

HO-15
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Talks with India soon: Kadirgamar

S. S. Kadirgama

COLOMBO, JUNE 1 Sri Lanka will start talks with India "very soon" to explore the possibility of involving New Delhi in any negotiations with the LTTE to find an amicable solution to the ethnic conflict in the Jaffna Peninsula.

In a wide-ranging interview to PTI here today, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, said though it was some time since the Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, made the offer to negotiate between the Government and the LTTE, New Delhi and Colombo had not yet explored the extent to which India could get involved. "We do not know what India has in mind. That is why I say that we have not explored with each other in real detail. We would like to know in due course, what India has in mind. That can only be done by discussions between two friends. The dialogue will start soon, very soon," he said.

Mr. Singh in an interview to a TV network last month, had said that "India has never been a dishonest broker. And as to playing any role in the situation, that is a process that can only be engaged when all sides to the situation asked for it." New Delhi has also said that it was willing to discuss a revised devolution package with Colombo for the Jaffna peninsula that would go "well beyond" the

1987 Indo-Sri Lanka accord which spoke about merger of the northern and eastern provinces.

Though peace talks in the present context of heavy fighting in Jaffna appeared academic, an important issue to be settled in the event of any future agreement between the Government and the LTTE is, who would take the responsibility to enforce it, Mr. Kadirgamar said.

THE HINDU

5 2 JUN 2000

Barak's clarion call

The Israeli Prime Minister used to be proud he was not a politician. It is a weakness of that country's war heroes who go into politics. Now that he is fighting for his political life, Ehud Barak still has to prove a few points before the voters are convinced, says ERIC SILVER



Ehud Barak: Countdown begins.

another man to whom he tried to dictate. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat knows that a Right-wing Prime Minister will not give him more than the Labour leader. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is trying to make them meet in Cairo soon.

But Mr Barak should not assume that the other proud old warrior will let him write the script for him, any more than he did at the Camp David summit in July.

(The author is The Statesman's Jerusalem-based correspondent)

W 11
elected Prime Minister by 56 per cent of the nation, it has undermined him. "Mr Barak," wrote a political commentator, Sima Kadmon, in *Yediot Aharonot*, "paid for his isolation. It was not only votes he was lacking. It was also friends." Her colleague, Nahum Barnea, said: "Mr Barak used to commend himself for not being a politician. Once he was elected, it became clear he was right."

It is a weakness of Israeli war heroes who go into politics. Yitzhak Rabin, another former chief of staff, was equally isolated during his first term as Prime Minister from 1974 to 1977. He, too, despised the devious skills of his new world. Like his assassinated mentor and model, Mr Barak thought he could do it alone. The illusion of invincibility was compounded by the direct election of prime ministers, introduced before the 1996 campaign that

brought Binyamin Netanyahu to power. Both the Likud leader and his Labour successor were flattered by a popular mandate, which they thought gave them a licence to make their own policies and ignore their political bases.

In the army, you earn your rank, then issue orders which your subordinates had better obey. In politics, ego reigns. Everyone has his own agenda. There is no binding chain of command. And, as Mr Barak may soon discover, you can be unseated not only by the voters, but by your own troops.

Yet he remains a fighter. His pugnacious Knesset speech served notice that he has not given up yet. As in the ill-fated negotiations with the Palestinians and the Syrians, he is going for broke: a peace agreement that will convince a conflict-weary electorate that he is still the best man for the job. If

he is to reverse opinion polls, which show Mr Netanyahu 14 percentage points ahead, he will need the cooperation of

right-wing protesters mask demonstrating in Jerusalem last week. — AP/PTI

3/12
BEFORE going to the Knesset on Tuesday night, to announce he was ready to face the electorate, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and his wife, Nava, toured the northern part of the country, glad-handing village elders, patting school children on the head, marvelling at their computer skills.

Back in Jerusalem, MPs were feverishly counting heads for and against early elections, cooking up ingenious formulas for saving or sinking the government. The Prime Minister, fighting for his political life, drove home with the insouciance of the undercover

warrior he used to be — and took a nap. When he finally made it to the parliament building at 6 pm, he locked himself away with six of his cronies. He neither consulted, nor confided in senior government and Labour party colleagues. They were as astonished as everyone else when he stood up and declared: "If you want elections, I'm ready."

It was the kind of arrogance that earned the pudgy ex-General, Israel's most decorated soldier, the nickname "Napoleon." It worked in the army. Mr Barak was a brave and inventive commander. But, over the 18 months since he was

THE STATESMAN
3 DEC 2000

Jaswant rules out UN role in Lanka

Singapore, June 2

INDIAN FOREIGN Minister Jaswant Singh today ruled out a role for the United Nations in war-torn Sri Lanka and reiterated that New Delhi would only get involved in the conflict there if asked by Colombo.

"I personally do not see a role for the United Nations as such," Singh said at a question-and-answer session after a speech on 'India and regional security' in Singapore.

But Singh, in Singapore on a three-day official visit, said India was seeking greater Commonwealth involvement to end the crisis in Fiji. He said UN involvement in Sri Lanka had so far been restricted to humanitarian aid under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"We cannot independently assume for ourselves a role in Sri

Lanka that is not at the request of the Sri Lanka Government," Singh said, when asked if India would consider intervention.

Singh said India was in touch with the Norwegian special envoy, who was trying to broker efforts to stop the ethnic bloodshed and had offered advice. Commonwealth can act on Fiji unlike the hands-off stance on Sri Lanka, Singh advocated greater international involvement in the crisis in Fiji, where the elected government of Mahendra Chaudhry was overthrown in a coup last month.

India is in talks with other Commonwealth countries, including Australia and New Zealand, to get the group to act on the crisis. Singh said an Indian envoy dispatched for talks with authorities in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji was due to arrive in Fiji today.

(Reuters)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUN 2000

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9/6

Czech-model, solution to Tamils' issue: Karunanidhi

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By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JUNE 3. In a dramatically major shift in the DMK's approach to resolve the Sri Lankan Tamils issue, the party president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, tonight said Sri Lanka should either agree for a 'territorial separation' on the lines of the Czech and Slovakia republics or grant more rights to the Tamils to enable a "permanent solution" to the ethnic strife there.

Asserting that there was "nothing wrong" in making this suggestion "on behalf of the DMK if not on the behalf of the Tamil Nadu people, as other political parties have different views," he mooted the Czechoslovakian model of a "completely peaceful resolution without shedding a drop of blood" to resolve the Sri Lankan crisis.

Dwelling at some length on the situation in the wake of the latest escalation of the conflict, he said a "question of self-respect" was at stake if a free republic could not protect itself.

Replying to felicitations at a

DMK-organised public meeting here to mark his 77th birthday, Mr. Karunanidhi said the ethnic problem was neither a result of an externally-induced enmity nor an external aggression. It was from within the forces in that country and the strife had so far claimed nearly 60,000 lives, most of whom were Tamils.

Likening the internal divide in Sri Lanka to a sort of extreme bitterness in a marital relationship, he said, "we must also consider how long one could put up with an unwilling wife." The world had entered a new era when shedding blood was disliked, he said before quoting the Czechoslovakian example of a bloodless resolution of an ethnic conflict.

Alternatively, the Sri Lankan Government should concede more powers to the Tamils there and "begin afresh their marital life," Mr. Karunanidhi said and asked why the Island Government was reluctant to devolve greater autonomy to the Tamils. "Tamils, after all do have their own identity and culture," he emphasised.

Reiterating the DMK Govern-

ment's position that India should not give any military assistance to Sri Lanka even if that Government was to explicitly seek it, Mr. Karunanidhi said it was pointless to send Indian troops there either just because Sri Lanka "looked for a morale booster from us".

- 4 JUN 2000

TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2000

HD-12
AN IRRESPONSIBLE STANCE

THE TAMIL NADU Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi's recent pitch on Sri Lanka is unwarranted and unwelcome. To have argued that Sri Lanka should agree for a separation on the model of Czechoslovakia (in the event that Tamils are not granted more rights) is to peddle a solution that is, at best, very vague and, at worst, extremely irresponsible. In the absence of specifying exactly what additional "rights" he has in mind, the suggestion is decidedly ambiguous. But this is the least of the problems. Far more important is the not-so-oblique endorsement of the idea of the island nation being divided along ethnic lines. This runs contrary to India's commitment to a united Sri Lanka, a position which has been the cornerstone of the country's foreign policy since the mid-Eighties. It also runs foul of what is often unstated but is arguably a concomitant of the above position — namely, that the establishment of Eelam would be against India's larger interests in the South Asia region. What if leaders of other countries were to make similar suggestions about Kashmir or parts of the Northeast? A Chief Minister who heads a party that is an important constituent of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government ought to have considered such things before speaking his mind.

At another level, Mr. Karunanidhi's suggestion that the island nation could be divided on the lines of Czechoslovakia glosses over some important differences. The establishment of the two sovereign entities, the Czech and Slovak republics, was bloodless and was the result of a considerable degree of political consensus; the constitutional dissolution of the federation was agreed upon in the early Nineties only after the leading parties on both sides of the political and geographical divide tried to reach a compromise about the country's future. The situation is totally different in Sri Lanka,

where the Government is engaged in a brutal conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) — a powerful Pol Potist-type organisation that has ruthlessly destroyed its rivals, that is unwilling to see reason and that behaves as if it is the sole representative of the Tamil community.

Traditionally, Mr. Karunanidhi's DMK has drawn a distinction between the broader Tamil movement in Sri Lanka and the LTTE. But to float the idea of two nations at a time when the LTTE is militarily ascendant and when the Sri Lankan Government is struggling to retain control of the island's Jaffna peninsula amounts to playing right into the hands of the militant organisation. It is no surprise at all that those Tamil Nadu parties which entertain a misplaced sympathy for the LTTE — particularly, the MDMK and the PMK — have rushed to welcome Mr. Karunanidhi's suggestion. Lately, these two minor allies of the NDA have been engaging in patent doublespeak — loudly supporting the cause of a Tamil Eelam, on the one hand, and endorsing the stance adopted by the Union Government, on the other. Such contradictory positions are a direct result of seeking to pander to a chauvinistic political constituency in Tamil Nadu while, at the same time, wanting to remain in the Union Government. The belief that there is considerable support within Tamil Nadu for the LTTE or Eelam is one of the myths that a number of political parties in the State continue to subscribe to. One result of this is a game of competitive politics or the phenomenon of political parties vying with each other to play what they regard as the Sri Lankan Tamil card. If Mr. Karunanidhi (who successfully urged the MDMK to call off its rally in support of "Eelam Tamils" only last week) was playing the same game when he advanced the idea of a Czech-type separation, it is a regrettable thing indeed.

THE HINDU

6 JUN 2000

Govt. does not see eye to eye with Karunanidhi on Eelam suggestion

The Times of India News Service
and Agencies of Lanka

LONDON: Two Israeli-made Dovra class fast-moving Naval craft of the Sri Lankan navy were sunk in a major sea battle with a flotilla of LTTE suicide gunboats on Monday off the north-eastern Vettalaikerni coast near Jaffna.

While one naval craft sank after being hit by the rebels' fire, another, which went to its rescue, came within the range of heavy aerial bombardment carried out by Sri Lankan Air Force warplanes, reports reaching here from the war zone said.

In New Delhi, the Union government asserted that there was "no change" in its position that it was against the creation of Eelam, a separate Tamil state.

"There is no change in our position," a foreign office spokesman told reporters when the government's view was sought on Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanid-

hi's reported remarks that Sri Lanka should either devolve more rights to the Tamils or follow the Czech model where the ethnic communities of Czech and Slovaks had agreed to a territorial separation.

The Congress party criticised Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi for favouring the balkanisation of Sri Lanka and said this only revealed the divisions among the constituents of the ruling National Democratic Alliance.

Talking to newsmen, AICC general secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad asked Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee to clarify whether he agreed with the formulation of Mr Karunanidhi that the island nation should be divided on the lines of the erstwhile Czechoslovakia.

The BJP and the Samata Party also refused to endorse Mr Karunanidhi's suggestion, even as they called for greater autonomy for the region dominated by the ethnic Tamils. "We do not stand for a sepa-

rate Tamil state, dividing Sri Lanka, but we strongly support greater autonomy to meet the aspirations of the Tamils on the island," BJP general secretary S.P. Gautam said.

He suggested the immediate resumption of talks between the Lankan government and the LTTE to pave the way for a peaceful solution to the current armed conflict. "Mr Karunanidhi has also talked of devolution as a means of ending the strife," Mr Gautam said.

Samata president Jaya Jaitley said conditions should be created for a dialogue to recognise the "fair and just" demands of the Tamils by devolution. "Talks should start," she said.

In Colombo, the army said that four rebels were killed in sporadic clashes between rebels and army units in the Jaffna peninsula on Saturday. Troops also destroyed an LTTE vehicle with artillery fire.

► See Edit: Divorce, DMK-style, Page 10

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 6 JUN 2000

DMK chief out on a please-all mission

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, June 5

BY MOOTING the Czechoslovakian model of separation for Sri Lanka's warring ethnic groups, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi appears to be on a course to please all and prevent the Opposition from pinning him down on the issue.

Did Mr Karunanidhi make the statement because he discerned revival of support in Tamil Nadu for the suffering Tamils in Sri Lanka?

