

The disconnect development

The international institutions and foreign nations participating in the Sri Lanka Development Forum (Paris Aid Group) on 18 December, declared that 'social exclusion driven by ethnicity, language and religion had resulted in reduced opportunities over decades and created the extreme tensions which drove the conflict' in the island.

The delegates noted that there was a "disconnect" between policy and the experience of the people despite the Sri Lankan government's assertion of commitment to improve judicial, legislative and administrative systems. The World Bank's South Asia Vice President Meiko Nishimizu emphasized the need for efficient institutions and good governance. She made clear that economic growth without equity and social harmony among citizens could become a 'destabiliser' in the region.

Ms Nishimizu pointed out that war expenditure had risen to 6% of the GDP. Ahead of the Forum sessions, the International Working Group on Sri Lanka (IWG), a consortium of NGOs, had pointed out that while 25% of government expenditure is needed to fund the war effort, defence outlays rose by more than 50% in 2000 to around \$1 billion. The IWG had urged governments to develop an explicit strategy for peace building within donor programmes and a coherence throughout all elements of foreign policy in relation to Sri Lanka.

The European Union, in a declaration at the Forum, confirmed its support for the Norwegian peace initiative and stressed the importance of the first meeting between Norway's special negotiator Erik Solheim and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader V Prabhakaran in November. In the same month, the Tiger leader had also called for unconditional peace talks, saying that the LTTE sought a negotiated settlement that would satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people. Mr Prabhakaran called for the removal of the north-east economic blockade and conditions of normalcy for peace negotiations.

The Development Forum is concerned about more accountable governance, encompassing an improved culture of human rights with an acceptable electoral process, an uncensored media and negation of state terror.

Kishali Pinto Jayawardene
Sunday Times columnist

In a statement on 12 December, Sri Lanka ruled out lifting of the economic blockade or the scaling down of the war before peace talks. The government, however, said that the time has come to move beyond rhetoric to the discussion of concrete political issues within a definite time frame with a clear political outcome in view. The government interpreted Mr Prabhakaran's call for creating normalcy as a pre-condition and contended that the LTTE held the view that conditions of normalcy include 'withdrawal of the Sri Lankan armed forces from the north before any talks can begin'. There will be no troop withdrawal, the government declared.

The government further stressed that the LTTE should agree to include the following core issues in the agenda for negotiations: 1) the stoppage of war; 2) the stoppage of terrorist killings; 3) the resolution of the Tamil people's problems through negotiated political settlement; 4) speedy solution to the problems of the war displaced. The government denounced Mr Prabhakaran for issuing a challenge to the Sri Lankan state declaring that the LTTE will 'regain Jaffna', and reiterated that the issue of territorial integrity of the island cannot be questioned or negotiated.

The LTTE sprang a surprise on 21 December by announcing a unilateral ceasefire from midnight 24 December to midnight 24 January. The Tigers said that

if the government responds positively to the ceasefire announcement, they would be prepared to 'extend the period of peace to create cordial conditions and direct negotiations'. The government has rejected the ceasefire outright. The following day, the Sri Lankan Army launched *Operation Kiniheera VII* (Anvil) to capture LTTE-held areas east of Jaffna town. In late December, eight Tamil parties, including the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) called on the international community to exert pressure for a ceasefire declaration.

Hostility to external mediation continued, but the Norwegians saw some expression of support for their initiative. While the Sihala Urumaya (Sinhalese Heritage) and the National Movement Against Terrorism (NMAT) staged protests and burned the flags of Norway and Britain, over 2,000 people assembled outside the Norwegian embassy on 11 December to encourage the peace effort. A demonstration in Kandy on 30 December urged the Sri Lankan government to accept LTTE's ceasefire offer and bring an end to the war.

