

## The north-east embargo

Five farmers in northern Vavuniya District of Sri Lanka instituted legal action in the Supreme Court on 15 October against restrictions on fuel to their areas. Later in the month, the Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunge denied in a BBC interview that a government-inspired economic blockade of the Tamil-dominated north-east was in existence.

The Vavuniya farmers say in the fundamental rights application that an Army order in June to the Government Agents of the Vanni has drastically reduced the monthly quota of fuel such as diesel. According to an order issued by the Army on 23 July 1998, permits must be obtained to receive fuel. Each application for permit is examined individually. Farmers complain that the requirement has made cultivation extremely difficult.

Restrictions on essential commodities to the north-east have been in force since 1990 under Emergency regulations. Following the end of the state of Emergency in July, the Defence Secretary issued a notification in August under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), re-introducing the ban on 21 articles to the north.

According to Colombo newspaper *Virakesari*, the Defence Ministry in Colombo and the Army in Vavuniya have imposed restrictions on 75 other commodities, including medicines, surgical instruments, fuel, food, building materials, agricultural implements, spare parts and fertilisers. Apart from affecting the long-term health of the population, the restrictions have had an adverse impact on agriculture, education, local industries and fishing.

NGOs say that only 40% of the food and medicines needed in the Vanni, controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), is supplied. Government officers in Colombo have long maintained that food and medicines fall into the hands of the Tigers. But the cuts have placed severe hardship on the civilian population, particularly the internally displaced people who are most vulnerable.

*The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern about the situation of civilians in the north-east of the country, particularly persons who were internally displaced by the conflict.*

Reports say there is a shortage of medicines in Vanni hospitals. The medicines for the third quarter of the year 2001 were reduced and only a part of the medicines for the fourth quarter has been received. Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts also lack the facilities for preserving vital medicines.

More than 11,100 patients were treated in Mullaitivu's Mallavi hospital in September, 750 for malaria and 275 for diarrhoea. Government restriction on Malathion insecticide for malarial prevention, continues. Reports say that over 2,350 children, nearly 50% of the total number and 400 pregnant women in the Mallavi Health Division are affected by malnutrition. In the hospital, 22% of the 137 children born in September were underweight. The Jaffna hospital is badly affected by shortage of medicines. Hospital authorities say that despite a number of communications to Colombo, no action has been taken.

In early October, the Army's Civil Administration Office in Mannar said it would allow *Maha* seasonal cultivation, in an area extending only one mile in the LTTE-controlled northern side of the Mannar-Vavuniya road. Farmers say they face difficulties in cultivation because of Army restrictions and harassment by the state intelligence agencies. Only 15% of the fuel needed for agricultural purposes has been allowed into the area.

Further south at Kalpitiya in Puttalam District, the Navy imposed a ban on fishing after 6pm from mid-October. Restrictions on outboard motors for fishing boats are being implemented. Under the Prevention of Terrorism (Outboard Motors) Regulations No 6 of 2001, fishermen are prohibited from using engines of power exceeding 25 horsepower (hp). But in the north-east, fishermen can only use outboard motors of 10hp. In Trincomalee District, the Army imposed a ban on fishing around the harbour from October until general elections are completed in December.

In Jaffna, a *hartal* (general strike) was staged in the Army-controlled north-eastern Vadamaratchy area on 23 October, demanding the removal of restrictions on fishing in a ten-mile region between Thondamanaru and Katkivalam. The fishermen complain that their nets are often ripped by naval vessels and the Navy sometimes confiscates their catch. A World Bank team visiting the peninsula in September expressed concern over the plight of Jaffna fishermen.

In the eastern Batticaloa District, the Army imposed a restriction in October on diesel and other fuel into LTTE-controlled areas through Karuthapalam bridge in Chenkalady. The people crossing the bridge were allowed to take only 10 litres and the rest was confiscated. Farmers are worried that the restriction has come at the beginning of the *Maha* cultivation season.

President Chandrika made regulations under the PTA in July, establishing Prohibited Zones. The Territorial Waters extending from Hambantota in the south, through Trincomalee and Jaffna, to Puttalam in the west, encompassing the entire coast of the North-East Province, is a Prohibited Zone. No person in any vessel or in any other manner can enter the zone without written permission from a Competent Authority. This means that fishermen in the north-east, who have undergone years of suffering because of restrictions, must have special permits to carry on their occupation.



## THE VANNI

# Bombing the Vanni

THE Sri Lankan Airforce continued its bombing raids of the LTTE-held Vanni region in October. Two fishermen were seriously injured in Airforce attacks in Alampil on the Mullaitivu coast on 12 October. A house was destroyed. Several houses were damaged when planes bombed Valaignarnadam on 21 October. Civilian S Baskaran sustained injuries. The LTTE attacked the Colombo airport in July, after warning the Airforce not to target populated areas in the north-east.