Although, there is no sympathy for the LTTE since the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the plight of 100,000 people in refugee camps in Tamil Nadu is a sob story. Since the latest developments, the local media has again begun to highlight it in the wake of plans in New Delhi to help Colombo with an evacuation mission.

Certainly, Mr Karunanidhi, who built his politics as a champion of the Tamil pride, cannot afford to be accused of betraying the Sri Lankan Tamils' cause when the Assembly polls are nine months away.

DMK leaders say, however, that it is not the first time that Mr Karunanidhi has mentioned the Czech model. They believe that he indicated this to Prime Minister A B Vajpayee when they met recently.

That was when Mr Vajpayee told

Centre's no to Eelam

INDIA'S OFFICIAL position on the on-going Sri Lanka crisis remains unchanged despite the NDA's Tamil partners pulling it the other way. The painstakingly crafted policy of the Vajpayee Government, which calls for a solution to the Tamil problem within the territorial unity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka, now appears endangered by the DMK supremo, Dr K. Karunakaran, calling for a Czechoslovakia-like solution.

The spokesman for the Ministry of External Affairs said on Monday that the Prime Minister had reiterated on Sunday in Manali that India would not mediate unless called by both the parties to the conflict and also that New Delhi would not recognise a Tamil Eelam. "The Government does not wish to comment on the position of particular political parties," he added. When asked if the Sri Lanka Government had taken cognisance of Dr Karunakaran's statement, the spokesman said the Indian High Commission in Colombo had not been approached for any clarification.



HTC, New Delhi

him about the need for New Delhi to prepare for a cease-fire and ship out the stranded soldiers if Colombo called for help.

By striking a statesman-like approach, Mr Karunanidhi granted "free hand" to the Centre to please the BJP and prevented his rival, AIADMK chief Jayalalitha, from reviving her old charge that his party has links to the LTTE.

After all, Mr Karunanidhi has never forgotten his nightmare in 1991. His government was dismissed by the Chandra Shekhar

Government (under the pressure from the Congress and the AIADMK) on the ground that it had allowed the LTTE to have a free run.

No sooner had he supported New Delhi's line, he startled everyone by his second statement that he would be happy if the Tamils got Eelam either through armed conflict or negotiations but the LTTE would not be allowed to get a foothold in Tamil Nadu.

This was to show that the DMK was not giving up the Tamils' cause

but was distanced from the Tigers.

A few days later, he again turned his ire on the LTTE's credentials to speak on behalf of the Tamils when it had killed other Tamils. He went to remind that the AIADMK under the late MGR supported the LTTE. The Tigers had once refused to accept money from his party, whereas the DMK's support was for Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) whose leaders were annihilated by the LTTE.

When pro-LTTE MDMK announced a rally in support of Eelam Tamils to be held on June 5, Mr Karunanidhi employed an emotional appeal to Mr Vaiko to call it off, saying controversies should be avoided.

That very night, however, as a sop to the local sentiments, he came out with his proposal. Sri Lanka should either agree for territorial separation without further bloodshed on the lines of the Czech and Slovakia republics or grant more rights to the Tamils to enable a permanent solution to the strife there.

Other allies say Mr Karunanidhi's Czech model plan is to please the MDMK and the PMK after they told him that he could not remain a silent spectator to the Tamils' cause when Colombo was reviving its military option.

An embarrassed BJP promptly asked its Tamil Nadu unit leaders to reiterate its policy on Sri Lanka.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUN 2 2000

Split will lead to Balkanisation of India, says Lanka Minister

AGENCIES

COLOMBO, JUNE 5

THE Sri Lankan government today said that any attempt to partition Sri Lanka between Sinhalese and Tamil communities, as suggested by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanadhi, would result in 'Balkanisation' of India.

Reacting to the suggestion made by Karunanidhi yesterday at Chennai that Sri Lanka should be separated on the lines of Czech and Slovakia, carved out from the former republic of Czechoslovakia, cabinet spokesman and media Minister Mangala Samaraweera said that any division of the island nation would result in yet another partition of India.

Answering a question he said perhaps Karunanidhi has made such a comment without having full knowledge of attempts being made by the government to restore e

No talks: Chandrika

TOUGHENING her stand, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga has ruled out immediate talks with the LTTE and said that any future peace dialogue would be on her conditions as the rebels have "lied and deceived" the international community.

She, however, refused to divulge the conditions saying the government would "consider" them when the time was ripe.

Tamil citizens, which included formulation of a new Constitution to provide autonomous powers to Tamil province.

Samaraweera made the above comments to a group of Colombo foreign correspondents, while announcing the easing of censorship on the foreign media

majority of foreign correspondents reported with responsibility and restraint and promised to lift the restrictions on the local media in a month or two depending on the military situation in northern Jaffna peninsula, where army was battling out a counter offensive by the LTTE to recapture the peninsula.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan security forces have bolstered security around one of the country's holiest Buddhist shrines which houses a tree reputed to be the world's oldest, an AFP report from Anuradhapura has said.

The shrine's holiest monk, Pallegama Siri Sumana Dhamma Rakkhita, told AFP today the government had deployed extra police and army troopers to guard the temple following a sharp escalation in the country's civil war.

"Tamils, Sinhalese, Muslims, and Christians

er the same) ON PAGE 2

Split will lead to Balkanisation of India, says Lanka Minister

umbrella. It was always very friendly. Now that has changed," he said.

Each of the 2,000 daily visitors are searched twice, with no exceptions, and Rakkhita said increased security at the Sri Maha Bodhi temple meant photography around the Bo tree was banned.

The Bo tree dates back 23 centuries, and according to Buddhist teachings was brought to Sri Lanka from India as a sapling from the tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment.

In 1985, Tamil Tiger rebels slaughtered three Buddhist monks and 25 worshippers at the shrine at the start of a killing spree which left another 100 people dead in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka's North.

Meanwhile in New Delhi, Opposition parties today assailed DMK Chief M Karunanidhi's suggestion for division of Sri Lanka saying it went contrary to India's view on the matter and showed "lack of cohesion" within the ruling NDA.

AICC General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad said it was strange that DMK, an important constituent of ruling NDA, should have made such a statement and demanded a clarification from the Prime Minister on the NDA's position on the issue.

Stating that the Congress was against division of Sri Lanka, he said the party wanted a solution to the ethnic issue while maintaining

territorial integrity and sovereignty of the island nation.

The CPI-M polit bureau said it was surprising that government was "silent" on DMK's view as it was contrary to that of India.

Demanding that the Centre condemn the stand taken by DMK, PMK and MDMK for the creation of a separate Tamil Eelam, the party said the division of Sri Lanka and creation of a Eelam would have dangerous consequences in the region and serious implications for India.

BJP President Kushabhau Thakre said his party wanted a solution to the problem within the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and said the views expressed by Karunanidhi should be taken in the context of the fact that the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka would directly affect Tamil Nadu.

Thakre said there were no differences within NDA on the Vajpayee Government's stand that India will not interfere militarily in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. The allies have supported the government stand on this, he added.

Meanwhile, the Lankan Government today lifted its 32-day-old censorship on foreign media but maintained the restrictions on the local media. The restrictions on media coverage of the war in Jaffna were imposed on both foreign and local media on May three after LTTE made a series of gains in its offensive to re-capture the northern peninsula.

INDIAN EXPRESS

7 JUN 2000

Focus of talks will be up to Lanka: Jaswant

Colombo, June 11

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh, who arrived in Colombo today, said that he was visiting the country on the invitation of Sri Lanka and his talks would depend on the issues that the Sri Lankan leaders "focus upon".

Speaking briefly to television crews at the Bandaranaike international airport after his arrival, Mr Singh said he was visiting Colombo as a friend of Sri Lanka and on the invitation of the Sri Lankan Government.

"My focus (during the talks) would be what the Sri Lankan President and Foreign Minister decide to set the focus upon," he said.

"Asked what would be the issues he would like to highlight during his visit, Mr Singh said "friendship with Sri Lanka and friendship with peace".

Soon after his arrival here, Mr Singh had a meeting with Colombo-based Indian diplomats after which he left for an unscheduled meeting with his Lankan counterpart Lakshman Kadirgamar. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JUN 2000

Karunanidhi hits out at critics, defends advice on partitioning Lanka

The Times of India News Service

CHENNAI: Responding to criticism in India and across the Palk Straits of his suggestion of a Czech-Slovak type partition of Sri Lanka to end the ethnic problem there, Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi on Tuesday came out with a five-page statement defending his suggestion.

Mr Karunanidhi said his "hasty critics" would do better to emerge from their ivory towers and check out the ground realities in Sri Lanka.

Saying there was nothing wrong in suggesting a political solution to Sri Lanka, Mr Karunanidhi contended, "Talking of a temporary settlement without equal rights to Tamils amounts to prolonging the problem."

He said his advice was in the interests of permanent peace in India's backyard. "I know more than anybody else that nobody has the right to advise a country to divide itself. But there should be a distinction between those who talk of Sri Lanka's unity sitting in air-conditioned luxury over a world map and those who know the ground realities."

His view, he claimed, was based on humanitarian grounds and not linguistic chauvinism. Sri Lankan soldiers were tired of fighting, he observed.

There was a lack of political will to end the conflict, leading to exacerbated mutual bitterness over the last 25 years, he said, suggesting that the Lankan government should try a quasi-federal, confederal set-up or a Czech-Slovak type of separation.

"Please select one of these avenues and stop the war. Stop making refugees of the people and creating hardship for Tamil Nadu. Let there be peace in India's backyard. This is my appeal," Mr Karunanidhi said.

He claimed his suggestion only strengthened the view held by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee that the ethnic crisis should end peacefully and equal rights should be given to Eelam Tamils.

The Tamils in Sri Lanka were not just labourers, but ancient inhabitants, and their rights had been taken away after Independence, he said, citing Scotland and Wales as examples in connection with devolution of power.

Mr Karunanidhi said his CPM

critics were fork-tongued.

In New Delhi, the BJP brushed aside Colombo's remarks that any attempt to partition Sri Lanka, as suggested by Mr Karunanadhi, would result in the "balkanisation" of India, saying, "India is strong enough to face any eventuality."

Reacting to the remark of Sri Lankan media minister Mangala Samaraweera that any division of the island nation would result in yet another partition of India, BJP vice-president J.P. Mathur said, "Not a single part of India is going to break away. We have had the experience of Partition and seen that

there was no peace between the two countries (India and Pakistan)."

Discounting differences between the BJP and its ally the DMK, Mr Mathur said he did not want to attribute any motives to the statement by Mr Karunanidhi, "But the DMK has its own compul-

sions."

In Chennai, opting to duck the tricky Sri Lankan issue, defence minister George Fernandes chose to stick to the Centre's view, but warned National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners that they should maintain a certain discipline.

"What the NDA expects is discipline in action, but there is no censorship on opinion," Mr Fernandes said.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, the Centre on Tuesday reiterated that its position on upholding the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka was "consistent, well-known and unchanged".



M. Karunanidhi

THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 7 JUN 2000

My suggestion a right medicine: Karunanidhi

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JUNE 6. The DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, today defended his Czechoslovakia-type solution to the Sri Lankan crisis, asserting that any "mutually agreed" political solution by the parties to the conflict should not pose any danger to India or Southeast Asia.

Lashing out at the "hasty critics", Mr. Karunanidhi urged that Sri Lanka end the war. It should hammer out a permanent political settlement agreeable to both sides, one way or the other, as the military option was no acceptable solution.

"It is one thing to sit in a cozy air-conditioned room and affirm that Sri Lanka should not be split, but an altogether different thing to speak bearing ground realities in mind," he said in a statement here. "I realise that a citizen of one country has no right to moot partition of another country, but what is the situation prevailing in Sri Lanka?" he asked.

Mr. Karunanidhi hoped that "ivory-tower theorists" would come down and see his remarks in their totality. "How long could the civil war in Sri Lanka continue, how many more should die on both sides and how many thousands should come to Tamil Nadu as refugees?" he asked. It was in view of these concerns, "I have been saying that only a political solution will work." Asserting that a political solution could involve either a 'quasi-federal' or 'confederal' set-up devolving more powers to the Tamils there or the Czechoslovakia way, Mr. Karunanidhi maintained that his proposal was based not on any "linguistic chauvinism", but on humanitarianism. Sri Lanka could choose from any of the three alternatives to find a permanent political solution, so that peace prevailed in India's backyard.

"This will be a right medicine, even if it is bitter, to permanently cure the plague of ethnic enmity and hatred festering for more than a quarter century," he said, adding his proposal only streng-

thened the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee's recent statement that Sri Lanka should give up its "anti-Tamil policies".

Tracing the genesis of the ethnic conflict to a cluster of factors, commencing from the non-honouring of the Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam pact, the declaration of 'Sinhala only' as the official language and the gradual deprivation of educational and

to resort to a different method after "massive repression" was unleashed on them by the Sri Lankan Government, he said.

Arguing against any interim solution, Mr. Karunanidhi said the clamour for freedom was respected worldwide. Even Britain had solved the centuries-old problem relating to Scotland and Wales by devolving more powers.