But in a letter to the Norwegian ambassador in Colombo, the People's Liberation Front (JVP) accused Norway of acting as an agent for the 'imperialistic intentions of the US and Britain' and demanded the Scandinavian nation not to interfere in the island's internal affairs. The Norwegian Deputy Foreign minister Raymond Johansen says his country became involved on the request of both parties and is not seeking to impose any solution on Sri Lanka. Observers are worried over the stance of the JVP and say the party could become a formidable opponent of the current peace process.

There is real concern that the positions taken by the parties may push Sri Lanka into another period of uncertainty. In late December, the Bishops of Jaffna and Batticaloa drew attention to the enormous suffering of the people of the north-east and urged both parties to stop squabbling and take constructive measures for peace and harmony.

JAFFNA

Army capture supply route

THE Army launched *Operation Kiniheera V* (Anvil) on 5 December to capture LTTE territory east of Jaffna town. The Kopai-Kaithady bridge was taken on 16 December. Nunavil junction and Nunavil West, seven miles east of Jaffna town were also captured.

The military is already in control of the Madduvil-Puthur road, further north, which offered some possibility of supplying troops in southern Thenmaratchy area. The LTTE had cut off all routes to Thenmaratchy, except the road from Point Pedro in northern Vadamarchy, to Kodikamam, five miles north-east of Chavakachcheri.

Operation Kiniheera VII began on 22 December and troops advanced in three columns, capturing 34 sq km territory, including the strategic Navatkuli bridge. Spokesman Sanath Karunaratne said that the 15-mile Jaffna-Chavakachcheri road was now in military hands. Observers say that the Army have effectively secured Jaffna town from LTTE mortar attack. The LTTE offered limited resistance and is said to be working on strategy to cope with the military's improved fire power.

While Airforce planes bombed Tiger areas in Thenmaratchy, shelling from military camps continued. Reports say Madduvil school principal Nagalingam Sivasothy, 53, was killed by a shell. The Thenmaratchy regional council has compiled a list of 112 civilians killed and 110 wounded by bombs and shells between 10 May and 24 November.

Reports say that arrests by security forces have increased in Jaffna since LTTE's *Great Heroes Week* in November. Ten youths were taken into custody in early December. Jaffna NGO, Human Development Centre's Nishali Selvalingam was detained, but was released in early December.

The Human Rights Commission is investigating allegations of torture of Thenmaratchy refugee S Ilayarajah. He was arrested by the Army on 11 November and sustained injuries in custody. K Vimalarajah, released on bail by a Jaffna court was arrested again. He is held at Kankesanthurai military base.

Reports say the 3,000 shelters in Jaffna refugee camps urgently need repairs. Poor sanitary conditions in camps are causing concern. The government is reviewing the situation and the 116,000 families on dry rations may be reduced by 50%. According to proposals, families earning over Rs 750 (\$9) and those with relatives abroad may not be entitled to food aid from 2001.

Director of Jaffna Hospital Dr Mrs Kanagaratnam told ICRC that a serious consequence of the military situation is the dearth of specialists in certain fields of medicine - orthopedics, neuro surgery, cardiac surgery, rheumatology. The lack of advanced technology in medical investigations, diagnosis and treatment such as radio therapy for cancer patients, laser and echo treatment and thyroid assay is another problem the hospitals face.

Asylum seekers

According to the BBC, Police in Kazakhstan detained 24 Sri Lankans wandering across the snow-covered steppes in freezing temperatures. The refugees suffered from exposure and carried the body of a fellow asylum seeker who had died of cold.

Deported

India deported Sri Lankan Tamil leader Kanagendran Eelaventhana, 68, to the island in early December on the alleged ground that he overstayed his visa. Mr Eelaventhana took refuge in Tamil Nadu in 1983. Reports say he was involved in LTTE's *Great Heroes Week* celebrations in Madras.

Cyclone

Five people were killed and 75,000 families affected in Batticaloa, Amparai, Trincomalee and Polonnaruwa districts when a cyclone hit the east on 25 December. Over 55,000 houses were damaged. The UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs says the cyclone also destroyed paddylands, livestock, electricity and telephone lines.