In the Vanni, the skeletal remains of a person was found at Periyaparanthan in Kilinochchi District on 11 October. Reports say over 175 people disappeared in Kilinochchi when the Army held the area for two years from 1996. The remains of 69 persons have been found so far. No investigations have been initiated into the alleged disappearances.

In Army-controlled Vavuniya town, a cordon and search operation was conducted on 4 October, after reports of LTTE infiltration from the Vanni. Over 500 people were rounded-up and taken to the Urban Council grounds for enquiry. They were paraded before *talayattis* or masked informers and 20 were detained.

Vavuniya Magistrate M Ilancheliyan again reprimanded the police in mid-October for harassment of civilians. A man and his wife had been arrested for possession of a motor cycle and two water pumps without permission from the police. The Magistrate pointed out that there is no provision in law requiring

them to obtain permission from the police and ordered them to be released.

After a landmine was found on Mannar-Cheddikulam road on 11 October, five people in a nearby house were arrested. The Human Rights Commission (HRC) has been informed that the civilians, including 17 year-old J Nisanthakumar were severely beaten in custody. The HRC says the police Special Intelligence Unit is holding eight people, including Chandrabose Suthagar, the editor of Tamil journal *Nilam* (Earth).

The Tigers killed two officers of the Irrigation Department in a landmine attack at Kahatagollewa in Anuradhapura District on 12 October. A policeman was killed and five others were wounded by an LTTE landmine on 17 October at Kebittigollewa. On the same day, three soldiers and two Sinhalese farmers died in an attack at Ruwanpitiya in Veli Oya.

In Mannar District, security force intelligence services arrested three members of a family suspected of LTTE links, including Jeyadeepa Mariyadas, 21, in early November. They were taken to Colombo for interrogation. They were refugees from the Vanni and lived in Uppukulam for the last two years.

Further south in Puttalam District, Batticaloa resident Joseph Anthony was taken into custody when he went to Mathurankuli to see his sister on 2 October. Another Batticaloa resident Anthonimuthu Mahendra was arrested in Munthal on the same day.

## Protest

French agency Reporters Sans Frontieres and New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists expressed concern that investigations into the murder of Jaffna journalist Mylvaganam Nimalarajan, in October 2000, have been abandoned.

## Terrorism

The Canadian government designated the LTTE as a terrorist organisation in October. A new list of 28 proscribed Foreign Terrorist Organisations issued by the US Secretary of State on 5 October includes the LTTE.

## Demonstration

Over 5,000 Muslims demonstrated in Colombo on 12 October protesting against US bombing raids in Afghanistan. The police used tear gas to disperse the crowd. There were also demonstrations in several other areas.

## Power

The power cut was reduced to one hour from three hours on 27 October. The cut, introduced three months ago, is the result of severe drought and, according to reports, mismanagement. The Ceylon Electricity Board has lost Rs 20 billion (\$215 million).

## Arrest

Canadian police arrested 40 Tamils in Ontario in mid-October on organized crime charges. The arrests followed two months of increased violence, including the murder of three people.

# Tiger attack on fuel ship to Jaffna

THE *Sea Tigers* launched an attack on the ship *Dunhinda* on 30 October, ten miles east of Jaffna's Point Pedro town. *Dunhinda* was carrying 560 tonnes of diesel and kerosene for the security forces and civilians. The ship was damaged in suicide attacks and three Navy personnel were killed. According to observers, the LTTE is targeting shipping in the Mullaitivu sea to deny supplies to Jaffna and to keep the zone clear to facilitate arms smuggling operations.

Nine days earlier, the Navy intercepted six *Sea Tiger* boats 50 miles east of Point Pedro. Three boats were destroyed and five LTTE were killed. The Navy claim to have foiled a number of LTTE attempts to smuggle arms to the

Mullaitivu shore since it began a blockade from May, in *Operation Varuna Kirana* (Coloured Rays).

In Jaffna, seven soldiers were killed and another seriously wounded in a remote-controlled mine attack by the Tigers at Karanavai in north-eastern Vadammaratchy on 24 October. The dead included Jaffna District deputy military co-ordinator Col. Lionel Wijekone. Reports say the attack took place in a military high security zone.

Resettlement of the internally displaced people has taken place in selected areas of southern Thenmaratchy, including northern parts of Varani and Mirusuvil. But it has not been successful in other places due to fear of land-

mines. K Nagamuthu and S Sivamohan were seriously injured by landmines in Sarasalai in early October. Mines wounded six people in September. Mine clearance operations by UN agencies remain suspended. According to reports, following a visit by a World Bank team in September, the operations may be resumed.