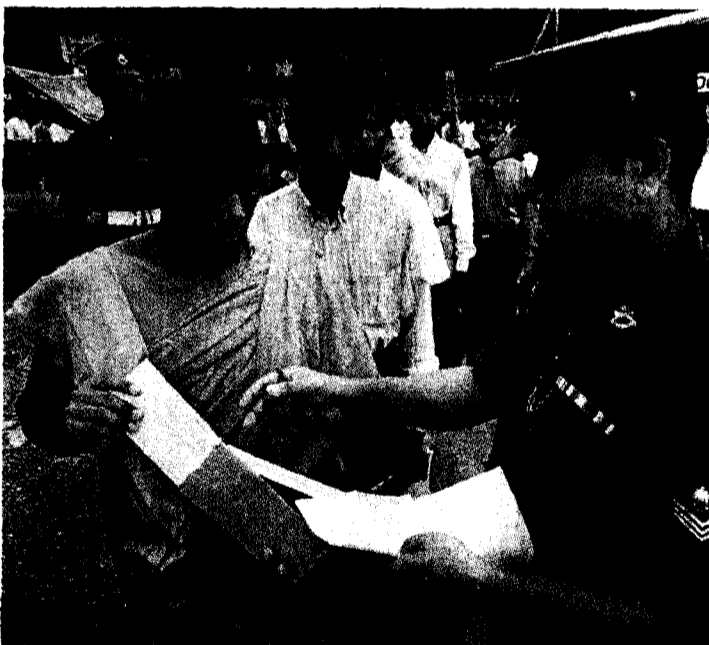
Adverting to the hawkish stance of the Buddhist clergy and the reported desertions from the Sri Lankan armed forces, Mr. Karunanidhi said sending "mercenary forces" whenever the island Government was in deep trouble would not help in finding a lasting and purposeful solution to the problem.

Mr. Karunanidhi also ridiculed his "communist friends" who accused him of indulging in double-talk over this issue. "I don't belong to a party which changed its policy from even district to district," he said.

Govt. stand unchanged, Fernandes on DMK's compulsions: Page 13

job opportunities for the island Tamils, Mr. Karunanidhi said the Tamils had not gone there as "coolies". They were among its "original inhabitants".

Amidst erosion of basic rights, the island Tamils ultimately found their voting rights also restricted. They initially took to the peaceful Gandhian path, but had



Vadharankada Sobitha, a 19-year-old Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, hands over his papers to an army officer at a military recruitment centre in Colombo on Tuesday. Sobitha said he is willing to shed his robes to fight the rebels "as saving the country is a greater priority than spreading religion". — Reuters

THE HINDU

27 JUN 2000

Unlike last time, India should get involved in Sri Lanka only if the conflict affects its security interests

Island of day before

By J. N. DIXIT

THE FOCUS of the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka has been on ground realities and on the Indian reactions so far. It is equally relevant to examine the context of Sri Lanka's tragedy after the withdrawal of the IPKF and what the Sri Lankan Government's substantive expectations are from India.

The period between 1989 and 1994 when President Premadasa's UNP Government was in power was characterised by Premadasa and the LTTE leadership playing a cat and mouse game. Premadasa's scheme was to pretend to do a deal with the LTTE on the basis of removing the Indian military pressure on them. Once the Indian Army moved out of Sri Lanka, Premadasa had hoped to militarily overcome the LTTE.

Premadasa's ploy succeeded partially when the IPKF pulled out in 1990. The LTTE had, however, seen through his plans and successfully resisted the military campaign against it. Negotiations for a political solution during 1990-94 proved abortive as Premadasa's objective was to dilute even the concessions promised to Tamils in the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution. The LTTE, instead, became more committed to its separatist aspirations. It brought this chapter to an end by assassinating Premadasa in May 1993.

The Government of Chandrika Kumaratunga hoped to make a new beginning. It had the advantage of not being a part of any of the political negotiations and military conflicts from 1987 onwards. Kumaratunga undertook a serious exercise for negotiations from the end of 1994 almost till the end of 1998. The proposals which she put forward for resolving the ethnic problem between 1995 and 1998 reflected a greater sincerity about devolving power to the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka and decentralising administrative and financial authority.

Her proposals, however, had a major shortcoming in pulling back from the previous commitment on the merger of the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka into a Tamil homeland and creating a Tamil government in that region. She could not avoid this modification of the earlier devolvement package because of the demands of the Sinhala and Muslim populations of eastern provinces of Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai — that they did not wish to be merged into a

in Jaffna. The prospects would be of an intense civil war situation with the likelihood of the Tamil areas breaking away from Sri Lankan polity.

What did Sri Lanka really expect from India over the last four weeks and what does it expect now? What it would have really liked was effective military assistance from India backing up the Sri Lankan forces in Jaffna. Though such a request has not been conveyed formally, there have been repeated informal suggestions from the Sri Lankan authorities that India consider sending its military forces to Sri Lanka.

Given India's serious reluctance to send in its forces again, the Sri Lankan authorities would have at least liked substantive support from the Indian Navy or Air Force to neutralise the LTTE offensive. Both these options have been ruled out by India due to the IPKF experience as well as the factor of Tamil Nadu politics not endorsing any intervention and support to the Sinhalese.

So it is a disappointed Colombo which has tentatively and informally suggested assistance of other categories — evacuation of Sri Lankan troops with Indian help if the situation demands, India joining the Norwegian initiative to bring about quick negotiations, and India persuading the Tigers, through LTTE contacts in Tamil Nadu, to come to the negotiating table.

Highly contradictory views have come to the fore. There was the view that India should not commit the mistake of the IPKF. There was also the view that given our security concerns regarding Pakistan and China and related defence expenditure, India should not take on additional regional security responsibilities. Then there was the view that if India is committed to the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, it should not back-peddle from giving full political and military support to Colombo.

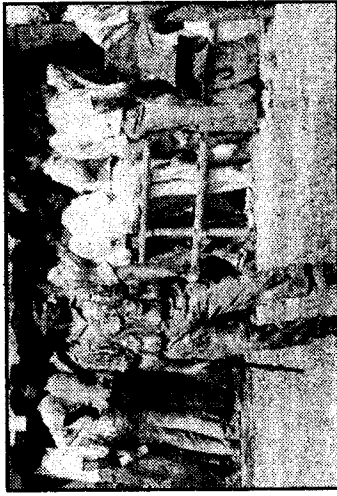
There was even the view that India should not hesitate to undertake military operations against the LTTE to avenge the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and its killing a large number of Indian soldiers. Another view is that the break up of Sri Lanka with the creation of an independent Tamil state need not be a matter of concern to India.

Sri Lankan reactions to the prospects of any possible Indian re-intervention in Sri Lankan affairs are equally complex. Foreign Minister Kadirgamar has declared that the UN getting involved in Lankan affairs without Colombo's consent would be serious interference which will not be tolerated. Former Sri Lankan ambassador to the UN, Stanley Kalpage, thinks no organisation or country has the right to meddle in the internal affairs of another country. There have been formal objections in Sri Lanka to the resolution passed by the EU Parliament in Brussels suggesting that the ethnic crisis be brought to the notice of the UN for action.

Most importantly, whatever compulsions there are for the Sri Lankan Government asking for India's military support, the reality is that segments of the Sri Lankan Government and Sinhalese majority would be critical of any Indian intervention. They would like Indian military support only as a short-term convenience, not for a solution of the ethnic problem. The LTTE is equally opposed to Indian interference. When one takes all these contradictory opinions into account and adds to them the LTTE's undilutable commitment to Eelam, prospects of a durable solution seem remote. All that can be achieved could be a temporary ceasefire which has happened more than once in Sri Lanka over the last 15 years.

New Delhi's policies so far have been practical, measured and conscious about the limitations under which all parties concerned are functioning. We are politically supportive of the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka, but according to both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government, they wish to decide the issue between themselves by alternating military and political interaction. We should leave it at that for the present.

India should become operationally active only if the fall out of the Sri Lankan conflict tangibly and directly affects India's territorial integrity and security interests.



'Compulsions behind suggestion'

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JUNE 6. The Union Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, today hinted that local political compulsions could have weighed with the DMK leader, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, in advocating a Czechoslovakian-type of peaceful, territorial separation to the Sri Lankan Tamils issue, but asserted that there was no change in the Centre's stand.

"The Centre is not going to intervene in any way in Sri Lanka, unless both parties made a request for some sort of assistance on humanitarian grounds," Mr. Fernandes told reporters here, responding to queries on the fallout of Mr. Karunanidhi's proposal.

The NDA's commitment was to the common programme they had agreed to, Mr. Fernandes said and added that in response to national or international situations, individual constituents might have their own views and there was no agreement that "they need not articulate their views".

Parties have "their own constituencies" and might have to cater for them, but what was important in a coalition was, "one has to act together", he added.

He said Mr. Karunanidhi, whose party had done "yeoman service" at both the State and Central levels, needed no advice "from us".

There was no proposal either to convene an NDA meeting to discuss the issue. Asked whether he agreed with Mr. Karunanidhi's proposal, Mr. Fernandes said, "my view is the Government of India's view".

Partition no solution: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 6. The BJP has reacted strongly to a warning by a Sri Lankan Minister that any partition of Sri Lanka will start a process of balkanisation of India. The strong roots of democracy in India will simply not allow that to happen, it says.

While the party has already rejected the suggestion made by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, that partition is the only long-lasting political so-

lution to ethnic strife on the island, it has also condemned the idea that the Sri Lankan crisis could trigger a separatist demand in India.

"Yes, the solution in Sri Lanka has to be a political one," Mr. J.P. Mathur, vice-president, asserted today, "but partition of the country is not the solution". Over 50 years ago, India was partitioned but it did not bring peace to the subcontinent. At the same time, he pointed out, all those who had been predicting balkanisation of India for the last 50 years had been proved wrong.

Mr. Mathur said that under no circumstances would India fall apart. For years people in the West and elsewhere had been predicting its balkanisation. At the height of the naxal movement in the Sixties and Seventies, the West predicted India would break up into small pieces. But that did not happen. "The strength lies in our vibrant democracy, and those who say that the crisis in Sri Lanka would trigger a problem of balkanisation here are wholly mistaken."

Clarify stand, Cong. tells PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 6. The Congress(I) today called upon the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to clarify the Government's stand on the Sri Lanka crisis in unambiguous terms, to clear the bad blood caused by the "avoidable and unguarded comments of his allies like the MDMK and the DMK. "The hawkish posture of the BJP's allies had created avoidable confusion", said Mr. Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, senior leader and CWC member.

Accusing the Government of squandering the longstanding goodwill between New Delhi and Colombo because of its "ambivalence and inept handling," Mr. Mukherjee called upon it to display heightened sensitivity, by taking into consideration regional security and India's own strategic interests. Mr. Mukherjee also took the Vajpayee Government to task for what he termed its "slow and utterly inadequate" response to

the crisis in Fiji and called upon it to take the initiative for convening a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth countries, to impose sanctions against the Pacific Island country.

Karunanidhi's remark dangerous: Mulayam

By Our Staff Reporter

CHENNAI, JUNE 6. The Samajwadi Party leader, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, today termed "very dangerous" the suggestion of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, advocating separation of Sri Lanka on the Czech model. Noting that Sri Lanka was the first to support India during the Chinese aggression, he said such suggestions would be unjust to a "friendly neighbour".

Asserting that he was not in favour of Indian military intervention in the island, Mr. Yadav lambasted the Centre for not making clear its stand on the issue "much earlier". Noting that India's prolonged silence had only aggravated the confusion, he said the Centre should have intervened and resolved the crisis amicably by holding parleys.

Mr. Mulayam Singh was in Chennai leading a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals.

Govt. firm on its stand on Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI, JUNE 6. The Centre said today that its position on upholding the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka "is consistent, well-known and unchanged".

Sri Lanka had reacted strongly to the DMK chief and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi's remarks warning any division of the island nation would result in "balkanisation" of India.

"Any division of Sri Lanka would result in yet another partition of India," the Media Minister and Cabinet spokesman, Mr. M. Samaraweera, told foreign correspondents in Colombo. "The position of the Government of India on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is consistent, well-known and unchanged," a Foreign Office spokesman said. — PTI

PM calls Cabinet committee meet on Lanka, Maran special invitee

Jay Raina
New Delhi, June 7

AMID CONTINUING confusion triggered by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi's changed stance over Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has convened a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Thursday evening.

DMK party's nominee at the Centre, Industry and Commerce Minister Murasoli Maran, has been asked to attend the meeting as a special invitee. Mr Maran's presence in tomorrow's CCS meeting assumes significance in the light of Mr Karunanidhi's recent statements and earlier reservations over the exclusion of his party from Mr Vajpayee's high-level discussions over the Sri Lankan crisis.

The DMK Chief's support to an independent Tamil Eelam as part of a political solution to the ongoing crisis has already evoked very sharp reaction in the Island nation.

Informed sources said the CCS meeting is aimed at distancing the NDA Government from Mr Karunanidhi's latest utterances and reiterate India's known stand wherein any kind of a military intervention in the ongoing conflict in the Island nation has been ruled out. The policy also commits the government to Sri Lanka's sovereignty even while seeking fair play to the Tamil minority within a unified nation.

The meeting is also billed to clear the misgivings in Colombo in the wake of Mr Karunanidhi's latest pronouncements. Earlier, in the beginning of the ongoing conflict

in Jaffna peninsula, the DMK Chief had expressed misgivings over his party's exclusion from the high-level discussions leading to the formulation of India's Sri Lankan policy. Thereafter, the Prime Minister made amends and invited Mr Karunanidhi for one-on-one discussions to ensure the DMK's support to government's Sri Lankan stance.