Compensation

The Jaffna NGO consortium says that 15,000 people displaced from Palaly have not been compensated. The 10,000 acre area is a high security zone and most houses in the area have been demolished. According to Vanni MPs, the Army is occupying a number of houses in Mannar for the past eight years without paying rent.

Ranil offers wages to Vanni refugees

SPEAKING in Parliament on 6 December, Opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe declared that he would gift one year's wages, if the government ensured provision of adequate medicines to the northern Vanni region. His statement highlights the gravity of the problems faced by civilians due to the economic blockade imposed by the Sri Lankan government.

In December, the European Union drew attention to the extreme social, moral and physical precariousness of the people of the north-east and urged the government to do everything within its powers to improve their lot, particularly through better access to humanitarian aid and improved freedom of movement.

Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts Health Department officers say 80 different kinds of medicines and materials needed in hospitals have not been received in the Vanni since February. These include wound dressing, antiseptics and preventive injections.

There is only one doctor in the Out Patients Department in Mullaitivu hospital. Over 1,000 patients visit the department daily for treatment. Over 13,600 people were treated in November in Mallavi hospital. The Kilinochchi hospital treated over 19,500, including 3,000 for malaria and diarrhoea. Seven children were treated for severe malnutrition.

Seven lorryloads of food reached the Vanni through Pramanalankulam in late

December. According to Vavuniya Government Agent K Ganesh 1,041 lorryloads of food was sent to the Vanni in 2000. Observers say the region needs several times that amount.

In Vavuniya District, the Airforce shot dead A Kamalanathan and S Sivakumar on 11 December at Poovarasankulam, alleging that they were LTTE members. Cheddikulam resident K Selvakumar, 42, was abducted from his house on 15 December and murdered. As a group allied to the Army is suspected, the Vavuniya court ordered the military commander to co-operate in investigations. In mid-December, the Army searched Vavuniya town to track down six *Black Tiger* suicide bombers.

■ *Eleven people disappear in Amparai*

Tiger bus bomb

TWO civilians and a policeman died in an LTTE bomb attack on a passenger bus on 6 December near Sathurukondan, north of Batticaloa town. Three doctors and two policemen were among the eighteen others injured. Three of the wounded, including District Medical Officer Dr Duke Arutpragasam, died in hospital.

The death of Dr Arutpragasam led to panic among other doctors in the district. Twenty Sinhalese doctors and two doctors from Maldives Islands, returned to Colombo fearing for their safety. The doctors returned to duty on 15 December after Health minister WDJ Senaviratne agreed to pay for life insurance and additional incentive bonus to doctors in the conflict zones. Following the incident,

the Batticaloa Human Rights Centre has urged the security forces not to travel with civilians on public transport.

Attacks continued despite an agreement on cessation of hostilities in early December during UNICEF's polio prevention programme and Tigers' unilateral ceasefire later in the month. K Alagaratnam, 76, and V Sritharan, 46, were shot dead near a checkpoint in Kaluvanchikudy on 2 December. The police allege that they died in a Tiger attack, but Batticaloa MP P Selvarajah says they were killed by the police after a policeman was wounded by the LTTE.

In mid-December, the LTTE asked people in the east to move away from military camps. The Tigers shelled Usan

Etram Army camp near Valaichenai on 15 December, killing a soldier. A naval officer died in attacks on Sathurukondan military base, four days later.

In Amparai, the Tigers fired mortar shells on a police Special Task Force (STF) camp on Badulla road on 12 December. A policeman was wounded. At dawn on 21 December, the LTTE launched simultaneous assaults on Nugelande STF camp and a police post killing a Home Guard. The military say seven Tigers were killed.

A team from the police Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) arrested three people in the east on 20 December, including Kalmunai teacher D Sathiyamurthy, and took them to Colombo. Relatives say no reasons were given for the arrests and have informed the Human Rights Commission (HRC). Between January and November, the HRC received complaints on the arrest of 207 young Tamils in Amparai District. Eleven have disappeared. In Batticaloa and Amparai districts, 418 youths were in detention in December.