Traffic warden Sriskandarajah Vimalaswaran, 19, a refugee from Thenmaratchy, was shot dead by suspected LTTE gunmen on 10 October in Jaffna town. He was among the 65 traffic wardens appointed on the recommendations of the Tamil group and government ally EPDP and functioned under the Jaffna police force.



## ■ Muslim abductions by the LTTE in Batticaloa

# Tension in Muthur

ETHNIC tension heightened in Muthur, nine miles south of Trincomalee, after the LTTE attacked a military post in a Muslim school on 26 October. The assault inside Central College left a policeman dead and three soldiers wounded. Reports say Eastern University student M Nasreeth died in crossfire.

In the Army shelling that followed, a student was killed in Akkaraichenai and three others were wounded. Local people say a masked gang attacked the Tamils in the area. On 27 October, Samithambi Ilankeeran was cut with swords and wounded. Over 400 Tamils and Muslims fled from their homes. On the same day a child was killed and five others were injured in a grenade attack. The authori-

ties imposed a curfew on 28 October, after a Muslim youth was hacked to death. Reports say that normalcy was restored after the Army summoned the gang members and warned them. The LTTE said in a statement that they have no intention of attacking Muslim civilians but urged them to ensure that police and Army posts inside Muslim schools are removed.

The Tigers have intensified operations in Trincomalee District. The Airforce base at Velvarikulam on Trincomalee-Anuradhapura road was targeted on 9 October. Four Airforce personnel were killed and seven were wounded. Eleven security personnel died and 15 were injured on 1 November, in a Tiger assault

on Muthur 64th Mile military base. Reports say the Tigers removed a large quantity of arms and shelled Kaddaiparichchan and Pachchanur Army camps. A shell injured five civilians in Kadduchenai.

In Batticaloa District, the LTTE carried out cordon and search operations in areas it controls. This followed remote-controlled claymore mine attacks on several LTTE leaders. The Tigers blame the Army's *Deep Penetration Unit*, but the military have denied involvement. LTTE Deputy leader *Karikalan's* vehicle was damaged by a claymore mine at Kadukkamunai on 18 October. Reports say *Mr Karikalan* was not in the vehicle at the time of the attack.

The LTTE abducted a number of Muslim civilians for ransom during October. Astrologer MT Ibralebbe was abducted at Natpittimunai on 5 October. Sammanthurai engineer AM Ansar was taken on 4 October but was released the following day. In Eravur, M Abdul Razak and MS Fareed were abducted on 25 October. Lorry driver P Wahaf and M Fowsul remain in Tiger custody.

Local people say that Tamil-Muslim relations in the east has been affected by the spate of abductions. Some eastern Muslim organisations have decided to meet with the LTTE to discuss the issue. Meanwhile, Tamil-Muslim friendship associations have urged the LTTE to release six bullock carts hijacked by the Tigers. They say the carts belong to poor Muslim families.

# Discrimination

SRI LANKAN MP Joseph Pararajasingham told Parliament in early October that there are 1,700 Tamils in custody under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Many of them are in detention for over five years. Either no charges have been filed in court or cases against them are dragging on. The Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission informed Jaffna resident Sathiyalethumy Ariyaratnam in October that her son Sathiyseelan is held at the Anuradhapura prison. He has been in detention since 1996 but she had not received any information about his arrest or detention from the authorities. After the state of Emergency lapsed in July, President Chandrika introduced regulations providing that all detentions made under Emergency regulations shall be deemed to have been made under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Legal experts say that this action is illegal and violates the constitutional rights of the detainees. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern in August over restrictions placed on civil and political rights in Sri Lanka under the PTA and Emergency Regulations (ER) and their allegedly discriminatory application with regard to Tamils. The Committee reminded Sri Lanka of the obligations to conduct exhaustive and impartial investigations into allegations of human rights violations involving racial discrimination and bring to justice those responsible. The Committee also expressed concern that a large number of Tamils of Indian origin and their descendants, particularly plantation workers, still had not been granted citizenship, many of them continuing to be stateless. The Committee noted that Tamils without Sri Lankan citizenship, were allegedly discriminated against and did not fully enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights.

# Shelling

THE police Special Task Force (STF) launched a military operation in Batticaloa District on 23 October and advanced west from Paddiruppu bridge to Porativu. Local people say the STF burned some houses and shops in Porativu. The operation was accompanied by shell attacks from Kurukkalamadam STF camp. Sathasivam Kamalanathan and Thambimuthu Maheswaran of Ambilanthurai were killed by shells. Eight people, including one year-old Bayata and five year-old Gajan were wounded.