However, Mr Karunanidhi reversed his party's stand over the ongoing Sri Lankan crisis earlier this week by suggesting the Czechoslovakia formula wherein Tamils and Sinhalese could part ways a la the Czechs and the Slovaks. Sources close to the Prime Minister said that there was no major change in the ground situation in Jaffna peninsula warranting any shift in India's Lankan policy.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 8 JUN 2000

A distant neighbour

EXPRESS FOCUS LANKA CRISIS

One fallout of Sri Lanka's domestic conflict has been a debate on India's foreign policy management and its claim of being a regional power, says **JYOTI MALHOTRA**

TROUBLE was supposed to have come from the West, not the South. Pakistan's defeat at Kargil was meant to have created a situation akin to the humiliation of Germany after the Treaty of Versailles — leading policymakers to expect further trouble from Islamabad. It never crossed anyone's mind that Sri Lanka — that paradise island, now perhaps lost to New Delhi — would provide the ammunition to not only spark off the conflagration of a domestic debate, but also contribute to the unravelling of India's claims as a regional power.

As Karunanidhi & Co. trumpet their views on the irreconcilable differences between man and wife — Tamil and Sinhalese — and seek a Czechoslovakian remedy to

the split, other Tamil parties in Tamil Nadu, not to be left behind, issue "me too" statements. Geography seems to have got mixed up with ethnic chauvinism, just plain chauvinism with a misunderstanding of international politics.

In the last six weeks after the fall of Elephant Pass, then, as New Delhi has lurched from inaction to confusion to silence, the major casualty has been the nation's foreign policy.

At once, it has become the handmaiden of regional bossism, unable to emerge from a *chavavayuth* of its very own making, or enthrone together a military strategy that would cause little or no damage at all to its own troops.

Just like, for example, the West did so effectively in Kosovo or Russia is doing in Chechnya.

tion, 120 mm guns, tanks, etc. The refurbishing of the Sri Lankan armed forces has shown in the last week, with them not only holding on to Jaffna town and preventing the rampaging

LTTE from flying the flag at Palaly airport and Kankesanthurai port. Significantly, some areas have even been retaken from the LTTE. Analysts say that the pressure is clearly showing, with the guerrilla outfit at least partially switching from conventional warfare tactics to bombing operations — a classic giveaway in the LTTE military lexicon.

As New Delhi has stoutly resisted a hands-on policy — apart from reasons of coalition politics — the government is also believed to have been constrained by the armed forces themselves, who, remembering the ignominy the IPKF was heaped with both at home and by Colombo, has said

that it needs a specified mandate before it can do anything. But rumblings can already be heard about the government's claim to being a regional power and wanting a permanent seat on the Security Council, but unable to settle its own neighbourhood.

Tied down and contained, some analysts say that New Delhi has had no option but to let other countries, such as the US and Norway — and clearly, Oslo is directly backed by Washington as well as the European Union — play the role New Delhi has abdicated in resolving the crisis. Long-time Sri Lanka hand and professor at JNU, S D Muni, pointedly refers to the fact that "India is working in coordination with Western powers" and wonders why New Delhi has changed its mind about calling the Norwegian initiative "not a workable solution".

The argument that the government has let Oslo act as a "shock absorber" in the crisis does not wash with others. Ex-IPKF soldiers this reporter spoke to condemned the utter instability of the 1987-90 years, when diplomats, intelligence, politicians and various groups within Sri Lanka acted at cross-purposes, leading to the wasted deaths of more than 1,200 soldiers.

But many spoke heatedly in favour of a limited operation today, such as the aerial bombing of

The government is believed to have been constrained by the armed forces themselves, who, remembering the ignominy the IPKF was heaped with both at home and by Colombo, has said that it needs a specified mandate before it can do anything.

the LTTE in Jaffna, their language betraying their passionate hatred of the guerrilla outfit — that India once trained with its own weapons, which they later turned against Indian soldiers.

"The LTTE systematically annihilated the moderate Tamils, how can they represent the Tamils of Sri Lanka," ex-IPKF commander Ashok Mehta said.

But what of the Sri Lankans themselves? It is believed that Colombo, privately furious about the statements of the "Famili-

ings," from Vaiko to Karunanidhi, has nevertheless not formally protested to Delhi yet. It was left to Sri Lanka's media minister Samaraweera to talk about the "Balkanisation" of India along ethnic lines if Chennai promoted the cause of Pan-Tamilism.

One Sri Lankan analyst explained that of the three million Tamils in Sri Lanka (with a total population of 18 million), about one million Tamils lived in the Central Province — very far from Jaffna — another million lived abroad, while the third million was divided between the northern and eastern provinces. "How can Karunanidhi speak of 'peaceful separation' of Tamils from Sinhalese as in Czechoslovakia, considering they are spread all over the country? It would be a nightmare, not unlike the Partition of India in 1947, although on ethnic lines," he said.

Colombo seems relieved that the top BJP leadership is coming out against its own partner's statements.

There is even joy that the Centre's statements in favour of the "unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka" — no Eelam — have been made, also jointly with the US and Norway. Colombo, finally, feels secure that the world's remaining superpower has a stake in "moderating" the big country in the region, India.



Sri Lankan troops stop an armoured personnel carrier in the harbour town of Trincomalee in the north of the country last week. AFP photo

Effectively, India's response to Sri Lanka's cry for help has been to offer advice — moral and military — besides, humanitarian assistance. In a recent interview to a local daily, Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga scathingly referred to New Delhi's refusal to be tainted with military

association, going on to add that Colombo had then been forced to look elsewhere for help. Other Sri Lankans have pointed out that Israel, Pakistan, China, Ukraine have been major suppliers of big-ticket military items, like fighter planes, gunships and naval boats, ammunition.

DMK changes mind, decides to toe govt line on Sri Lanka

Our Political Bureau

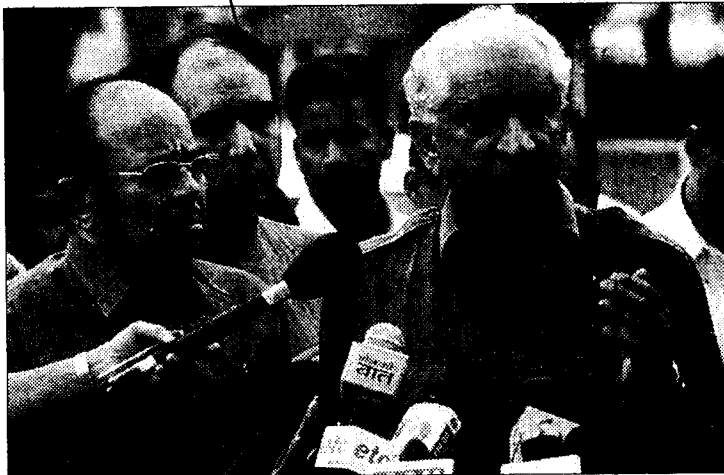
NEW DELHI 8 JUNE

SWEARING BY the NDA government at the Centre, the DMK on Thursday toed the mainstream line on Sri Lanka. An unusual presence at the Cabinet committee on security (CCS) this evening, DMK leader Murasoli Maran later said they wanted a "peaceful, strong" Sri Lanka. He said the conflict can only be solved within the parameters of the Sri Lankan constitution. The minister for external affairs, Mr Jaswant Singh, also briefed the CCS on the developments in Fiji, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.

Mr Maran insisted that the DMK chief, Mr M. Karunanidhi's statement was "blown out of proportion". He had merely made some suggestions regarding the options on the devolution package that had been structured. He complained that only one portion was lifted out of context.

Mr Maran's presence was intended to highlight DMK's support to the government and also signal to other countries that such controversial opinions only hindered mainstream government efforts.

Mr Karunanidhi's initial statement which was corroborat-



UNITED FRONT: Jaswant Singh and Murasoli Maran make their stands clear to the press in New Delhi on Thursday AFP

ed by later statements, sent jitters in Sri Lanka, prompting the media minister there to observe that Eelam would lead to another partition of India. Mr Karunanidhi's reported statements had also led to internal ferment, with questions being asked about the cohesiveness of the government. Mr Maran said the DMK was firmly behind the central government, which he colourfully described as a "rock of Gibraltar".

Mr Jaswant Singh said the

devolution package was part of the movement towards finding a lasting solution to the problem in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, in an interview to the TV programme *Aaj Tak*, said devolution was the only answer, since military solution was impossible.

"..Sri Lanka has to decide how far it can go while maintaining its territorial integrity. The government there also favours devolution of powers," he said.

The Economic Times

9 JUN 2000

Maran walks tightrope on Lanka divide

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 8: The BJP-led coalition government today managed to get the DMK to publicly fall in line with its Sri Lanka policy, but failed to make it fully retract the suggestion for partitioning the island nation to resolve the decade-old ethnic tangle.

DMK leader Murali Maran, who was specially asked to attend today's meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security, said his party was in "full agreement" with the Centre. But he refused to withdraw Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi's suggestion of dividing the island.

More than the government, it was Maran who appeared to be doing the balancing act. By agreeing with the Centre, he tried to give the impression that there was no rift within the NDA. His refusal to outright withdraw Karunanidhi's remarks also ensured that his party chief was not embarrassed.

Maran's ambiguity was also

intended to keep the hardliners — those in favour of a separate Tamil Eelam — happy.

A day after a suicide bomber killed a senior Lankan minister, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee said he saw no solution in sight for the ethnic standoff under the prevailing circumstances. He argued that the crisis could not be resolved through armed confrontation but only through a devolution of powers.

"Sri Lanka has to decide how far it can go while maintaining its

territorial integrity. The government there also favours devolution of powers. A way could be found out through that. It cannot be resolved through war," Vajpayee told a TV news channel. "Jaffna has changed hands several times. The whole thing is linked to Jaffna. Till now, there is no indication of any concrete result."

Any solution, he said, will have to be found within its constitutional framework.

Talking to reporters after today's meeting, foreign minister

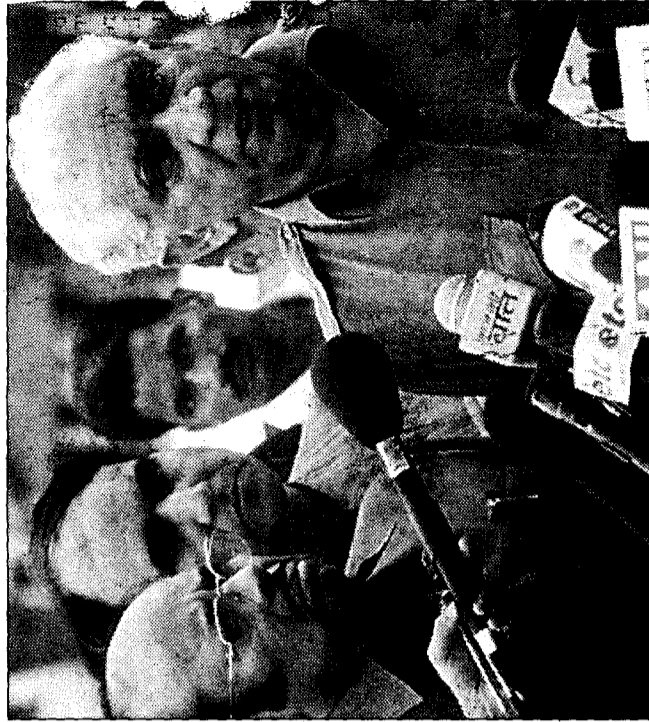
Jaswant Singh said: "We want a peaceful resolution within the territorial unity, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka within which the aspirations of all ethnic groups will be met."

To give the impression that the DMK shared the Centre's viewpoint, Maran was made to stand with him. "Mr Maran is here and he will settle all doubts regarding disunity in the government's policy on Sri Lanka," Jaswant said. "The DMK is in full agreement with the government," he added.

Immediately after, the commerce minister repeated the same words to drive home the point that there was no difference between his party and the government on the issue.

"What the chief minister said has been blown out of proportion," he said, referring to Karunanidhi's remarks that Sri Lanka should be split into two in a "Czechoslovakia-type" solution.

Maran tried to play down Karunanidhi's remarks, saying that partition was only one of his suggestions to end the crisis.



Jaswant Singh (right) gestures as he and commerce minister Murali Maran brief reporters outside Atal Behari Vajpayee's residence following the Cabinet meeting. (AFP)

Cong fires salvo at Atal

New Delhi, June 8: The Congress today took strong exception to the comments of the NDA's regional allies on foreign affairs and alleged that Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's Sri Lankan policy was restricted to "pleasing Karunanidhi and Vaiko".

Diplomat and former minister of state for external affairs K. Natwar Singh said never in the history of independent India had regional parties dictated foreign policy matters the way they were doing now. "It seems regional interests subordinate the national interests," he said. Singh objected to Karunanidhi's emphasis on a separate Tamil Eelam, wondering if the Tamil Nadu chief minister had ever visited Sri Lanka. "I have been there. Has he cared to ascertain the views of Tamils outside Jaffna who are spread all over Sri Lanka?" he asked.

THE TELEGRAPH

2000

S. S. Lanka
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Jaswant Singh to visit Sri Lanka tomorrow

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, JUNE 9. In a significant development, the Minister of External Affairs, Mr Jaswant Singh, is scheduled to arrive here on an official visit on Sunday to hold discussions with the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, on the crisis in the island.

