirms that some people had been shot after the bomb blast, and that they may have been victims of extrajudicial or indiscriminate killing, those responsible should be identified and brought to justice.

"Amnesty International has appealed to the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE to protect the lives of civilians as fighting between the two sides escalated in the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE is fighting for an independent state called Tamil Eelam in the north and east of the country. In November 1999 it overran ten army camps in the Wanni area and more recently in April 2000 it launched an offensive to oust the army from Jaffna peninsula - its former stronghold - and regain control of the area themselves."

An Anti-Tamil Backlash ?

As the battle for Jaffna continues between the Tamil Tigers and government forces, there is growing sense of apprehension among Tamils living in the south of the country. There is apprehension of an outbreak of communal violence directed at the Tamils if Jaffna is lost to the LTTE.

In July 1983 when the last major communal riot occurred, there were only about 75,000 people belonging to the Tamil community who resided in the island's capital, Colombo, and adjoining areas. Since the escalation of the armed conflict in the north in recent years, hundreds of thousands Tamil families have moved to the south of the island. An estimated 200,000 Tamils are reported to be now resident in Colombo and adjoining areas. Many more are said to be living spread over the island's western province. It would seem that the mood in the Tamil community is characterised by tension, anxiety, and fear. The general attitude among them appears to be stay quiet and tread carefully.

In northern Jaffna, the Tamil Tigers have launched a massive military onslaught to recapture the peninsula which they lost to government forces in late 1995. An estimated 20,000 government troops are stationed in Jaffna and the Tigers have laid siege to their last remaining bases which have become targets for intense artillery and mortar attacks.

There is a general fear that thousands of these troops may be killed if the Tigers succeed in overrunning these last remaining bases. If such a tragedy were to materialise, which is quite possible, then the Tamils living in the south may become victims of an anti-Tamil backlash, although the government has proclaimed its determination to prevent an outbreak of such violence.

Government spokesmen have sought to justify the recently imposed draconian censorship regulations preventing the publication of war-related news on the grounds that publication of such reports might provoke an anti-Tamil backlash from which they must be protected.

"Uthayan" Shut Down

Sri Lankan authorities have ordered the closure of northern Jaffna's only newspaper "Uthayan" for allegedly violating censorship regulations.

Confirming the closure of the "Uthayan", a Tamil newspaper, government chief censor Arya Rubasinghe said that the newspaper office had been sealed on 19 May following complaints of violation of censorship regulations, which were imposed on both the domestic and foreign press following escalation of fighting between government troops and the LTTE in Jaffna early this month.

Sources at Uthayan's office in Colombo said that soldiers went to the newspaper's office in Jaffna town and disconnected the telephone lines, locked the building and took away the keys.

The recently promulgated public security ordinance empowered the government to seal the newspaper offices

and seize their printing presses for violation of the censorship rules. Human rights and journalists' organisations have denounced the censorship regulations as draconian and an interference with press freedom.

Uthayan is one of the oldest Tamil newspaper which has been functioning in adverse conditions for over 12 years.

The newspaper has the distinction of functioning under different regimes, including the five year period between 1990-95, when the LTTE controlled Jaffna.

Previously, the Sri Lanka army in Jaffna had reprimanded and warned the editor of Uthayan, Mr.C.N Vithyatharan on 14 May for publishing in his paper a story about the Sri Lankan President breaking into tears during her meeting with Indian Air Force chief A.Y Tipnis. He was also severely warned that action would be taken against

(continued on next page)

CPI-M Calls for Military Support to Sri Lanka

Chennai, May 19: The Communist Party of India-Marxist on Friday said a separate Tamil 'eelam' was not the answer to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and wanted India to extend humanitarian aid, including arms, to the army which was again fighting with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Party politburo member, R. Umanath claimed that the best solution would be give autonomy to Tamils within a united Sri Lanka. He felt that when countries like Pakistan and China

were selling arms to Lanka, there was nothing wrong India too did so. He also said that CPI-M had been advocating this stand for 17 years since the ethnic conflict broke out in the island nation.

Alleging that the LTTE was not representing the views of the Tamils in the island nation, but only appeared to be a terrorist organisation, Umanath criticised the support to the LTTE by political parties like the MDMK and the PMK. The two parties had taken divergent views on the issue, even

while continuing as partners in the NDA government at the centre.

He said the CPI-M welcomed the stand expressed by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi in the state assembly that the LTTE cannot protect the interests of the Tamils as it had killed Tamil leaders. He said that the CPI-M appealed to Karunanidhi to raise his voice in support of autonomy to Lankan Tamils within the unity of Sri Lanka.

Claiming that a Tamil homeland under LTTE would only endanger the unity of the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka as also the security of India. The CPI-M demanded that the Vaj-payee government take a clear stand on the Lankan issue and not permit any minister to make statements contrary to the Centre's stand.

Thousands Stranded as Passenger Vessels are Cancelled

All movement of people between the Jaffna peninsula and the mainland has ceased since latest round of fighting between the LTTE and government forces commenced and particularly since the fall of the Elephant Pass on 22 April to the Tigers who are continuing their relentless offensive to recapture Jaffna.

'The City of Trinco', a passenger ship to Jaffna that was scheduled to depart in the morning of 19 May from the eastern port of Trincomalee was cancelled by the Sri Lanka Navy for security reasons, officials said. The ship was to set sail with 350 passengers to the Kankesanthurai harbour (KKS), located adjacent to the sprawling Palaly base complex in the northern sector of the Jaffna peninsula.

Three thousand forty people have registered and reserved seats for pass-

age to Jaffna at the Trincomalee Divisional Secretariat, officials said. Thousands more are awaiting transport to and from Jaffna. The last passenger ship to Jaffna sailed on April 1 this year. The service was canceled after the Tigers stepped up their offensive into the peninsula in late March. This ship, Lanka Muditha was used to transport troops as well. In a statement issued from their London office on 19 May, the LTTE said that their artillery units have been firing on the base since 17 May.

The statement added, "The Palaly air base and the KKS harbour are the only viable supply points available to the Sri Lankan troops battling the advancing troops of the Liberation Tigers in the peninsula.

"The Tigers fired several volleys on the base killing 7 soldiers and wounding 28 in the base yesterday said sour-

ces in Colombo. The Voice of Tigers radio said that LTTE's artillery fire had knocked out the communications tower of the base and had hit its runway."

The statement added that the KKS harbour may also be within the firing range of the LTTE's field guns as the Tigers have advanced into Kopay Veli, about 12 kilometers from the Palaly base as the crow flies. The 122 mm howitzers captured from the SLA by the Tigers have an effective range of 17 kilometers.

Parliament to Meet Behind Closed Doors

As the situation relating to the war in the north of the island is becoming more and more precarious, the government has agreed to a request by the opposition United National Party to hold weekly sittings of Parliament to brief the opposition. But the sessions are to be held behind closed doors with the media being shut out and even without any record being kept in the Hansard.