In Trincomalee District, the LTTE attacked a police station in Thoppur, five miles south-east of Muthur, on 5 December, injuring three policemen. The Tigers also blasted Thoppur bridge to prevent reinforcements from Palathoppu Army camp further south-west. A naval base near Kuchchaveli, 20 miles north-west of Trincomalee town, came under attack on 21 December. Six Navy personnel were killed in the assault.

Mirusuvil mass grave

REPORTS say eight Tamil people, arrested on 19 December, were murdered by Sri Lankan soldiers and buried in a grave at Mirusuvil in Thenmaratchy, 16 miles east of Jaffna town. The eight refugees who had earlier fled to Point Pedro, Atchuvelli and Udupidy, further north and north-west, returned to Mirusuvil on 19 December to inspect their houses and to collect firewood, when they were seized by the Army. According to the evidence of District Medical Officer Dr C Kathirvetpillai, their throats had been slashed. The dead included three teenagers and five year-old Vilvarajah Prasath. The murders came to light after Ponnuthurai Maheswaran escaped from Army custody with serious injuries and informed relatives. In a letter to President Chandrika, Jaffna MP Mavai Senathirajah says that a woman's body was seen partially buried in the area, leading to suspicions that there are other mass graves. Mr Senathirajah has urged the President to order further excavations in Mirusuvil. The police arrested an Army officer and six soldiers in late December. Five soldiers were identified in identification parades held in Point Pedro on 3 and 4 January.

More than 700 people disappeared in Jaffna in 1996 and 1997. The remains of 17 people were found buried at Chemmani in 1999. The Sri Lankan government has said that 765 complaints of disappearance had been received. Sixteen people were ascertained as killed in custody and 201 were said to be in prisons. The fate of 548 remains unknown. The UN Working Group on Disappearances urged the government in March, to abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency regulations which facilitate disappearances. The government introduced new regulations in May, increasing the powers of the security forces.

MANNAR Catholic Bishop Rayappu Joseph has condemned the STF for attacking civilians in Kathankulam, north of Mannar town, on 25 December. The STF is reported to have shot dead a youth and forced people out of a cinema to identify him. When they could not identify the dead youth, the STF began attacking, injuring some of them. The Bishop says that he would be complaining to President Chandrika.

The LTTE continue to launch attacks in Army-held areas in Mannar. In early December, bombs were discovered in Nanattan and in Meddawachchiya, south-east of Mannar. The Tigers fired mortar shells on police posts in Uyilankulam, nine miles south-east of Mannar town, on

STF attack

19 December, injuring two policemen. On the same day, an Army intelligence officer was shot dead at a bus stand in Mannar town and another was wounded.

Further west, 10,000 refugees in camps around the Madhu Church, are unable to return to home areas. Some displaced farmers continue to cultivate their lands. Reports say farmers in LTTE-controlled areas in northern Mannar are unable to market rice produced because of restrictions imposed by the Army.

The Navy arrested a man on Mannar coast on 5 December, who attempted smuggle 9,000 batteries across the front-line. Batteries are said to be used in Tiger bombs. They are among many items banned into Tiger territory.

Prolonged detention without evidence

Detainees allege torture

IN a fundamental rights application in December, Mannar resident Krishnasamy Suresh alleges that he suffered torture at the hands of the security forces. Mr Suresh was arrested on 24 April in a lodge on Dam Street in Colombo in possession of communication equipment. He had purchased them for a communications centre in Mannar, after obtaining a permit from the Nanattan *Pradeshiya Sabha* (regional council). The security forces detained him under the PTA and repeatedly assaulted him accusing him of supporting the LTTE.

Reports say that Hill Country resident R Malarvasagam, arrested on 9 November, suffered severe torture at the hands of Nuwara Eliya police. Eight Tamil youths, including Kanthasamy Ganesh of Mannar, detained in Kalutara prison for over two years were released by the High Court on 8 December. Confessions had been obtained from them under torture. According to reports by Judicial Medical Officers, they have

scars on their bodies consistent with the allegations of torture.