With New Delhi reiterating its commitment to a united Sri Lanka, Mr. Singh's visit is expected to allay apprehensions here about statements made by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, that he favoured a Czechoslovakian-style solution to the ethnic conflict.

Mr. Singh is expected to stress the urgency for a speedy political solution to the aspirations of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka.

While Colombo and New Delhi have been in constant touch over the last few weeks, Sunday's meeting will be the first top-level contact between the two governments since India's refusal of military assistance to Sri Lanka last month.

The meeting is expected to touch on all aspects of the ethnic conflict, including the military sit-

uation in Jaffna, the progress of the Constitutional reforms process and diplomatic initiatives to open negotiations with the Tigers.

The last high-level contact between the two sides was when Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, met his Indian counterpart at New Delhi in early May, at the height of the military crisis.

India had then responded to Sri Lanka's request for military help with the offer of "humanitarian assistance", interpreted as the evacuation of soldiers and civilians from the peninsula.

Subsequently, Mr. Singh stated during a TV interview that India was ready to mediate if the parties to the conflict so desired.

Ms. Kumaratunga recently told *The Hindu* that India could help bring the LTTE to the negotiating table and support the efforts of Norway, the "chosen facilitator" in the peace initiative.

Mr. Singh is expected to meet the leader of the United National Party (UNP), Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, during his visit here.

THE HINDU

10 JUN 2000

Colombo visit to focus on power share

Jaswant push for Lanka peace

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, June 10: Foreign minister Jaswant Singh leaves on a two-day visit to Colombo tomorrow to help the embattled nation thrash out a consensus on the "devolution package" and assure it that Delhi believes the ethnic strife must be ended without a "Czechoslovakia-type" division of the country.

Senior foreign ministry officials today stressed that the first step to resolving the Tamil problem within the framework of the Sinhalese Constitution was cessation of violence, particularly terrorism. This was a clear signal to the Tamil Tigers that, despite DMK chief M. Karunanidhi's remarks, Delhi did not encourage them in any way.

Jaswant, who will touch down in Colombo, is slated to hold talks with President Chandrika Kumaratunga and his Lankan counterpart, Lakshman Kadirgamar. He will also meet senior Opposition leaders, including Ranil Wickremasinghe, to discuss the devolution package proposed by the People's Alliance government.

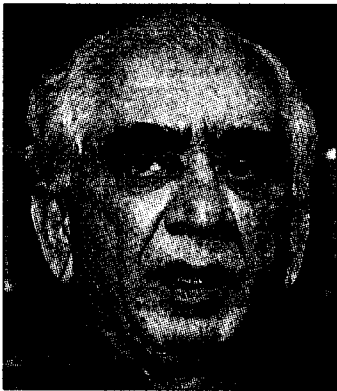
The foreign minister told reporters that he had been invited by the Lankan government and the peace package was topmost on the talks agenda. However, the DMK chief's suggestion that the country must be partitioned to end the ethnic strife is also likely to crop up.

The remark, which left Delhi scurrying to save face, was strongly resented by Colombo. Media minister Mangala Samaraweera said such a move would lead to Balkanisation of the region.

There were reports of a fresh flare-up today, with agencies saying 25 Lankan soldiers and eight

civilians had been killed in an army offensive in north Jaffna. The fighting resumed even as the Tamil Tigers appealed to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help broker a ceasefire in Thenmarachchi division to evacuate civilians.

A Lankan government release said an officer and 24 soldiers had been killed and 49 wounded when troops mounted an operation near Sarasalai, southeast of Jaffna town, to bust a Tiger "strongpoint".



Jaswant: Island mission

Jaswant's visit is significant as it is the first high-level one from Delhi since war erupted this time round for the control of Jaffna. He had visited Sri Lanka in March 1999, when he went to the Nuwara Eliya hill resort for the Saarc foreign ministers' meet.

The Lankan foreign minister, however, visited Delhi following the recent flare-up in Jaffna. There have been other ministerial visits from Colombo also to discuss the situation in the island-nation.

Jaswant's visit also comes in

the wake of the assassination of a senior minister in Kumaratunga's Cabinet, and after the Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance government was forced to clear the air on its Lanka policy.

However, foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal insisted that "the foreign minister's visit to Colombo should not be seen as a damage-control exercise". He said the Cabinet Committee on Security meet last week had already cleared the confusion created by the DMK chief's statements.

Jassal said Lanka had been "always aware" of India's stand on the ethnic problem. "You can only have a political solution to the Tamil question. But the first step towards it is the cessation of violence, particularly abjuring terrorism," he said.

Jassal reiterated Delhi's position when asked to comment on the Tigers' offer of a ceasefire. "We want cessation of violence to create the atmosphere for a negotiated settlement of the ethnic problem."

On Jaswant's talks agenda, Jassal said: "It is an evolving situation in Sri Lanka. But the foreign minister's visit is a political engagement at the highest level and all issues of importance will be discussed."

Reuters quoted an LTTE statement issued from their London office requesting the Red Cross to arrange a truce to evacuate civilians. "Thousands are still caught up in the crossfire and unable to move to areas of safety," it said.

A Red Cross spokesman confirmed the truce offer. "But we have been in touch with both warring sides for more than two weeks with regard to arranging to go into the Thenmarachchi division to assess and respond to the humanitarian need there."

THE TELEGRAPH

11 JUN 2000

Jaswant to leave for Colombo today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 10. — India begins its formal political engagement with Sri Lanka on a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict with the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, leaving for Colombo tomorrow.

The visit was announced today even as the LITTE, in a statement from London, asked the UNHCR and the ICRC to help arrange a temporary ceasefire.

It appears that Lanka will take the LITTE's second ceasefire offer more seriously than the first, because India has stipulated cessation of hostilities as a prerequisite for a political settlement.

This indicates that some of the groundwork for a negotiated settlement has already been laid. India is expected to make a major policy announcement on the Lankan situation after Mr Singh returns.

The external affairs ministry kept details of the agenda confined to generalities, saying all aspects of the situation and bilateral relations would be discussed. But the spokesman added: "the fact of the visit is itself significant."

In Colombo, Mr Singh will call on President Chandrika Kumaratunga and hold talks with the Lankan foreign minister Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, the Leader of the Opposition and other

political leaders.

The MEA spokesman said the visit was part of India's high-level political engagement with Sri Lanka and would further buttress the appreciation and understanding the two countries had for each other's positions. India would like to see a negotiated political settlement within the framework of the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka, he said.

Mr Singh's visit was cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs which met on Thursday. The foundation for the visit has been laid over the past few weeks during which India has been aligning itself with the Lankan govern-

ment and distancing itself from the LITTE.

The government had denounced the LITTE's suicide bomb attack on the Sri Lankan industries minister last week, terming it an attack on the "forces of democracy". There was no room for coercive attempts to achieve political objectives through violence in a democratic society, the government had said.

PTI reports from Colombo: Twenty-five soldiers and eight civilians were killed in an army offensive to recapture lost areas in the northern Jaffna peninsula yesterday.

THE STATESMAN

JUN 2000

Tamil Eelam group wants India to lift ban on LTTE

P.K. Balachandran
Colombo, June 11

THE TAMIL Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) wants the Government of India to lift the ban on the LTTE so that India may be perceived by the LTTE as a neutral, and therefore, a suitable mediator in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict.

TELO spokesman, Mr.K. Srikantha, told The Hindustan Times here today that TELO, like the rest of the Tamil parties, was of the view that India should play a dominant role in any mediation between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. But the LTTE had a "psychological barrier" to accepting India as the mediator, because it had banned the organisation, Mr.Srikantha pointed out. India had said that it was ready to mediate if both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE asked. But how could LTTE ask if it felt that India was biased against it, Mr.Srikantha wondered.

The TELO leader felt that it was time India and the Indians set aside emotions and the various omissions and commissions of the LTTE and looked at the grim real-

ity in Sri Lanka. Millions of Tamils and Sinhahas were suffering because of the continuing war, and India could not just look on passively, he said.

But spokesmen of the other Tamil parties said that TELO stood isolated on this issue. The leader of PLOTE, Mr.D.

Red alert

LANKAN POLICE have declared a red alert in Colombo, warning about the presence of 25 more LTTE human bombs ready to launch attacks, in the wake of the recent bomb attack here which killed a senior minister and 24 others.

PTI, Colombo

Siddharthan, and the Senior Vice President of the TULF, Mr.V. Anandasangaree, said that it was not possible for India to lift the ban on the LTTE given the fact that only last month New Delhi had reimposed the ban giving very elaborate security reasons. Therefore, the Tamil parties might not raise the issue of lifting the ban on the LTTE when they meet the

Indian Foreign Minister, Mr.Jaswant Singh, here on Monday.

While the Tamil parties would formally ask India to mediate, they do not expect India to oblige, given the LTTE factor. What they expect India to do without embarrassment, is to put pressure on the Sri Lankan government and the opposition UNP to finalise a devolution package quickly and implement it urgently. Ideally, they would like the 1995 government proposals to be implemented. If that was not possible, at least the October 1997 watered down proposals should be. The UNP, which is still talking of a unitary constitution, should be pressurised into accepting the federal system, they say. When this is done, and the international community including India back it, the Tamil people could be weaned away from the LTTE, the Tamil moderates believe.

Asked if the LTTE could be weaned away from its goal of a separate Tamil Eelam, the Tamil parties say that with the international community and India being dead set against a separate Eelam, the LTTE's pitching for Eelam is an exercise in futility.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JUN 2000

India may want LTTE on board

By Atul Aneja

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NEW DELHI, JUNE 11. As the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, engages the Sri Lankan authorities in a brainstorming exercise, it is against the backdrop that the LTTE has to be on board in any peace deal to end the ethnic crisis.

According to highly-placed Government sources, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in its last meeting reiterated that the LTTE's participation was necessary for any lasting negotiated deal in Sri Lanka.

While endorsing LTTE's participation, India, at the same time, is clear that Tamil secession in Sri Lanka is non-negotiable. Policy-makers, while endorsing Sri Lanka's "unity and territorial integrity", have veered to the view that a lasting solution would depend on two factors. The Sri Lankan Government will have to accommodate the maximum autonomy for the Tamil population. On its part, the LTTE has to concede that realising its maximalist goal of a Tamil Eelam is impossible.

In the negotiations towards autonomy, which might begin subsequently, a devolution package based on the Thimpu negotiations of 1985 and talks which immediately followed this meeting could become the reference point.

The timing of Mr. Singh's airdash to Colombo is significant, analysts here say. Sri Lanka, having resisted the LTTE onslaught in Jaffna, is now better positioned for talks without sacrificing its national honour. At the same time, Sri Lanka is not entirely secure militarily. The Government is yet to consolidate its military gains and the LTTE's capacity to wear out the Sri Lankan forces over a period of time

cannot be ruled out. Both these factors are likely to encourage the Sri Lanka to talk.

However, there are equally powerful forces in Colombo which discourage a dialogue. The President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, will have to override the extremist Sinhala sentiment for getting a dialogue with the LTTE started. Signals from the Sri Lankan Government are also not entirely consistent, with the Foreign Ministry, rather than the President's office, showing greater inclination to look beyond the immediate crisis and in favour of a lasting solution.

Getting the LTTE to the negotiating table on a constructive agenda is also not going to be easy. Sources point out that Britain, backed by the United States, may be currently enjoying the best contacts with the LTTE. Britain has become the hub of overseas LTTE activities after the leader of the Tigers, Kittu, who operated from France, was killed in an encounter with the Indian Navy in 1993. The Norwegians have opened a formal channel of communication with the LTTE. India, too, has credible contacts with the Tigers, but is likely to utilise them only if the other players in engaging the LTTE fail to make a headway.

Meanwhile, the Government here has also recently debated the impact of arms supply by Pakistan to the Sri Lankan forces. While the defence services have favoured that India also opens its military supplies to the Sri Lankans, a decision to keep the country out of arms transfers to Colombo has ultimately prevailed. Critics of possible arms transfers argue that once weapons are sent, it would be difficult to avoid the pressures for military participation in Sri Lanka, which India wants to avoid.

THE HINDU

12 JUN 2000

Sri Lanka hopeful as Jaswant arrives

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, JUNE 11. The Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh, arrived here this afternoon amid anticipation that after a decade of disengagement, India was once again preparing to take the initiative in finding a solution to Sri Lanka's bloody ethnic conflict.

The President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, and Mr. Singh, who were due to hold one round of formal talks this evening, met before a banquet in honour of the visiting Minister. Earlier, Mr. Singh held discussions with his Sri Lankan counterpart, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, at Temple Trees, the presidential residence. The meeting lasted 45 minutes.

No aides were present, and details were not immediately available.

Ms. Kumaratunga and Mr. Singh are scheduled to hold one more round of discussions tomorrow morning.

The Minister will also hold talks with Mr. Kadirgamar tomorrow, as well as the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, and leaders of the Tamil and Muslim minority communities tomorrow.

The visit, on the invitation of Ms. Kumaratunga, is being seen as Sri Lanka's acknowledgement of the pre-eminent role India can play to end the country's long-drawn conflict which has claimed more than 60,000 lives and ren-

dered many more homeless. Quoting Government sources, *The Sunday Times* reported today that the invitation to Mr. Singh was extended to initiate a "frank exchange of views on all issues arising from the recent fighting between Government troops and the LTTE" in the northern peninsula.