This arrangement is unprecedented. The Hansard is maintained for future reference and correct reportage of the proceedings. Many are of the view that that parliamentary sessions on an important subject like the war should be made public as the people have a right to know as public funds are allocated to fight the war. With a strict censorship on at present, the only avenue open to the people is the Parliament where no censorship is enforced at present in respect of reporting its proceedings.

(Continued from page 21)

him for publishing in his paper, Uthayan, the names of the five civilians, including two children, who were killed in the Sri Lanka Air Force bombing in Pooneryn on Friday, May 12.

The SLA had summoned Vithayatharan during the day and told him that he had no right under the recently promulgated regulations of the Public Security Ordinance to publish these news stories in the Uthayan.

However, Mr. Vithayatharan had

pointed out that there was no competent authority in Jaffna to submit articles for approval before publication.

"But given the fighting and the disruption of communications with Jaffna, we cannot expect the Uthayan paper to fax all the stories to the government's Media Centre in Colombo; and then patiently await a response from the censor. Deadlines cannot be met in Jaffna under such circumstances" Mr. Vithayatharan said.

Censorship Makes Scribes Read Between Lines

COLOMBO, 19 May: For journalists reporting from Sri Lanka on the country's latest outbreak of a nearly two decade-old ethnic conflict, the imposition of censorship on local and foreign media, has given rise to a new form of interpretative journalism. This means, distilling the truth from claims by Tamil Tigers in their updated web sites and verbiage churned out by the country's information department.

The government's lines on "strategic repositioning", "effective relocation" and "change of line of attack", may well, imply, that the Tigers have had their day of triumph in the heavy exchange of mortar in the northern peninsula. The two statements which followed Tuesday's cross-fire are telling: amilcanadian.com, a pro-Tiger web site, went on to announce: "The

decisive battle for Jaffna resumed with great intensity as heavily combat formations of the LTTE opened up two frontal assaults and engaged the Sri Lankan troops in a day-long battle at Pasaiyur and Karunagar in the municipal outskirts of the city."

The government was less conceding. A statement issued by the Special Media Information Centre read: "Intense fighting continued into the early hours on Wednesday. Due to the concentrated fire by the terrorists, the senior ground commanders shifted the defences to prepared positions more towards the north east (of Tanankillapu)."

"Censorship can often be counter-productive," said Sri Lankan foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar in an interview to a prominent weekend newspaper, recently. Considering the inter-

national denouncement that the country has come into for imposing a new regulations on journalists, ironically, a day before World Press Freedom Day, Kadirgamar, definitely has a point.

These are "the most draconian regulations ever imposed on the media in Sri Lanka," says Committee for Protection of Journalists (CPJ). At a recent conference jointly organised by UNESCO and the Swiss Government, on media reporting in conflict zones, freedom of the media in Sri Lanka, for the first time became a point of debate at an international forum. In their list of recommendations, the organisers proposed greater interaction between all journalists in war-torn areas and a greater interplay of media watch-dog bodies to ensure free reporting.

In a statement issued recently, the US State Department too, came down heavily on the imposition of censorship on the media in the country. But clearly, decision-makers in Sri Lanka are not listening, yet.

(The Times of India News Service)



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Nalini's Death Sentence Commuted

Tamil Nadu Governor Fathima Beevi has commuted the death sentence on Nalini, one of the four convicted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, to a life-term. However the mercy petitions of three others, Murugan, Nalini's husband, Perarivalan and Chinna Santahan, have been rejected.

The mediapersons came to know of the development only from Vellore prison sources. The four are currently detained there. There was no official communication issued at Chennai itself, indicating how the DMK government feels chary of the whole affair.

Nalini's mercy petition has apparently been accepted on the ground that she has a seven-year-old daughter who is now being brought up by some of her husband's friends in Colombo.

The Governor's orders only means that the DMK government has decided to bite the bullet and take a decision which might not please the Tamil nationalist lobby. However the last word has not been said as yet on the subject. The convicted could still appeal to the President for clemency.

It may also be recalled here that Congress President and widow of Rajiv Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi herself, had suggested that Nalini's life be spared taking into consideration the future of her child.

The LTTE supporters say that once the matter goes to the President, they have enough wires to pull in the Vajpayee government to put off the inevitable as long as they can and hopefully get the sentences commuted in the case of the other three too.

Of the 26 sentenced to death by an anti-Terrorism court in Chennai two years ago, 19 were acquitted by the Supreme Court and three others sentenced to life, leaving the four to face the noose. Their review petitions were rejected by the apex court.

Subsequently the four appealed to the Governor for clemency, but their petitions were peremptorily rejected, things still remaining unclear what role the Karunanidhi government had played in the issue.

Karunanidhi himself has been blowing hot and cold, now saying that he had always been against death sentence, later retracting. The government's counsel did not take a clear stand when the four challenged in the High Court the rejection of their mercy petitions.

On the ground that Governor Beevi had not consulted the state cabinet before rejecting the petitions, Justice Govindarajan set aside her decision and asked her to consider the issue afresh after consulting the cabinet. That was in December last.

The Chief Minister did defend the

Governor's decision even after the Court's ruling, but clammed up when pressed what would be his government's approach when Beevi consulted it. He kept reiterating that the matter was being examined by legal experts.

The issue itself does not evoke much emotion one way or another among the people of the state, though not many seem to bay for the blood of the four. Karunanidhi has taken a calculated risk in advising the Governor to reject the mercy petitions of the three. He could come under tremendous pressure from the Tamil nationalists.

Apparently he would now put it out that he has saved the life of one, Nalini and the other three could be taken care of by the Centre. The four have already appealed to the President. With one saved, the other three could do so again, after the Governor's order.

Readying for Jaffna Fallout

A report datelined 19 May in the Deccan Herald under the title "Navy Gears Itself for Jaffna Fallout" states:

"Even as Southern Naval Command prepares itself for all contingencies that might arise due to the ongoing fight in Sri Lanka, a 'quiet' visit of the Sri Lankan Chief of Defence Staff Gen Rohan De Silva Daluvatte to India has sparked off intense speculation.

Sources suggest that Gen Daluvatte is in India 'shopping' for several items on the wish list of Sri Lankan armed forces including communication equipment.

While the war rages in Sri Lanka's Northern peninsula, the Indian Navy and coast guard continue their vigil off the coast of Tamil Nadu. Despite the reported fall in number of refugees coming to Tamil Nadu in the last fortnight, the Navy does not want to take any chances.

They are planning for contingencies, including evacuating trapped Sri Lankan troops from Palaly and also large scale refugee migration from across the Palk Straits. Thus plans have been made to monitor maritime zone around the area of conflict, ensure coastal security and control refugee flow.

Minesweepers, landing tank ships and Kashin class destroyers have been

positioned around the east coast near Chennai. Contingency plans include using LSTs for establishing beachheads for ground troops or for evacuating people trapped along the coast.