The government appointed a new Committee of Inquiry into Undue Arrest and Harassment (CIUAH) in mid-December. The nine-member Committee will again be led by Lakshman Jayakody and include the new Justice minister Batty Weerakoon and other ministers - GL Peiris, SB Dissanayake, Lakshman Kadirgamar and Douglas Devananda.

The Committee will receive complaints on illegal detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and Emergency regulations, delay in cases, harassment by security forces during and after arrest, non-issue of arrest receipts, police registration, holding relatives as hostages and problems faced by people from north-east Sri Lanka.

In a complaint to the CIUAH, six Tamil youths in Kalutara prison say that they are in detention for a long period even after the Attorney General (AG) informed courts that there is no evidence

to prosecute them. S Suthakaran was arrested at Valvettiturai in Jaffna in August 1999 and is currently held in Kalutara. The AG informed court in February 2000 that there is no evidence to institute action against him.

Batticaloa Technical College lecturer S Thiyagarajah says that he is held in Kandy's Bogambara prison since his arrest on 18 July. He was not informed of the reasons for the arrest and was produced in court only on 10 November. According to the Defence Ministry, 436 Tamils, including 64 women, were arrested under the PTA in 2000 and cases have been filed against 350. Other reports say over 4,000 Tamils are in custody, most without trial, under the PTA and Emergency regulations.

Four Tamils from Muthur in Trincomalee who went to Colombo to go abroad were arrested by police in a lodge in Bambalapitiya suburb on 6 December. Four relatives who accompanied them were also taken into custody.

Denying freedom of movement

JAFFNA people wishing to travel to southern areas in Sri Lanka face considerable difficulty in obtaining permits to leave the peninsula. An application form costs Rs 10 at the Army's Civil Administration Office (CAO). There are only two CAOs in Jaffna - one at Point Pedro in north-eastern Vadammaratchy and the other in Jaffna town.

Three copies of the photograph of the applicant certified by the Grama Sevaka (Village Headman) should be attached to three copies of the application form which in turn must be attested by the *Pradeshiya Sabha* (regional council) office of the area. The *Pradeshiya Sabha* retains one copy.

The applicant must take the other two copies to the Army camp in the area to be certified by the officer-in-charge of the camp. The camp retains the second copy. The third copy must then be handed to the CAO. After the CAO issues a permit, a ticket to travel by ship to Trincomalee may be obtained at the office of the *Pradeshiya Sabha*. Local people say that this procedure may take weeks and sometimes months. More than 10,000

people have applied to the CAOs and are awaiting to travel out of Jaffna.

A bus service operates between Jaffna town and Point Pedro - where passengers board the ship. The passengers undergo

security checks in Jaffna, Thellipalai and Point Pedro. The widows of the buses are covered during the 30-mile journey.

The LTTE control the Vanni and there are no road links to Jaffna through the region. The cargo ship *Lanka Muditha* is currently used for passenger service, which is irregular. A ticket costs Rs 600 (\$7). There are only two toilets in the ship for 1,250 passengers and travel to Trincomalee may take up to 18 hours. In 1999, 27,500 people travelled by ship to the south and 16,000 arrived in the peninsula. More than 2,000 people are currently waiting at Trincomalee to go to Jaffna. Air services to Jaffna resumed on 17 November. Heli Tours operates one flight a day and only a few people can afford the air fare.

The suspension of the weekly services of the ICRC ship *Jaya Gold* in December affected people who are unable to obtain treatment in Jaffna due to restrictions on medicines. *Jaya Gold* carries patients from Jaffna to the south for urgent medical consultation, investigation and treatment. The ship also transports medicines and postal bags to Jaffna.

THE SRI LANKA MONITOR is part of an information service set-up by the British Refugee Council to keep Sri Lankan refugees in Britain, Europe and elsewhere, informed about the current situation in their home areas. The Sri Lanka Monitor for a particular month may contain information relating to events of previous months or the early part of the following month.

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