The newspaper said that an Indian role in peace initiatives, as offered by Mr. Singh last month, would form the main substance of the discussions between the leaders. With India's offer of "humanitarian assistance" to soldiers and civilians in Jaffna peninsula still on the table, Sri Lanka is also expected to seek clarification about the scope of such aid, should the need for it arise.

Mr. Singh's visit has generated varied expectations here. The majority hope is that Mr. Singh will firmly state India's support for a united Sri Lanka to clear the air after the statements made by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, for a Czechoslovak-style solution to the island nation's ethnic problem.

Tamil leaders, who are scheduled to meet the Minister Tuesday afternoon, said they would raise with him the urgency for a ceasefire in the north to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, for a Sinhala consensus on a political solution in the south, and for the need to engage the LTTE in talks.



The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, with the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, when he called on her in Colombo on Sunday. — Photo: Sriyantha Walpola

See also Page 13

THE HINDU

12/6

TO BE A TAMIL IN SINHALA

ANATOMY OF A CRISIS: PART I
BY S.J.S. CHHATWAL

A brief historical background is necessary to understand the ethnic conflict and the current crisis in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, earlier known as Ceylon, came under the British rule in 1833. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans in Ceylon, there were two contiguous kingdoms in the island — the Sinhala and the Tamil Kingdoms.

After independence in 1948, the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka had hoped that they will be treated as equal citizens with the Sinhala majority. However this was not to be. The Sinhala government started discriminating against the Tamils. This gave rise to the peaceful struggle by the Tamil minority to get equal status and rights with the Sinhala majority.

In 1956 the Sri Lanka government enacted that Sinhalese language will be the only official language of the country, including in areas where Tamils were in a majority. This meant that overnight Tamils could not contact any official of the state, howsoever big or small, as they did not know Sinhalese language. In their struggle to get their grievances redressed the Tamil leaders reached Selvanayakam-Bandranaike Pact in 1957. But this pact remained a dead letter as the Buddhist clergy opposed it. In 1958 there were anti-Tamil riots in the country and government sponsored colonisation by the Sinhala majority community of traditionally Tamil areas, continued. In 1965 the peaceful struggle of the Tamil minority resulted in Selvanayakam-Senanayake Pact to fulfil at least some Tamil aspirations, but J.R. Jayawardane (who later became President of Sri Lanka) opposed this pact and it was, therefore, abrogated. In 1970 the Sri Lanka government enacted a law that Tamil students seeking admission to professional institutions such as medical and engineering colleges will have to score much higher marks than Sinhala students to get admission to the same course. In the same year Sri Lanka security forces forced their way into the World Tamil Conference and opened fire killing nine Tamils. In 1972 the Constitution of the country was amended to make Buddhism the official religion of Sri Lanka. In 1981 the world renowned Jaffna Library was burnt down in which one lakh volumes of Tamil literature were reduced to ashes.

In 1983, when I was the High Commissioner in Colombo, 64 Tamils were butchered in Vallikadai Prison. (In July 1983, as required, I had informed the Sri Lankan Foreign Office that I was proceeding on home leave. I have every reason to believe that some Sri Lankan agency already had plans to attack the Tamil inmates of Vallikadai prison. On learning that I would be away from Colombo, this agency decided that an opportune time to carry out their plan would be during my absence from the Sri Lanka. Therefore, when I was hardly away from Colombo for two days on home-leave in Delhi, the plan to attack the Tamil inmates in Vallikadai prison was carried out. On hearing of this massacre, I rushed back to Colombo. When I confronted the Sri Lankan authorities they told me that there was a riot between Sinhala and Tamil prisoners in Vallikadai prison, as a result of which 64 Tamils were killed. When asked as to the number of casualties and wounded on the side of Sinhala prisoners in this riot, the Sri Lankan authorities had no answer, as there was not a single casualty or injury to any Sinhala prisoner. It was clear that these Tamil inmates of Vallikadai prison were not killed in a so called riot, but by a well-armed outside agency which was permitted by Sri Lankan authorities to commit this heinous crime within the prison walls.

There are two types of Tamils in Sri Lanka — the Sri Lankan Tamils and the "Indian Tamils." Sri Lankan Tamils are as old settlers in Sri Lanka as the Sinhala community itself — both having migrated from India thousands of years back. Sri Lankan Tamils are high caste Tamils of the caste system of Tamil Nadu. They are educated and professionally well qualified in various fields. Right from the beginning Sri Lankan Tamils had to depend on education and professional qualifications for their livelihood as the land in Jaffna peninsula is not so fertile. These Sri Lankan Tamils because of their expertise in various professions have migrated to countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and even West European countries and North

Prior to the IPKF going to Sri Lanka, India was a referee or an umpire in the Sinhala-Tamil quarrel and was respected by both sides. After the IPKF went to Sri Lanka, India got to be hated by the majority Sinhala community, the Tamil minority community and the Sri Lankan government also. This was no mean achievement!



Sri Lankan soldiers guard the Presidential palace in Colombo against any possible attacks (AP)

America. The Sri Lankan Tamils have always been a proud community considering themselves as the custodians of Tamil culture even more than the Tamils in India. It has to be noted that the first medical college imparting medical education in Tamil language was established in Jaffna and not anywhere in Tamil Nadu in India.

In contrast to Sri Lankan Tamils, "Indian Tamils" went to Sri Lanka from Tamil Nadu comparatively recently i.e. around 100 years ago. These "Indian Tamils" were taken to Sri Lanka by the British to work on tea plantations in the highlands of the southern part of the country, where Sinhala population is in a majority. The "Indian Tamils" belong to lower castes in the caste system of Tamil Nadu. It is partly for this reason that for over a century there has been practically no social interaction between the Sri Lankan Tamils and the "Indian Tamil" of the tea plantations. Actually, a Sri Lankan Tamil because of his professional qualifications and higher social standing has always looked down upon the "Indian Tamils." (The total population of Sri Lanka is around 18 million, of which Sri Lankan Tamils account for about 2.34 million or 13 per cent and "Indian Tamils" around one million or 5.50 per cent. The population of Tamil Nadu in India is around 43 million).

As a result of the continuous efforts of the Tamil moderates, an experiment tried in 1981 was that of District Development Council (DDCs). The DDCs which were set up to redress the grievances of the Tamils by giving them some degree of autonomy, were, however, stillborn. No worthwhile powers or functions could be undertaken by them at the ground level. What is even more important is that all the DDCs were dependent for their finances on the various ministries in Colombo. The ministries headed by Sinhala ministers did not transfer the necessary finances to the DDCs. The only ministry which released funds to the DDCs was that of minister S. Thondaman, the Indian plantation workers leader. It was in such a situation of the continued intransigence on the part of the majority Sinhala community that Tamils instead of asking for autonomy at the district level started demanding a "homeland" by merging the Jaffna peninsula and the Eastern province of the country.

The LTTE which was established in 1975 has its cadres and its following from amongst the Sri Lankan Tamils but practically none from amongst the "Indian Tamils." The "Indian Tamils" over the years, were led by S. Thondaman who had been representing their cause separately and independently to the Sri Lankan government. It

is interesting to note that S. Thondaman for long years was a Cabinet minister in the successive Sri Lankan governments, irrespective as to which Sinhala political party was in power, in Colombo.

The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of July 1987, as a result of which IPKF went to Sri Lanka was basically flawed. This was not an accord signed between the two fighting parties i.e. the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. On the contrary, this accord was signed between the Sri Lankan government and India, which had been mediating since 1983, in the ethnic conflict between the Sinhala government and the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. Prior to the IPKF going to Sri Lanka, India was a referee or an umpire in the Sinhala-Tamil quarrel and was respected by both sides. After the IPKF went to Sri Lanka, India got to be hated by the majority Sinhala community, the Tamil minority community and the Sri Lankan government also.

This was no mean achievement!

The above makes it incumbent to have a look at the background in which the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 was signed. V. Pirabhakaran, the LTTE supremo was invited to Delhi in July 1987. He was shown the text of the proposed Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, to which he did not agree. He was put practically under house arrest at Ashoka Hotel in Delhi, so that the accord between India and Sri Lanka could be signed. Thus this Accord was signed even when Pirabhakaran opposed it. He returned to Jaffna from Delhi on August 1, 1987.

Relations between the IPKF and the LTTE were correct to begin with. However, events took a dramatic turn on October 3, 1987 when 17 LTTE top cadres, who were apprehended while crossing over to Tamil Nadu, were to be handed over by IPKF to Sri Lankan Army to be taken to Colombo. Ever since these LTTE cadres were apprehended, LTTE had been pleading vehemently that these LTTE cadres should not be handed over to Sri Lankan Army. These pleadings fell on deaf ears. While IPKF was in the process of handing over these 17 top LTTE cadres to the Sri Lankan Army, they swallowed cyanide capsules which they were carrying on their persons and committed suicide. This was the turning point in the relationship between IPKF and the LTTE.

S.J.S. CHHATWAL was a former High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka

■ TOMORROW: India's role in Sri Lanka (Concluding part)

India offers Lanka \$ 100-m credit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 12. — Mr Jaswant Singh stressed again that intervening militarily in Sri Lanka was not an option with India, but announced a \$100-million credit facility for Colombo as humanitarian assistance.

India did not want to repeat the IPKF experience, nor had Sri Lanka asked for military help, the external affairs minister told reporters after returning from Colombo today.

Details of the credit had not been worked out yet, but it will not be used to buy arms, Mr Singh said.

He side-stepped questions on the possibility of India helping Sri Lanka evacuate its troops from Jaffna, saying this was speculative, and that the decision on evacuation had to be taken by Colombo.

India will engage itself with the process of a political settlement based on devolution under way in Lanka, but take no steps that encroaches or

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interferes Colombo's sovereignty, Mr Singh said. "India has a continuing role" — it will assist, advise and render humanitarian help, and the Indian High Commission in Colombo will play a nodal role in the consultation process that has begun with Mr Singh's visit.

In Colombo, the minister had extensive talks with the Lankan President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga, and other leaders including those from the Opposition. He said

■ More reports on page 7

he had seen the country moving towards a political process, but could not predict its outcome.

Sri Lanka had not raised the issue of the comments made by Mr M Karunanidhi, Mr Singh said. The comments, advocating a Czechoslovak model of division of the island, appeared to be more of a concern for journalists, he added.

He refused to comment on whether the Sri Lankan government would cease military action against the LTTE during the political process.

THE STATESMAN

13 JUN 2000

INDIA ANNOUNCES \$100 MILLION CREDIT TO SRI LANKA

Only political process can bring peace: Jaswant

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, JUNE 12. The Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh, reiterated India's commitment to the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and support for a political solution in line with the aspirations of the country's Tamil minority in talks with the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, today.

The two leaders met for 90 minutes along with officials of both sides. Immediately after, they conferred privately for a few minutes.

Mr. Singh later met the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar. He also held discussions with the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, and political leaders of the Tamil and Muslim minority communities before returning to New Delhi this evening.

A joint statement issued at the end of Mr. Singh's visit said the Minister in his discussions "reiterated the continued commitment of the Government of India to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka."

He also expressed the good wishes and support of the Government of India to "the restoration of a lasting peace, which would be possible through a political process that produces a settlement, which meets the aspirations of all communities."

Official sources said the discussions between the President and



The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, with his Sri Lankan counterpart, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, in Colombo on Monday. — Photo: Sriyantha Walpola

Mr. Singh included a briefing on the progress on the Government's proposed package of constitutional reforms, of which devolution to the Tamil and Muslim minorities is the centrepiece.

However, in an indication that New Delhi prefers not to be seen as imposing a particular political solution on Sri Lanka, but would rather that it evolved through

consultations between all parties here, the joint statement avoided mention of Ms. Kumaratunga's proposed package.

Mr. Singh, who was also briefed about the military situation in northern Sri Lanka, expressed concern over the developing humanitarian crisis in the Jaffna peninsula.

But contrary to views emanat-

ing from New Delhi that the need of the hour was a cessation of hostilities, Mr. Singh emphasised that the humanitarian crisis underlined the urgent need for a "lasting peace", sources said.

The shift may be an indication that New Delhi accepts Colombo's current confidence that it can defend Jaffna against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). For the Sri Lankan Government, a ceasefire at this stage could be an admission of weakness vis-a-vis the separatist group.

Material assistance

The joint statement also spelt out the details of the material assistance that India was prepared to offer Sri Lanka to tide over its immediate crisis: a credit facility amounting to U.S. \$ 100 million, and wheat, rice and sugar on a counter trade basis.

It said Ms. Kumaratunga welcomed the offers of assistance in the "humanitarian as well as economic sphere to ease any constraints that may be currently faced by Sri Lanka". In his discussions with Mr. Wickremesinghe, Mr. Singh "advocated" the urgency for "a unanimity" on a political process through which the aspirations of the minority communities could be met, as that itself would be a contributory factor to lasting peace.

Loan to ease war burden?: Page 13
Text of statement: Page 14

THE HINDU

13 JUN 2000

Jaswant confident

By C. Raja Mohan 18/6 9-5-2000

NEW DELHI, JUNE 12. India is hopeful that a peace process to end the prolonged civil war in Sri Lanka could be initiated in the foreseeable future.