TU-142 long range maritime patrol aircraft are flying reconnaissance missions off the eastern seaboard from Arakonam while Do-228 surveillance aircraft keeps watch on the coastal areas, said sources.

All this activity is to ensure that India is not caught unawares by any sudden influx of refugees or is at the receiving end of intense fighting. Fall of Jaffna to the LTTE, analysts say, might witness refugees moving out. This may happen also if SLA troops tactically withdraw to Palaly air base in the north from Jaffna.

India has twin worries about Sri Lanka, regarding any outside power moving into Trincomalee harbour and third countries, like China supplying arms to Colombo. It is this, analysts say caused military intervention in 1971 and IPKF going to Sri Lanka in 1987.

The 1999-2000 defence ministry annual report notes "most of Sri Lanka's military hardware have been supplied by China at comparatively lower costs compared to western sources."

Sri Lanka on Arms Buying Spree

Sri Lanka has embarked on massive arms buying spree in a bid to steel its forces fighting a last-ditch battle to save Jaffna from falling into the hands of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), according to an agency report datelined 11 May.

Highly-placed Government sources indicated that as many as seven Kfir ground attack fighters from Israel have landed in Colombo to boost the Sri Lankan Army's campaign against the LTTE. It is believed that Sri Lanka has contracted for arms purchases from Israel, Pakistan, North Korea, South Africa and the Czech Republic.

These ground attack fighters will augment the existing fleet of six combat aircraft (5 Kfir C2 and 1 Kfir CT2) of the Sri Lankan air force. It is believed that three aircraft of the existing fleet are grounded. Sources said an arms-laden ship is on its way to Sri Lanka from Pakistan. The ship is reportedly carrying 122mm multi-barrel rocket-launching systems (MBRLs) with 1600 rockets.

The MBRLs are used to decimate the adversary's (in this case the LTTE) fighting capability through its devastating power and to give a shot in the arm of the beleaguered Sri Lankan

forces.

It is understood that Sri Lanka has procured huge amounts of ammunition with no less than 24 containers of arms and equipment being purchased from Israel.

Pakistan is also airlifting arms and ammunition in large quantities to Colombo. It is learnt that Pakistan, in spite of request made by the Lanka Government, has refused to land arms and ammunition at Palali air base in Jaffna.

The government sources indicated that Sri Lanka has approached the Czech Republic for supply of tanks to beef up the infantry's fighting capabilities. These tanks are expected to be airlifted to Colombo in the coming days. These off-the-shelf arms purchases are seen as an effort on the part of the Sri Lankan Government to prolong the Jaffna conflict and hold on to the strategic Palali air base.

Refugee Flow Ebbs

Ramanathapuram, May 18: The Indian Navy has declared 'Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee-Free Week' following the non-arrival of refugees since May 10. The last to arrive, on May 9, were 12 stranded Tamil refugees who were rescued by local fishermen from the sixth island of Sri Lanka.

The naval marine commandos started undertaking regular patrols at the Lands end from March 10. A forward observation post was set up on April 11 in Arichalmunai near Dhanuskodi. Despite the fall of Elephant Pass on April 22 and the proclamation of emergency in Sri Lanka, there has been no exodus of refugees as vigil has been stepped up in the coastal areas of Ramanathapuram district. Keeping an eye on the illegal ferrying of refugees also yielded good results, asserted Lieutenant Commander Satish, Executive Officer, Naval Detachment, Rameswaram.

He told 'The Hindu' on Thursday (18 May) that despite strict vigilance of the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard along the Indo-Sri Lankan International Border, a large number of refugees crossed into India in the past because of lack of vigil on the Sri Lankan side. As the distance between Thalaimannar to the Lands End was only 25 km, the refugees could cross

over within one and a half hours.

But with the setting up of the forward observation post, the boatmen, ferrying the refugees, started dropping them on the sixth island in Sri Lankan territorial waters. This created problems as Indian Navy and Coast Guard perso-

nnel could not cross the international border. When this was reported to the higher-ups, the Navy was given permission to open fire at fleeing boatmen. This brought the refugee arrival to a halt. As the LTTE is advancing towards Jaffna, the Tamils who helped the Sri Lankan Army have also started moving towards Thalaimannar to move into the Indian territory, according to highly placed sources.

Missionary Zeal Minority Schools Under Attack

Watching a film on Jesus Christ, even for a Christian, has become a hazardous occupation and requires informing the police if one wants to be saved from violence, or so the Maharashtra police expect of citizens. VHP goons recently ransacked a Christian girls hostel, burnt three vehicles and damaged school equipment to protest a Bible reading programme followed by a film on Jesus. All those invited were Christians, so the false argument of a threat of conversion does not apply. Luckily the female boarders were safe thanks to the vigilance of those attending the show. The police have acknowledged that the attackers were local VHP elements but argue that the organisers should have informed them in advance for protection. Does that

mean from now on every minority community which wishes to practise its faith even in the privacy of their homes, has to seek police protection.

Attacks on minority educational establishment have become the norm, and the BJP Government have done nothing to stop them. In UP three missionary schools were attacked in the guise of robberies. The principal of one school in UP has been charged with sexual harassment by a sacked female employee. That it took the alleged victim seven years to make the charge is intensely suspicious. It offends common sense to take notice of such fabrications. There is also the vicious police violence on the Jamia Millia Islamia campus. Innocent students of this minority institution were beaten up,

while Hindu students were given worse treatment for mixing with what the police called "ISI agents".

The students were jailed, their careers ruined, while the policemen went scot-free. The government refused to order an inquiry. This supports the hypothesis that such behaviour is impossible without political support. If such

attacks continue, religious segregation in schools will become inevitable. Hindu parents will stop sending their children to missionary schools not out of fear of conversion, that is ludicrous, but for fear of attacks by the VHP. Universities like Jamia Millia and Aligarh Muslim University which have at least 40-50 per cent non-Muslim

students will become institutions for minorities. Segregation will create more misunderstanding between communities and the rise of bigotry. This is what the VHP wants, but is this what India wants? Let us tell the bigots that their tactics are exposed and will not pass.

(Editorial, The Statesman, 17 May 2000)

Humanitarian Crisis in Sri Lanka – NGOs Express Concern

A group of Non Governmental Organisations have made a joint statement expressing grave concern about the situation that has developed in Sri Lanka leading to a humanitarian crisis.

Following is the text of the statement titled "A Joint Statement and Call for Action" by the NGs:

"The conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) has resulted in the deaths of over 65,000 people. Since 1983, 1 million people have been internally displaced and a further 600,000 refugees have fled the country.

We, as organisations working in the war zones and actively involved in seeking a negotiated and peaceful end to the conflict, are deeply concerned by the grave and immediate threat to the lives, security and basic humanitarian needs of 500,000 civilians currently caught in the fighting between the military forces of the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula in the north of Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, we wish to express our concerns for the safety of 40,000 personnel of the Government of Sri Lanka stationed in the Jaffna Peninsula.