The military shelled Ambilanthurai on a number of occasions in the nights in October. Security forces fired shells at Central Camp in Amparai District in

early October, damaging buildings. A large number of people fled the area seeking safety. In a letter to President Chandrika, local associations have called on her to intervene and stop indiscriminate military attacks on civilians. Batticaloa MP Joseph Pararajasingham has urged her to order an investigation into the civilian deaths. Mr Pararajasingham says that he has brought many such incidents to the notice of the President, but no action has been taken.

The Army shot dead vegetable vendor B Uthayakumar near Iyankerni on 18 October alleging that he was an LTTE member and attempted to throw a grenade. His relatives have denied that he had any link with the Tigers.



## 'Agreements are designed to prevent terrorist fundraising' Italy signs refugee return agreement

ITALY returned 200 Sri Lankans to Colombo on 5 October, all of whom were taken into custody by the police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for enquiry. Six days later, a further 88 people were deported to Sri Lanka. The CID took them also into custody at the Colombo airport.

The deportations came after Italian and Sri Lankan governments signed an agreement on 24 September for the return of Sri Lankans 'who do not have the right to enter or remain' in Italy. A press release by the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry says that the two countries agreed to protect the safety and dignity of persons being returned.

Sri Lanka has entered into similar agreements with four other European nations and the Foreign Ministry says negotiations with the European Commission on a multilateral agreement on rejected asylum seekers are underway. The Ministry also says that "these agreements are designed to discourage,

inter alia, human smuggling that provides a ready source for fundraising on foreign soil by terrorist groups and their sympathizers operating abroad". Sri Lanka has said that it has also signed a return agreement with Britain, but the details are unknown. Sources say that a Norwegian team would be visiting Sri Lanka on 13 December for an assessment of the situation to return refugees.

These are underway while the fighting between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE continues and human rights violations are committed in the context of the war. Sri Lankan government measures for improvement have been inadequate and the security forces continue to violate human rights with impunity.

Although the state of Emergency lapsed in July, the security forces in southern areas continued to demand proof of police registration. Four Tamils from Batticaloa were arrested by police on 2 October in Mount Lavinia for non-registration. Three other Batticaloa resi-

dents were detained in Kandy in early October for the same reason. Resident of Haputale in the Hill Country, A Jeyaraj was taken into custody in Colombo by the Airforce in early November. S Sathiyakumar from Ratnapura was also arrested when he came to Colombo for employment.

The police say that Tiger cadre continue to infiltrate southern areas and security has been tightened in the run-up to LTTE's annual *Great Heroes Week* in November and the general elections scheduled for 5 December.

Two policemen and a civilian were killed by a suicide bomber on Chitra Lane in Havelock Town suburb in Colombo on 29 October. Nineteen others were wounded. Ten Tamils were arrested in this connection. Police say the LTTE may have intended to target Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake who was scheduled to travel that way. Former minister GL Peiris lives on Kirula Place, a stone's throw from Chitra Lane.

## Tamil parties form election alliance

WHILE the opposition United National Party (UNP) initiated the formation of United National Alliance (UNA) in order to accommodate defectors from the ruling People's Alliance (PA), four Tamil parties came together to establish the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) to contest the elections scheduled for 5 December. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) signed a cooperation agreement on 20 October.

Reports say that unity was forged following pressure from the Tamil people in Sri Lanka and the expatriate Tamil community. The TNA say that after the election, their demand to the new government would be to hold peace talks only with the LTTE. They would also insist on a political solution based on recognition of the right to self determination and a Tamil homeland in the north-east.

Some 10,000 local election monitors have been appointed. A 40-strong European Union monitoring team will

arrive on 15 November. But observers have expressed concern that widespread violence in the run-up to general elections by both the major political parties may have an impact on the polls. By the end of October, more than 200 violent incidents had been reported.

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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Fifteen people were injured on 29 October when Sri Lanka Muslim Congress supporters were attacked in Gampola. Former deputy minister Reggie Ranatunge was arrested on the same day after UNP supporter Lionel Rodrigo was shot in Minuwangoda. He died later in hospital. Narayanan Ravichandran was killed in Puttalam in early November allegedly by PA supporters.

Opposition members accuse the government of improper conduct to influence the voters. In mid-October, the government announced wage rise to government employees, increase in pension payments and tax cuts on fuel and cement. The opposition say that the sacking of Bribery Commissioner Rienze Arsecularatne is to facilitate the arrest of former minister SB Dissanayake on bribery charges. Mr Dissanayake crossed from the government to the opposition in early October (See October Briefing). A request from the Elections Commissioner to defer the transfer of 57 policemen was rejected by the Inspector General of Police. The opposition alleges that the transfers are politically motivated.