Summing up his talks with the Sri Lankan leaders over the last two days, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said "I have no doubt that the process would start soon".

Mr. Singh was confident that an emerging consensus among the majority Sinhalese community to grant substantive autonomy to the Tamil minority, and a growing recognition of the need for a ceasefire, would facilitate peace.

Addressing a press conference at the Indira Gandhi International Airport here immediately on his arrival from Colombo tonight, Mr. Singh said all his interlocutors "wanted an early cessation of hostilities" and "agreed that a political process must conclude within a reasonable time-frame".

The Minister insisted that a ceasefire need not necessarily precede a package on political devolution. "Quite often in such situations", Mr. Singh said, "the

dynamics of simultaneous action will release many forces". While he was confident about an early start to the peace process, the Minister was cautious enough not "to venture on the outcome of the process".

Mr. Singh said his mission had three objectives. One to reassure Colombo of "India's commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka". Two, India wanted to convey its strong interest in the "earliest possible exploration of a lasting peace to the conflict on the ravaged island". Three, the Government wanted to ensure that a "political process towards devolution of power" to meet the aspirations of the Tamil minority was "set into motion".

He ruled out Indian military intervention. "The question of military involvement in Sri Lanka is not an option we consider as open", Mr. Singh said.

Even as he pressed Colombo to move quickly on devolution, Mr. Singh argued, "India has no desire to intrude upon the sovereign political terrain of Sri Lanka". He insisted that the decisions on devolution belonged only to the Sri Lankan Parliament.

THE HINDU

13 JUN 2000

INDIA IN LANKA: SOILED BY THE MURKY WATERS

THE ASIAN AGE

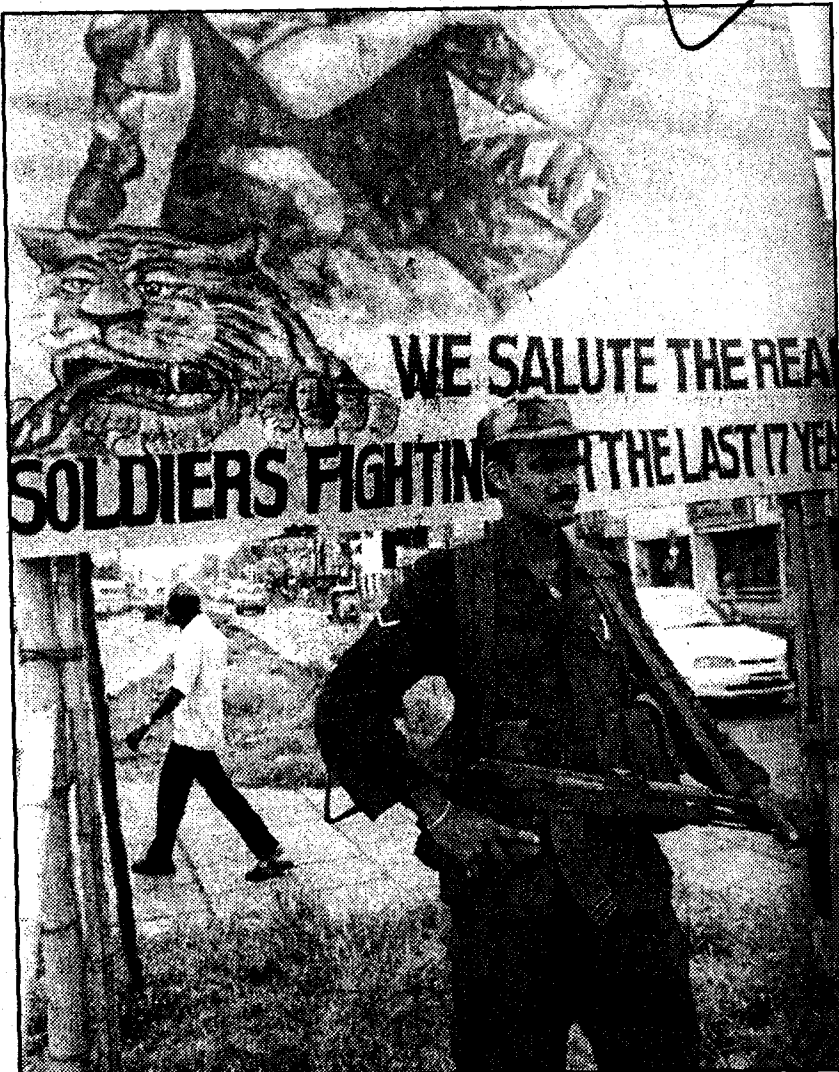
1 JUN 2000

Despite the difficulties faced, by 1988 the IPKF had succeeded in establishing fairly peaceful conditions in Jaffna peninsula and in the eastern parts of the country. Elections were held which resulted in a moderate Tamil to become the chief minister of the area. After these elections the IPKF and India waited for a year and half for powers to be devolved to this provincial government, as required under the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987. However, the devolution of powers never took place. In the meanwhile, Premadasa who had opposed the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 was elected as President of Sri Lanka. Not carrying out the provisions of the accord was bad enough, what was worse was that President Premadasa started joining hands with LTTE to attack IPKF all over in the Jaffna peninsula and the eastern part of the country. It is no longer a secret that President Premadasa in a clandestine manner continuously supplied to the LTTE the much needed weapons and ammunition to fight the IPKF. All these weapons and ammunition from President Premadasa were carried to the LTTE in Tata Trucks which had been earlier gifted by India as aid to Sri Lanka! Such was the role of President Premadasa, which ultimately resulted in the ignominious exit of the IPKF from Sri Lanka in 1990.

In recent times, India has intervened twice in Sri Lanka. In 1971 at the request of the Sri Lankan government, Indian forces landed in Colombo to help Sri Lanka to fight the insurgency by Rohana Wijeweera and the Sinhalese extremists of Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP). It was the Indian intervention, which enabled the Sri Lankan government to deal with this insurgency successfully. The "gratitude" that India got for this timely help given to Sri Lanka in 1971, was that in the month of December of the same year, Sri Lanka had no hesitation in providing Pakistan with refuelling facilities for their aircraft operating between East and West Pakistan during the Bangladesh war. The second time India intervened by sending IPKF in 1987 to Sri Lanka, this peace force was ignominiously expelled from Sri Lanka after it had suffered 1200 casualties and 3500 wounded. India in financial terms incurred an expenditure of Rs 10 crores on daily basis for a period of almost three years on the IPKF. India lost more men in its peace keeping mission in Sri Lanka, than during the Pakistani aggression in Kargil in 1999.

As regards the war efforts of Sri Lankan Army over the years, unfortunately, it has to be noted that often the Army's campaigns have been influenced by electoral considerations of the political party in power in Colombo. Close to elections, the party in power has not been able to resist the temptation of being able to announce that they have captured so much territory from the LTTE without giving any consideration as to how and for how long they will be able to control the territory captured from the LTTE. It also appears that the Sri Lankan Army has been fighting time and again on LTTE terms. They appear to have lost initiative and are bogged down in what is called the bunker mentality. A LTTE victory in the current fighting in Jaffna will be emotionally unacceptable to the majority Sinhala community in Sri Lanka.

Based on its previous experience, it is wise on the part of India not to intervene militarily in the current conflict in Sri Lanka. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka



A Sri Lankan soldier stands in front of a board praising the war efforts of the Sri Lankan Army

ANATOMY OF A CRISIS: PART II BY S.J.S. CHHATWAL

is basically a Sri Lankan problem and Sri Lanka has to solve it. No outside power can solve this problem for Sri Lanka. The violent methods used by both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE over the last 17 years have resulted in the loss of no less than 20,000 lives, and the two sides are no closer to a solution. What has to be understood clearly by both sides is that there is no military solution possible to this problem. The conflict in Sri Lanka is a political problem and it has to be solved politically.

Indian shore of Tamil Nadu being hardly 20 kilometres from the northern tip of Sri Lanka, India cannot remain indifferent or unaffected by what happens in Jaffna or in the adjoining areas. The geographical and the ground realities (43 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu) are such that we have no option, but to extend a helping hand to Sri Lanka in resolving the ethnic crisis through negotiations. This will be not only in the

interest of both India and Sri Lanka, but in the overall interest of the security of South Asia. There is no harm in accepting the domestic factor (Tamil Nadu being next door to Sri Lanka), as a consideration in our relations with Sri Lanka. After all, we will not be the only country which would be taking a domestic factor into consideration in our relations with a neighbour. In the present day world, international relations are getting more and more affected by domestic factors. This at the same time, does not mean that Tamil Nadu should dictate our relations with Sri Lanka. Tamil Nadu, as a factor, has always been present in our relations with Sri Lanka, but it would be a folly to think that India has been concerned over events in Sri Lanka only because of the Tamils in Tamil Nadu. In the very first debate in the Lok Sabha, after the anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka in 1983, the first 10 speakers in the House were non-Tamils. The whole of India is con-

President Premadasa started joining hands with LTTE to attack IPKF all over in the Jaffna peninsula and the eastern part of the country. It is no longer a secret that President Premadasa in a clandestine manner continuously supplied to the LTTE the much needed weapons and ammunition to fight the IPKF. All these weapons and ammunition from President Premadasa were carried to the LTTE in Tata Trucks which had been earlier gifted by India as aid to Sri Lanka! Such was the role of President Premadasa, which ultimately resulted in the ignominious exit of the IPKF from Sri Lanka in 1990

cerned over what is happening in Sri Lanka and not only the Tamils in Tamil Nadu.

Having accepted that there has to be a negotiated settlement of the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, I will now attempt as to what should be the main pillars of the negotiated edifice. First of all, to clear the ground to build the new edifice, there has to be a cease-fire followed by time-bound negotiations. It is heartening to note that an offer of such unconditional talks preceded by a cease-fire was recently made by President Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka in a television interview. Since an independent state of Eelam is not acceptable to Sri Lanka, India and the international community, Sri Lankan Tamils will have to be given a "Tamil homeland." This "homeland" should have the same degree of autonomy as enjoyed by any state of the Indian Union including Tamil Nadu under the Indian Constitution. Such an autonomy to be credible will have to include:

i) The unit of the "homeland" will have to comprise the Jaffna peninsula and the eastern province of Sri Lanka. Some special provisions can be made for the Muslim majority district in the eastern province. Tamils are not likely to accept anything less than the merger of the North and the East as the unit for their "homeland." Actually, such a provision had been made in the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 and earlier in Annexure "C" of the proposed agreement with President J.R. Jayawardene in 1983.

ii) Powers devolved to this new unit will have to be in a federal system and not in the present day unitary government of Sri Lanka. It is a fallacy to believe that a federal system is a weak system of government as compared to the unitary system. The world's only super-power today, the US, is a classic example of the federal system. Even small countries have done well with a federal system, such as Switzerland.

iii) Powers like police and land settlement will necessarily have to be devolved to the new unit — the police to give confidence to the Tamils that they have an armed agency for effective policing functions and land settlement in view of the history of state-sponsored colonisation of eastern districts by Sinhala migrants considered to be traditionally Tamil areas.

iv) The long drawn Tamil struggle in Sri Lanka, since 1956 produced a number of periodic agreements which however, were never put into effect. Added to this are the armed hostilities between the two communities since 1983. All this has understandably resulted in a crisis of confidence between the Sinhala and the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. Both sides are not likely to accept any agreement this time, which is not supported by a credible guarantee. The "guarantee" of India available in the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987 did not turn out to be effective because of a number of factors. This time, the guarantee that the provisions of any agreement arrived at will be carried out, will have to come from a number of countries including Norway (which has been acting as a facilitator in negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE) along with India duly supported by the United States.

S.J.S. CHHATWAL was formerly an Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka

■ CONCLUDED

India veers round to accept Lanka's strategy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

9 S. Lanka
55-8

14/6

NEW DELHI, June 13. — Sri Lanka's two-pronged strategy towards the LTTE, which seeks to weaken the organisation militarily while isolating it politically appears to have found greater endorsement from the Indian government following the visit of the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, to Colombo.

Though the Indian government had earlier described the cessation of hostilities as the "first step" in the political process, Mr Jaswant Singh said yesterday that the two could be simultaneous.

The spokesman maintained today that this did not reflect any change. The cessation of hostilities was an important element of the process but it did not necessarily have to be linear, he said.

The Indian government's stand, say diplomatic observers, is an acknowledgement of the Sri Lankan government's carefully calibrated strategy to bring the LTTE on board the process of a political, negotiated settlement.

The hardening of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's stand, says a diplomatic observer, is not a knee-jerk reaction to the LTTE's recent acts of terrorism, including the killing of the Sri Lankan minister, a close confidante of the President. It is a carefully thought-out tactical approach that would move Sri Lankan polity towards a political settlement while reserving the option of continuing military action against the LTTE.

In doing so, the government of President Kumaratunga feels, the LTTE would come under greater pressure, not merely militarily but also because of its marginalisation from the political process.

If the process of a political solution is seen to be under way sans the LTTE, the organisation would be more willing to join the process than if the strategy was limited to one of securing military advantages.

Senior officials following the developments in Sri Lanka acknowledge that it would not be possible for the Sri Lankan government to arrive at a solution without the LTTE. "Definitely, implementation of

any package would require the LTTE's involvement.