We call upon the Secretary General of the United Nations to urge the parties to the conflict to resolve the immediate crisis in Sri Lanka in a manner that ensures compliance with International Humanitarian Law and reduces to an absolute minimum the risks to life and security of civilians and combatants alike.

We propose that the United Nations

High Commissioner for Human Rights immediately undertake a visit to Jaffna and Colombo to assess the current situation throughout the entire country.

We request that the European Union agree financial support for this visit and for any further recommendations which may arise.

We urge the nations of the international community to communicate with all the parties to the conflict including the Government of Sri Lanka, the parliamentary parties and the LTTE, the need to resolve the present crisis in Sri Lanka in a manner that reduces to an absolute minimum the risks to life and security of civilians and combatants.

The international community must seek respect, by all parties, with the relevant provisions of International Humanitarian Law to ensure that :

- all civilians in Jaffna Peninsula are safe from any form of violence to life, murder, cruel treatment, taking of hostages, outrages upon personal dignity, humiliating and degrading treatment by the armed forces of either side;

- all civilians in the areas under the de facto control of the LTTE remain safe from any form of punishment without previous judgement pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all judicial guarantees;

- members of the armed forces of both parties who have laid down their arms or are placed hors de combat shall, in all circumstances, be treated humanely; and

- all civilians are provided with adequate access to essential items, including supplies of food, water, fuel, and medicines.

By these actions the international community may assist to create conditions which will allow access for medical and emergency supplies to provide care for the wounded and sick and the respectful burial of the war dead of all parties.

Impartial bodies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the relief agencies currently working in Jaffna may offer their services to the parties of the conflict. Such services will require the financial support of the donor countries for the provision of relief supplies and to supplement current personal levels if required. It is essential that there be effective monitoring of the humanitarian situation and adherence to International Humanitarian Law by the parties to the conflict.

The visit of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should therefore investigate the possibility of establishing a monitoring team throughout Sri Lanka. A monitoring system may be convened under the auspices of the United Nations, multi-national bodies from the region, the Commonwealth or the European Union as is felt appropriate and agreed in discussions with the parties to the conflict. Such an initiative must be agreed with the LTTE and apply to areas of the country under their de facto control.

Any political commitment to these measures will require a commensurate financial commitment from the international community.

We urge a swift response to provide transportation, coordination and care for the wounded and sick, if the Government of Sri Lanka requests the international community to assist an evacuation of its personnel from the Jaffna peninsula. The international community should endeavour to use all channels of communication to ensure that any evacuation takes place with full adherence to International Humanitarian Law and to agree modalities to

provide monitors to ensure strict adherence.

As organisations who have worked for many years in all areas of Sri Lanka we recognise that the current situation in the Jaffna peninsula may have serious political and humanitarian implications in the rest of the country.

We therefore propose that the international community use its good offices with both the Government of Sri Lanka and all parliamentary parties, including the parliamentary Tamil parties, to ensure that the above modalities are made in the spirit of a bi-partisan approach to the long-term resolution of the conflict. A bi-partisan approach may pre-empt the possibilities of increased tensions in the country leading to inter-ethnic violence.

We have witnessed the dangers of such violence in Sri Lanka in 1983 and again in 1988-92. The Government of Sri Lanka must be confident of the support of all parliamentary parties within the country and of the international community if it is to prevent any extremist political, religious or racial groups from manipulating the current situation for their own ends to instigate ethnic violence.

It is imperative that such support be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the Aid Consortium in Paris. This meeting must now incorporate a full debate on humanitarian and peace issues. The Framework on Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation currently being prepared for the Government of Sri Lanka by the World Bank must specifically focus on methods to support a long-term peace process in Sri Lanka.

We welcome and encourage the current initiative of Government of Norway, at the invitation of both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, aimed at peaceful and negotiated resolution to the conflict.

We request that the international community take all decisions in relation to Sri Lanka with the view to supporting the Norwegian initiative and seek-

ing further possibilities for confidence building measures between the warring parties. Particularly at this time of crisis, which threatens an unprecedented escalation of the war, it is vital that any decisions on financial or military transfers to any party to the conflict be meticulously scrutinised in this light.

The international community must also engage with all parties to the conflict to ensure that freedom of expression is protected for all people living in all areas of Sri Lanka. Emergency measures should not exceed the limitations established in International Law. We unreservedly believe that the free flow of continual, accurate and reliable information is essential to monitoring respect for the full range of human rights and humanitarian norms. Moreover, fully inclusive debate and analysis need to be guaranteed as a prerequisite for a political solution to the conflict.

To summarise, we are taking immediate action to mobilise the international community to ensure sufficient and sensitive political and financial assistance to respond to this crisis:

- The Secretary General of the United Nations to urge the parties to the conflict to resolve the immediate crisis in Sri Lanka;
- The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights to make an on-site assessment throughout the country;
- The European Union to fund this visit;
- All nations of the international community to communicate concerns to the parties to the conflict;
- Establishment of effective human rights monitoring systems throughout Sri Lanka;
- Adherence to International Humanitarian Law and other humanitarian norms by all parties to the conflict;
- Financial support to the ICRC and humanitarian agencies so that they may

care for the wounded and sick of all parties in the Jaffna peninsula;

- Essential humanitarian supplies for all civilians affected by the conflict;
- All measures to prevent inter-ethnic violence throughout the country;
- If required, urgent assistance to the Government of Sri Lanka to evacuate personnel from the Jaffna Peninsula;
- Communication with all parliamentary parties to ensure a bi-partisan approach to the immediate crisis and the longer term peace process;
- Support for all initiatives aimed at facilitating a de-escalation of the conflict and leading to a negotiated peace process in Sri Lanka;
- Consideration of all humanitarian and peace considerations at the forthcoming meeting of the Paris Aid consortium;
- Consideration of financial and military transfers in the light of the dangers of contributing to an escalation of the conflict;
- Support for the free flow information to ensure the monitoring of respect for the full range of human rights and humanitarian norms throughout the country.

The signatories to the above document are: Andrew Carl, Co-Director, Conciliation Resources - London, UK; Basil Fernando, Executive Director Asian Human Rights Commission - Hong Kong; Daisy Francis, Director, Canada Asia Working Group - Toronto, Canada; Cornelia Fuellkrug-Weitzel, Director, Bread for the World - Stuttgart, Germany; Janet Hunt, Executive Director, Australian Council for Overseas Aid - Australia; Julian Filochowski, Director, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development - London, UK; Miriam A. Young, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace - Washington U.S.A.; Peter Bowling, Director, International Working Group on Sri Lanka - London, UK; Rienzie Perera, Research Director, Life and Peace Institute - Uppsala, Norway.



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Intolerance of Dissent is Unchristian

Lanka Nesiah

Pope Paul constantly reminds the world that war should belong to the tragic past, to history. It should find no place on humanity's agenda for the future. But, noble as these sentiments of the pontiff are, we have to admit that war does belong to the present as an evil we are compelled to put up with. War has at times become inevitable to halt the terror, chaos and destruction caused by the irrational and brutal element in man.

But the problem with war is that it has terrible consequences. Particularly in a prolonged conflict situation, there is a huge human cost. Tens of thousands are killed or maimed. It degrades the human soul and destroys the talents and resources of the people who are caught up in it.

We know this in our own situation here. That the Tamils and the disadvantaged had genuine grievances and suffered increasing discrimination since independence and that the political leadership at the Centre failed to resolve these is now acknowledged by all major political parties. It is also acknowledged that it is only the war that has woken up our people to this reality. But what has been the cost of this war over the last two decades. Hundreds of thousands of our people, Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, have been killed, maimed or psychologically traumatised. And the tragedy continues with senseless brutality.

This is why it is necessary for men and women of goodwill, of all religions, to create the right conditions and attitudes among our people to compel the political leadership to end the war and to deliver a just and reasonable settlement. This is also why the tone and tenor of the Rev. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel's 'A Call to TULF Leaders' (Tamil Times, 15 April 2000) is so disappointing. Father Emmanuel says he is writing as a Tamil Christian Priest from Jaffna. As a Tamil Christian layman from Jaffna, I feel doubly disappointed with one of my Christian leaders.

Speaking soon after the war between Britain and Argentina over the Falkland Islands, Lord Runcie, then Archbishop of Canterbury, said: "As Christians, we believe that man can overcome the deadly

selfishness of class or sect or race by discovering himself as a child of the universal God of Love. When a man realises that he is the beloved child of the Creator of all, then he is ready to see his neighbours in the world as brothers and sisters. That is one reason why those who dare to interpret God's will must never claim him as an asset for one nation or group rather than another. War springs from the love and loyalty which should be offered to God being applied to some God-substitute, one of the most dangerous being nationalism. Man possesses the power to obliterate himself, sacrificing the whole race on the altar of some God-substitute." I wish Father Emmanuel will ponder over these words.

Father Emmanuel says that with Norway agreeing to be a facilitator, the historic moment of truth has arrived. What is that truth? Surely, it is that a just and reasonable solution can be arrived at only through dialogue. Dialogue is the only way forward. Etoric, calling people names and labelling the government as 'Sinhala Buddhist' does not help in this process. Father Emmanuel even puts words into the mouth of President Chandrika by stating that according to her, this was not a Tamil Problem but only a terrorist problem. Let us have the honesty and the fair-mindedness to acknowledge that President Chandrika is one of the few leaders who has consistently recognised, both when in the opposition as well as in government, the need to grant Tamils their due. Even as late as this week, we had President Chandrika addressing the nation and appealing that the reforms designed to grant 'the just and reasonable demands of Tamils' (her words) should not be delayed any further. Indeed, it is to her credit that she personally has never once deviated from this position.

Translating her thoughts into action has, however, been another question. Admittedly, various parties have also to share the blame for the lack of progress over the last 4.5 years. But, clearly, the only way forward is through dialogue. Neelan Tiruchelvam and Kumar Ponnambalam, each in his own distinctive way,

were engaged in dialogue with groups and individuals in the South. It is our tragedy that, for this very reason, both were assassinated by the forces of reaction.

Like Neelan and Kumar, the TULF and countless other Tamils, individually and collectively and in all parts of the country, are engaged in fruitful dialogue. War, without dialogue, is a hopeless exercise and will lead the Tamils nowhere. Like in all communities, there are differing opinions among Tamils as to the best approach forward. Neelan and Kumar, while sharing a common belief in dialogue, had contrasting ways of engaging in dialogue. And it was good for the Tamils that these differences existed, as much as these differences exist among other communities. Constructive dialogue requires both sides to be on the same wavelength: Dialogue is most constructive when it is between two like-minded people.

There is an unsaid chord that runs through the whole of Father Emmanuel's article. Either you conform to my views on this problem or you quit. What else does he mean when he states: "Stand up! And speak with one clear voice the Truth concerning the Tamils" (emphasis mine). This is great pity. Intolerance of dissent is not only unchristian but also a tragedy for a whole people. The peace process in Northern Ireland moves forwards not just because it engages in dialogue but also because it recognises different points of view. On the Republican side, Jerry Adams and John Hume are totally different individuals, as are also Ian Paisley and David Trimble among the Unionists. The Good Friday agreement was made possible because each party was willing to accommodate the other, even when they had different approaches while yet being on the same side. There are inevitable stumbles on the way but the peace process keeps moving forward.

That should be our approach as well. Ethnic cleansing, intolerance of dissent and murder of individuals because their views differ from that of the killers (all sadly and unashamedly condoned by various groups and individuals) should have no place in our society. Religious leaders like Father Emmanuel are in a supreme position to denounce such evils and encourage dialogue that will create the space for a just and reasonable solution, where all our people can live with justice, dignity and self-respect.

On that, Easter evening, Jesus greeted his disciples with the words: "Peace be with you." May the risen Lord speak those words to our hearts today. "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God."

Sanmugam Arumugam was born in Nallur, Jaffna, Sri Lanka on 31 August 1905, the only son of Vairavanather Sanmugam. When the time came to enter primary school, Arumugam was admitted not to Jaffna Hindu College, where a scholarship awaited him as the son of a former Director of the College, but to St Johns College purely because travel to the school from his home in Nallur was easier. In 1921 he passed the Cambridge Junior examination with distinctions and was ranked first in the school. His mother then decided that his further education should be in a Colombo school. When the Principal of St. Johns, Revd. H. Peto heard about this, he visited Kanagammah in her home and tried to persuade her to let Arumugam continue at St Johns. The compromise that was reached was that if Arumugam was to study in Colombo, it would not be at Royal College but at St. Thomas College which was in the same mission as St. Johns.

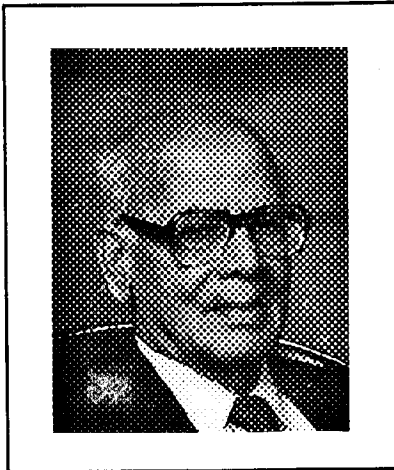
In 1922 Arumugam set forth from Jaffna in the relatively new train service to Colombo and joined St. Thomas College which was then headed by Warden Stone (known by contemporaries as the Stone Age of the College!). Arumugam passed the Cambridge Senior examination in 1923 with distinctions and based on his performance in the examination he was exempted from the London Matriculation examination.

He entered the Ceylon University College in 1923 and obtained a Science Degree in 1927, coming second in order of merit. At that time there were two Government Scholarships awarded annually for further study in the UK, and he assumed that normal selection policy would be followed and he started making arrangements to proceed to UK to study for an engineering degree at Kings College, University of London. When the scholarship results were announced, he found to his surprise that the first and sixth in order of merit were awarded scholarships! Nevertheless he decided to proceed to the UK to study engineering at his own expense.

He graduated with a Civil Engineering degree from Kings College in 1930 and then proceeded to work in Haweswater in the Lake District on construction work for a reservoir for the Manchester City water supply. He liv-

Sanmugam Arumugam

(1905 – 2000)



ed in the little village of Butterwick where he was an object of curiosity because none of the local inhabitants had previously seen a coloured person.

He returned to Ceylon in 1932 and joined the Irrigation Department, where he was the third Ceylonese engineer to be recruited. He rose to the Department's Directorate level by 1950 and continued to work in the Irrigation Department until his retirement at the age of 60 years in 1965.

During his 32 years in the Irrigation Department, he worked in all parts of the country, including the malarial dry zone. Three schemes in which he was fully involved deserve to be mentioned. The first was in 1948 when he was the Divisional Irrigation Engineer, Northern Division, based in Vavuniya. He used some surplus funds available for minor village irrigation works to build a dam at Palavi, thus providing a tank for the Thiruketheeswaram Temple. This enabled the "Palavi Theertham" to be held at Thiruketheeswaram in 1949 after a lapse of over 300 years. He was fully involved in the restoration of the temple and he was Chairman of the Construction Committee.

The second scheme was the Urellu Well Windmill pumping scheme in Jaffna. At Puthur there is a well known as Nilavarai which is reputed to be "bottomless" and all previous attempts going back over 100 years at pumping out the water with powerful pumps made hardly any impression on the water

level. This engaged the natural curiosity of Arumugam, and he was determined to get at the bottom of it! First of all soundings were made

and it was established that the well was not bottomless but was about 164 feet deep ending up in huge underground cavern.

Next, samples of water were taken at different depths and it was found that there was a light fresh water lens of water about 50 feet deep riding on top of heavier sea water below. When pumping was commenced with powerful diesel engine driven pumps, it was found that the fresh water lens became narrower as the pumping rate was faster than the rate of fresh water recuperation. However the well level was being maintained because the salt water percolated rapidly into the well from the sea several miles away through the fissures in the Jaffna limestone strata. Mystery solved! The hydrological data obtained from these pumping trials was then used at the Urellu Pokkunai well, which has similar recharge characteristics, to install a Hercules Windmill pump in 1952 to provide irrigation water for the surrounding fields at virtually zero running cost. This was the first windmill installation in the Jaffna Peninsula.

The third scheme was his proposal for a "River for Jaffna" which is yet to be fully implemented. Every time during the North East Monsoon when he crossed the Elephant Pass bridge, he would stop in the middle of the causeway and look at the large volumes of fresh water flowing from the Elephant Pass lagoon in the east to the sea (Jaffna lagoon) in the west and think "Surely there must be a way of utilising this fresh water for the benefit of the Jaffna Peninsula?"

The scheme that he proposed (called the "Arumugam Plan" by others) was briefly as follows. The Kanagayan Aru which flows from the Vanni mainland northwards, discharges monsoon floodwaters into the Elephant Pass lagoon, and this water flows under the Elephant Pass bridge and westwards into the sea. A dam and spillway at the Elephant Pass bridge and a 4700 foot long embankment and spillway at the eastern seaside end of the Elephant Pass lagoon at Chundikulam would trap

this fresh water in the 11,400 acre Elephant Pass lagoon. A two and a half mile long link channel at Mulliyan is then constructed from the northern end of Elephant Pass lagoon to lead this fresh water into the Vadamarachchi lagoon at its southern tip.

The Vadamarachchi Lagoon is a large inland lake which stretches from Mulliyan in the south, through Chempianpathu, Eluthumadduval, Varani and Karaveddi and then to the sea at Thondaimannar. It also branches off at Sarasalai and extends towards Jaffna Town connecting to the sea also at Ariyalai near Chemmani. It has an average width of about a mile and more or less extends through the heart of Jaffna Peninsula. The barrage at Thondaimannar prevents salt water intrusion at that end, and a spillway and gates at Chemmani will prevent salt water intrusion there, and you then have a river of fresh water flowing through the heart of the Jaffna Peninsula!

The barrage at Thondaimannar was refurbished and the spillway at Chemmani constructed in the 1950s and this brought immediate improvements to the well water quality in many parts of Jaffna, which the older generation will no doubt recall. In the 1960s work commenced on the Chundikulam bund, the spillway at Elephant Pass bridge and the Mulliyan channel. The Chundikulam bund was constructed but subsequently breached. The spillway at Elephant Pass bridge was completed, but the Mulliyan channel which was to lead the fresh water from Elephant Pass lagoon to the Vadamarachchi lagoon was never completed. It was Arumugam's hope that one day this scheme will be completed because the benefits that it will bring to the Jaffna Peninsula are immeasurable.

After his retirement from the Irrigation Department, he continued to work in the Water Resources Board as Chief Engineer and Director until he finally retired at the age of 72 years. He was the President of the Institution of Engineers, Ceylon and President of the Engineering Section of the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science. He read numerous technical papers before these two organisations. He alerted the general public to the dangers of over-pumping water from wells in Jaffna as this would lead to increasing salinity. His published technical books

include "Development of Village Irrigation Works" (1957), "Maintenance of Major Irrigation Works", "Ground Water in the Jaffna Peninsula" and a monumental volume entitled "Development of Water Resources of Ceylon" (1969) which was detailed study of every river basin in Ceylon, and is a standard reference work on the subject. His last two papers on technical matters will in fact be published posthumously and will appear shortly in a publication to be issued by the Irrigation Department to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Department which was established in 1900.

D.L.O.Mendis, a former President of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka, and Adviser to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs is a self-confessed academic disciple of Arumugam and wrote in one of his books that "This author has repeatedly paid tribute to S. Arumugam, now a nonagenarian living in London, as the **foremost engineer in his time** who recognised the true significance and value of the ancient small tank systems. He was thus implicitly opposed to the conventional wisdom of the hydraulic engineers who dominated the scene in the Irrigation Department and led the Irrigation Ministry to follow them. This conventional wisdom maintained that the small tanks were "inefficient" and had to be replaced by large reservoirs and channel systems. Sadly the hydraulic engineers had their way."

In fact it was Arumugam's interest in small tanks that led to his most productive period in writing about Tamil culture and Hindu temples, after his retirement. He had noted when investigating abandoned Northern and Eastern Province village tanks for possible restoration that each tank invariably had a temple beside it, usually in ruins. He started taking photographs of these temples and collecting information about them, and this led to the publication of his book "Some Ancient Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka" (1980). This was followed by 'Thiruketheeswaram' (1981), he was a founder member of the Thiruketheeswaram Restoration Society and a Vice-President of the Society. "Stone Sculptures in Colombo Hindu Temple" (1990), "Thiru Koneswaram" (1990), "Lombok and its Temples" (1991) an exploratory study of the ancient Hindu monuments of Java, Bali

and Lombok, and "More Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka" are amongst his other publications.

In 1998 he completed and published a "Dictionary of Biography of Ceylon Tamils". This publication contains potted biographies of more than 750 Ceylon Tamils over a period ranging from the Kings of Jaffna to the present day. This book publicised some of the achievements of Ceylon Tamils, for example the fact that the first Asian lawyer to be called to the London Bar was a Ceylon Tamil, Muttu Coomaraswamy in 1862. During the past two years he has been a regular visitor to the London Tamil Elders Centre in Wembley, where he delivered over 50 educational and informative lectures on a wide variety of topics on Hindu culture and Tamil civilisation.

In 1999, Shruthi Laya Shangham, a London based cultural organisation, approached him for information about the five ancient Shiva (Pancha Ishwaram) temples in Sri Lanka, Koneswaram, Thiruketheeswaram, Thondeswaram, Naguleswaram and Muneswaram. Arumugam duly obliged with the background information on these pre-Christian era temples of antiquity, and lyrics and music were added by the foremost violinist from Tamil Nadu, Lalgudi G. Jayaraman. Choreography and dancers were from Kalakshetra in Chennai and the performance was held at Logan Hall, University of London on 16th October 1999. At the end of the performance which was rapturously received by the audience, Lalgudi came down from the stage to the audience and draped a "Ponnadai" on Arumugam as recognition of his lifelong work.

He was by nature a quiet, humble, man who avoided the limelight, but he was a life long workaholic. He mastered the computer in his eighties and until a few weeks before he passed away he would spend several hours a day on the word processor, interspersed with a long daily walk in the park, whatever the weather. He passed away on 6th March 2000, after a brief illness.

*"Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."*

*And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."*

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna mother seeks professional groom for daughter, 41, British citizen, Analyst Programmer. Religion no bar. M 1170 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu mother seeks professional groom (fully/partly qualified) for daughter, 36, 5'5", Civil Engineer, UK permanent resident in good employment. Send horoscope, details M 1171 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional groom for fair, attractive, USA graduate daughter, 34, Canadian PR, holding professional job, innocent divorcee without encumbrances. Send horoscope, details. M 1172 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional bride for British-born son, 27, M.Sc. (Information Technology) in excellent employment. Send horoscope, details. M 1173 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional bride for son, 27, medical doctor, British citizen. Send horoscope, details. M 1174 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu Uncle seeks professional bride for engineer nephew, 35, settled in UK. Send horoscope, details. M 1175 c/o Tamil Times.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent wedding.

Sivarajan (Ranjit) son of Mr. & Mrs. K. Sivanantham of 51/4 Alexandra Place, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka and Ajantha daughter of Mr. & Mrs. N. Vigneswaralingam of 42 Kenwood Drive, Beckenham, Kent BR3 6QJ on 14th May 2000 at Wandsworth Civic Suite, Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 2PU.

Shankaran son of Mr. & Mrs. Kumarasamy of Uyarapulam, Anaicoddai, Jaffna and Premalatha daughter of Mrs. S.

Ponnuthurai of 5-3/1 Frances Road, Colombo 6 and late Mr. Ponnuthurai on 28th May 2000 at Dehiwela Conimara Reception Hall.

OBITUARIES



Born: 23.07.1910

Died: 26.03.2000

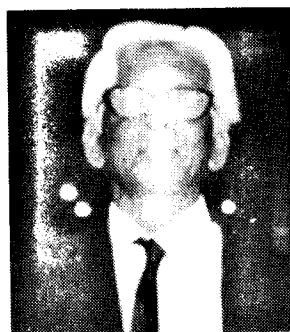
Mrs. Katpakam Muthubala-sooriyar, daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. Chelvarayan; beloved wife of late Muthubalasooriyar; loving mother of Swami Yogeswarananda (Rishikesh), Rajan, Sarweswaran, Vijayan, Roopa, Yogi, Vasanthi and Shanthi; sister of late Mannavarayan, late Manmatharajan, Mahadevarayan, Rajarayan, Mrs. Maheswary Vivekanandarajah and Mrs. Pavalam Kanagalingham; mother-in-law of Ganeshanathan, Sivapalan, Thanabalasingham, Alalasundaram, Selva, Malar and Vatsala; grandmother of Gayathri, Girthika, Meena, Senthil, Sarvesh, Satish, Ramesh, Kishani, Mathuri, Priya, Nirushi, Dharshan, and Kumaresh; great grandmother of Harshini and Shayaka passed away on 26th March 2000 in Bambalapitiya, Colombo 4.

The members of the family wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and floral tributes and assisted them during the period of bereavement. - 152 Cherry Wood Lane, Morden, Surrey SM4 4HQ.



Mr. Sinnapoo Nagalingam Nadarajah of Annaicottai North, Manipay, Sri Lanka; son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Nagalingam; son-in-law of the late Mr. & Mrs. Sabapathy; beloved husband of Therese Parimalam Nadarajah; loving father of Nadine (USA), Ragini (UK), Jegan (Len) (UK), Suresh (Bernie) (Zimbabwe) and Pragash (UK); father-in-law of Kugendran (USA), Shanmuganathan, (UK), Edwina (UK), Vaksala (Zimbabwe), and Thevankathy (UK); grandfather of Nishan and Brennan (USA), Kavitha and Laksha (UK), Natasha and Jessica (UK), Kaje and Priya (Zimbabwe), and Nithiya (UK); brother of Shanmugampillai, Puvan-eswari, Thangeswari and the late Sivapakiam, Annaedchumy, Saraswathy, Manonmaini, Thiagarajah; brother-in-law of Agnes, Annette and the late Rev. St. Christable and Albert passed away on 13th of April 2000 and the funeral took place at the Breakspear Crematorium, Ruislip on 19th April.

His wife and children wish to thank all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy, floral tributes and helped in various ways. They regret their inability to thank them individually. - 50 Canonbury Avenue, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 1TS.



Ward & Davy Mr. Vythialingam Anandadarajah, retired school

principal, husband of the late Kamalawathy; loving father of Skandamalar (Australia), Sivanandan, Sivakumari, Gayathri (all of UK), Ravindran and Bhahirathan (both of Australia); father-in-law of Indrakumar, Bhama, Sandirakumar, Shan Navaratnam, Vasundra and Vathsala; brother of late Muttucumaraswamy, late Annapoorani Sinnadurai, late Proctor Sivasubramaniam, late Sivajoti, late Seethaluxmy Sinnadurai, late Dr. Thangarajasingam, Kamalanayaki Param Thillairajah and Pathmavathy (Dr.) Balasingam; brother-in-law of late overseer Balasundaram and grandfather of Pradeep, Prasanna, Sharmatha, Murali, Brindan, Thayanuji, Sivanuji, Mayruja, Aarani, Luxmy, Kannan, Vibushini, Kailesh, Lalithayini, Sanjutha and Shivanthi passed away in Luton, UK on 12th May 2000 and was cremated on 15th May.

The members of the family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes, messages of sympathy and provided support in several ways during the period of bereavement. - V.A. Sivanandan, 4a Ringwood Road, Luton, Beds. Tel: 01582 582619.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of Mrs. Ranjini Geetanjali Thirunavukarasu on the fourth anniversary of her passing away on 24th May 1996.

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her husband Thirunavukarasu; children Poornima and Pradeep; father Mahalingam; mother-in-law Mrs. P. Ponnuthurai; sisters Mrs. Lalitha Dilkushi Karunakaran and Priyadarshini Damayanthi; brothers Premkumar, Mohanakumar,

continued on page 31

continued from page 30

Ranjitkumar, Nimalkumar and Tilakumar; brothers-in-law Karunakaran and Balanathan; sisters-in-law Kamalarani, Vijayalaxmi, Nirmala, Yasothara, Nalini, Kamaladevi and Sugirthadevi. - M .Ranjitkumar, 12 Chase Lane, Barkingside, Essex IG6 1BH Tel; 020 8554 2095.

Tenth Anniversary Remembrance



In ever loving memory of Dr. Parameswaran Kandiah on the tenth anniversary of his passing away on 12th May 1990.

Ten years have rolled by since the passing away of a much dedicated doctor, a loving husband and father.

Australian Newsletter

Dwaraka's Bharatha Natya Arangetram



The Bharatha Natya Arangetram of Dwaraka, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Wimalaswaran of Box Hill, Melbourne and Sishya of Dr. Chandrabhanu took place before a packed audience at The George Wood Performing Art Centre, Ringwood, Melbourne on 22nd April 2000

To have lived and known a man such as him is surely an inspiration to bring out the goodness and the kindness in us all. God bless you.

Sorrowfully remembered by his beloved wife Pathmasany and loving children Thayalan and Anjali. - 29 Mounstan Close, Hartside Grange, Hartlepool TS26 0LR.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Jun 1 Karthigai; Feast of St. Justin.

Jun 2 Amavasai.

Jun 3 South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop in. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jun 5 Sathurthi; Feast of St. Boniface.

Jun 6 Feast of St. Norbert.

Jun 7 Shasti.

Jun 11 Feast of St. Barnabas.

Jun 12 Eekathasi.

Jun 13 Feast of St. Anthony of Padua.

Jun 14 Pirathosam; Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Jun 16 Full Moon.

Jun 18 SLTWG Welfare Trip to Brighton. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

with the blessings of Shiva Sri Parameswara Dikshitar of Chidambaram, South India

The proceedings commenced with the traditional Pushpanjali, the dance of offering flowers to the almighty and the consecration of the stage followed by Jethiswaram, the nritha (pure dance) piece which blends the adavus of the dance with complex timings and rhythmic patterns to make an exciting display of technique, dynamics and control over rhythm, which Dwaraka executed perfectly. The central piece of the repertoire is the Varnam which combines all the elements of the art form and in which passages of pure dance alternate with the lyrics of the song. In this Varnam Dwaraka addresses Lord Krishna as the beloved and the ease with which she wove complex movements won the hearts of the audience. This was followed by Chidambaram in Kalyani Raga, Thaye Yasotha in Todi and a Padam in Huseeni Raga. The performance concluded with Thillana, a pure

Jun 20 Sathurthi.

Jun 22 Feast of St. Paulinus.

Jun 24 SLTWG celebrates Founder's Day. Tel: 020 8542 3285.

Jun 28 Karthigai; Eekathasi.

Jun 29 Pirathosam.

Jun 30 Feast of the First Martyr of the Church of Rome.

Jul 14 7.00pm Bharathanatyam by Indhumati Srikumar at Sir James Hawkey Hall, Broomhill Road, Woodford in aid of Cancer Victims of North & East Srilanka.

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HG. Tel: 020 7351 3056/4068

Jun 4 6.00pm Bharata Natyam by Meenakshi Chitaranjan.

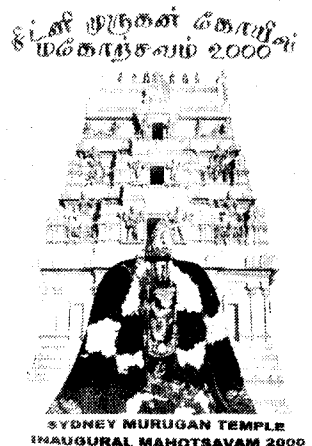
Jun 17 6.00pm Hindustani Vocal by Swati Natekar.

Jun 18 6.00pm Vocal - Indrani Sen and Folk Dance - Pinache Khan.

Jun 25 6.00pm Kuchipudi Dance by Kaushalya Reddy.

Jun 26-29 6.30-8.00pm Daily Srimad Bhagavad Gita Lectures by Swami Parthasarathi. All Welcome.

work under Dr Chandrabhanu's tutelage. Her parents have been wholeheartedly involved in her dance interests and helped her to develop artistically and spiritually. She is a conscientious student, a charming and graceful dancer and uses her eyes beautifully in her interpretations. Besides Bharatha Natyam, she is on the school magazine, Patchwork and Pound committees, plays hockey and cricket and has acted in several school dramatic productions.



Sydney Murugam Temple Inaugural Mahotsavam 2000

The Sydney Saiva Mantram held the inaugural Mahotsavam of the Sydney Murugam Temple from 11th March to 22nd March 2000. It is remarkable for the Mantram to have organised the annual festival of the temple before the first anniversary of the Maha Kumbabiekhram which was held on 17th June 1999. The president of the Mantram Mr. Danikaikandakumar and the committee deserve to be complimented for their hard work in respect of both these events.

The Mahotsavam commenced with the initial Vinayaga puja on 10th March, followed by the hoisting of the flag - Kodietram on 11th March continuing with a few days of festivals culminating in the colourful Chariot Festival - Thertiruvilla on 19th, the Theerthotsavam - the water cutting ceremony on 20th, Thirukkalyaanam - the wedding ceremony on 21st and finally the lowering of the flag - Kodiirrakam on the 22nd March.

dance piece, on an exciting note with a series of beautiful arrangement of movements and rhythm presented with verve and vitality. The engaging choreography of Dr. Chandrabhanu and Adyar Lakshman was quite fast and Dwaraka managed it very well with clarity and an impressive command of rhythm.

Dwaraka's Guru Dr. Chandrabhanu should be congratulated for the excellent training he had imparted which was clearly noticeable. The other members of the orchestra who shared in the success were Sivaganga Sahadevan - Vocal, Balasri Rasiah - Mrdangam, V.V.S. Murari - Violin and Rajalakshmi Bhargavi Ramash - Tampura. Sixteen year old Dwaraka migrated to Australia from Sri Lanka with her parents in 1985 and commenced her training in Bharatha Natyam in 1991 under the guidance of Dr. Chandrabhanu and had her initial foundation in the technique from Arun Munoz, before she began repertoire

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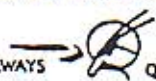


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