But at the initial stage, where consultations are on to arrive at an agreement on the structures of devolution, the Sri Lankan government can go ahead without the LTTE. Once the LTTE realises the process is under way with or without it, it will be more inclined to participate."

India's acknowledgement of the efficacy of this policy was reflected in the comments of the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, on his arrival in New Delhi last night.

The minister said the issue of cessation of hostilities and the initiation of the political process were so closely interlinked as to make it impossible to say which should come first and often the two occurred simultaneously.

This was a significant departure from the position spelt out by the spokesman on Saturday when he had said "the first step (a political settlement) has to be a cessation of hostilities including stopping 'first violence'".

THE STATESMAN

14 JUN 2000

Vaiko convinced on aid to Sri Lanka

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 13. The MDMK leader, Mr. Vaiko, expressed himself to be "satisfied" with the \$100-million "credit" the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, had promised Sri Lanka during his visit to Colombo. After Mr. Singh's announcement on Tuesday, an agitated Mr. Vaiko had sought a meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, to seek a clarification about the Government's rationale. Mr. Vaiko met the Prime Minister this evening in the presence of Mr. Singh and other senior officials. Mr. Vaiko was heard attentively. Like the PMK, the MDMK leader expressed reservations about the loan.

It was explained to the MDMK leader that the "line of credit" would not be used by the Sri Lankan Government to buy weapons, and hence it could not be argued that the Vajpayee Government was deviating from the stated policy which the NDA constituents had endorsed. It was also explained to Mr. Vaiko that there would be counter trade between India and Sri Lanka in the matter of rice and sugar.

The Vajpayee Government and the BJP leadership are not unmindful of the southern allies' need to strike a somewhat deviant note on Sri Lanka. The latest noises of the PMK and the MDMK are being viewed understandingly as their need to pander to the "constituency back home".

The BJP spokesperson, Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, had politely dismissed as "personal view" the reported reservations of the southern allies on the outcome of the External Affairs Minister's Colombo visit. Mr. Naidu suggested that such personal views would not be allowed to hinder the Sri Lankan policy. Mr. Naidu was merely reflecting the confidence the Vajpayee establishment feels about its ability to carry the allies along on Sri Lanka.

In fact, after his 45-minute meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Vaiko repeated to newsmen almost all the arguments the Ministry of External Affairs had expounded in defence of Mr. Singh's Colombo visit. If Mr. Vaiko was satisfied with the "explanations" he heard, the Vajpayee establishment was also satisfied with the way Mr. Vaiko was handled.

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JHL 11111111

Norway welcomes Jaswant initiative

401
1576 By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JUNE 14. Emphasising the importance of India's role in Sri Lanka, Norway has welcomed the recent diplomatic initiative taken by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

The Norwegian special envoy on Sri Lankan affairs, Mr. Erik Solheim, told *The Hindu* today that Oslo "is pleased with India's move to engage" the political establishment in Colombo.

In a telephonic conversation from Oslo, Mr. Solheim said he "is in continual contact" with the Indian Government and sees Mr. Singh's visit in "absolutely positive terms".

As part of his effort to facilitate a peace process, Mr. Solheim stays in close touch with both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the Government in Colombo and the Opposition parties.

He has kept India informed of his diplomatic endeavours and New Delhi has supported the Norwegian initiative.

Diplomatic sources closely monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka see Mr. Singh's visit as an important move, but are not entirely convinced that it could lead to an early cessation of the hostilities.

Colombo has indicated that it may be ready for an unconditional ceasefire that is linked to negotiations aimed at finding a lasting solution. But the LTTE, which has offered conditional ceasefire proposals, may not yet want to end hostilities and begin talks.

The LTTE, the speculation goes, may want to start talking only after recapturing Jaffna, an objective that has eluded it till now.

Analysts, however, caution that the present military "stalemate" in the Jaffna peninsula need not necessarily remain "a stable one". Without a greater clarity in the ground realities and a "stable stalemate", negotiations between the warring parties are unlikely to begin soon.

Observers believe that both sides may be preparing for fresh

offensives in the coming days. So long as there is hope for further military gains, they might not want to opt for an early cessation of hostilities. There is also considerable scepticism of the LTTE's interest in any package of devolution. Observers say it could be looking for rifts within the Sinhalese establishment that might preclude a broad agreement on a devolution package.

One of Mr. Singh's major objectives in Colombo was to try and catalyse a Sinhalese consensus on a substantive package of political devolution which could meet the political aspirations of the Tamil minority within a united Sri Lanka.

Mr. Solheim would not confirm his current travel plans to India and Sri Lanka. Diplomatic sources, however, suggest it is entirely possible that the envoy will decide to come to the region in the next few weeks.

Suicide bomber strikes again

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, JUNE 14. A suicide bomber of the LTTE killed himself and two others and wounded seven, while attempting to ram an Air Force bus in a northern suburb of the capital today.

Police said the human bomb had intended to attack the bus at a busy junction in Wattala, 10 km from here. But he missed his target when a cycle got in his way, with the detonation killing the cyclist and a woman. Several others were wounded and some vehicles damaged. The windscreen of the bus got shattered. A Government statement said the bus occupants were not injured.

The attack came exactly a week after a suicide bomber killed the Industrial Development Minister, Mr. C.V. Gooneratne, his wife and several others. After last week's attack, intelligence reports had warned that several LTTE suicide cadre were present in the capital.

PA, UNP accord: Page 13

11 JUN 2000

India not to play role in Lankan devolution plan

Jay Raina
New Delhi, June 15

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INDIA IS all geared up to fine-tune its Sri Lanka policy without disturbing its core. An immediate cause for this reappraisal is Pakistan's bid to consolidate its military presence in the strife-torn island.

Contrary to general perception, India does not envisage a role in clinching the devolution package on which Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga is trying to evolve a political consensus for a permanent solution to the Tamil problem.

Highly placed sources told *The Hindustan Times* that it was for the Sri Lankan Government to put in place the finer points of the package in consultation with other political formations, notably the United National Party, the LTTE and other moderate Tamil groups. "We are keen to see accommodation of the natives' aspirations, including the Tamils, for a long-lasting solution to the ongoing strife," they explained.

The Indian position on the proposed devolution formula was made clear by External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh during his recent visit to Colombo. In fact, his Sri Lankan mission was prompted by other considerations, foremost among them being Pakistan's rising profile in the island nation.

Over the last couple of months, Islamabad has provided the embattled Sri Lankan forces considerable assistance in terms of men and material. The

arms sent by them include a large number of multi-barrel rocket launchers operated by Pak army personnel.

Other countries such as Israel and Ukraine are also reported to have sewn up close military ties with Colombo following the LTTE advances in the Jaffna peninsula. Mr Singh's trip last weekend to Colombo was in response to these developments and the concomitant need to fine-tune policy to protect New Delhi's security concerns as well as its role and attendant responsibilities to ensure peace and stability as a major regional power.

Behind the News

The sources said the Indian commitment to a peaceful political resolution of the ethnic crisis in its neighbourhood automatically made it averse to any kind of military presence that could complicate matters in Sri Lanka. "We have to be on guard against third-party military manoeuvres in our backwaters," they said.

Mr Singh's unscheduled airdash to Colombo and his offer of \$100 million credit line to Colombo has to be understood against this background. The Indian move is clearly aimed at projecting itself as a key player without getting embroiled in the ongoing conflict between the Tigers and the Sri Lankan troops.

Mr Singh's surprise visit had the clearance of the Cabinet Committee on

Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. At its meeting last Saturday, the CCS arrived at a consensus over Mr Singh's mission after debating the other option of despatching a high-powered team under either the Foreign Secretary or the National Security Advisor.

An overtly pro-active Indian role was considered imperative on the following counts: One, the Vajpayee Government's offer of "humanitarian assistance" (read evacuation of Sri Lankan troops from Jaffna) had come to be construed by influential circles in the Kumaratunga regime as evidence of Indian neutrality that could only be advantageous to the Tigers in the obtaining conflict situation.

Two, the prospect of marginalisation of India in the face of Pakistan's active support to Colombo, whose calls for help have also evoked response from other countries.

And three, the Indian obligations as a facilitator in the Norwegian peace initiative, together with the immediate need to reduce the ever-widening gap between the obviously intransigent warring sides.

The Prime Minister's decision to send his Foreign Minister to Colombo was also meant to be an expression of India's solidarity with the Kumaratunga regime in the wake of the assassination of the Industries Development Minister C V Gooneratne. The Sri Lankan leader was killed on June 7 by an LTTE suicide bomber.

HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 JUN 2000

Engaging With Sri Lanka

India's Role Must Be Marginal

By PRAFUL BIDWAI

71-1A
16/6

THE contrast between today and the late 1980s couldn't have been starker. 1987 marked the apogee of India's great power ambition to become South Asia's unquestioned hegemon and extend its influence to the Indian Ocean region too. This ambition's consummation was the Indo-Sri Lanka accord under which Colombo surrendered its sovereignty and the IPKF went to the island to disarm the very force that India had financed, trained and armed. India also intervened militarily in the Maldives. But by 1988, the IPKF had come a cropper. It soon returned home humiliated. By the time the first Fiji coup happened under Sitiveni Rabuka, India was reduced to issuing verbal statements and pleading for Australian mediation. In 2000, India — despite the nuclear weapons — is a much-chastened state. Its response to the developments in Sri Lanka after the fall of Elephant Pass has been tepid. Mercifully, New Delhi hasn't countenanced military intervention. Even on Fiji-II, India has taken a non-interventionist approach.

In many ways, this is a healthy, overdue correction to the hubris-driven policy of the 1980s, although it risks alienating sober, liberal and secular-pluralist opinion in Sri Lanka, which felt India had deserted a friendly state in its worst moment of crisis and through its policy of "neutrality" effectively allowed the LTTE to make huge gains. However, there is a serious danger that New Delhi could again come under growing pressure, and itself develop a temptation, to take a more pro-active role than it can sustain, or is fair to all concerned.

This may seem ironical just after Mr Jaswant Singh's Colombo visit, itself overdue, in which he (wisely) didn't argue for a cessation of hostilities — which would today favour the LTTE — but pledged support to a long-term political solution based upon the devolution of powers within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. Yet, there is cause for worry in view of pressures from pro-Eelam politicians and from the domineering nationalism we have seen grow in India since the mid-1980s. This nationalism is not inclusive and at peace with itself, but exclusivist.

To return to Sri Lanka, the situation there is one of a temporary military impasse in the North, and political disarray in the South. Af-

ter some spectacular victories, the LTTE appears stuck as the Sri Lankan army reinforces itself. The capture of Jaffna may elude the LTTE. But even a military triumph may prove hollow for the Tigers. A unilateral declaration of independence is unlikely to win much support from an international community revolted by the LTTE's methods. The unembellished truth is that the LTTE is probably the world's most ruthlessly guerrilla force. Its campaign of terror has targeted not just Rajiv Gandhi and a galaxy of Sinhalese leaders, but the moderate TULF, the EPRLF, PLOTE and TELO, two elected mayors in Jaffna, and progressive like Neelan Tiruchelvam.

The prospect of an Eelam under the LTTE is too frightening to contemplate. And yet, there is a powerful case for the maximum devolution of powers to Sri Lanka's north-

IN BRIEF

- India may want to be more pro-active in Sri Lanka
- But it may be difficult to develop a finely tuned mediatory role
- An Eelam under the LTTE is too frightening to contemplate
- Sri Lanka's northeast must be given maximum possible power
- New Delhi can at best play a non-interventionist part

east as part of an effort to (re)build a plural society that reverses systematic anti-Tamil discrimination. It is to Ms Kumaratunga's credit that she has put serious proposals for such devolution on the table.

One can only hope that the present state of national distress and the high cost war — estimated at a huge 21 per cent of GDP a year even before the Elephant Pass battle — will prove to all concerned the futility of a purely military approach and promote the agenda of political reconciliation. One can hope that the Jaffna impasse — and its tarnished international image — will make the LTTE too realise the need for a political solution. Sri Lanka cries out for external mediation. Today, only Norway is playing a limited role. Among the other candidates for mediation are the UN, the US, Britain and India. The UN with its

recent poor peace-keeping record inspires little confidence. The US is preoccupied elsewhere and is liable to be seen as overbearing or untrustworthy: witness the Palestinian mess. (India too has reservations about big power involvement). Britain has serious leverage over the LTTE. But it shows little enthusiasm for mediation.

What of India? This is an extraordinarily difficult question. On the one hand, India cannot remain unaffected by what is happening across the Palk Straits given its own 50 million Tamils, the knock-on effects of the Lankan crisis, and potentially, a refugee influx. On the other hand, India bears a good share of the responsibility for the Sri Lanka mess — thanks to the disastrous role it played in the 1980s. India should not be insensitive to the hopes and expectations that responsible streams of Lankan opinion have of it; it cannot afford to be "neutral" between Colombo and the LTTE. Non-chauvinist liberal Sri Lankans want India's help. However, it is hard to imagine a finely tuned mediatory role for India, especially under the present dispensation. The BJP has a marked proclivity to big brother nationalism. Some of its allies are itching to put India's weight behind Eelam. Not just the MDMK and the PMK, but even the DMK, wants a break up of Sri Lanka; witness the ill-conceived "Czechoslovak solution."

Under the circumstances, it is hard to envisage India as an "honest broker", a neutral mediator, or a trustworthy facilitator of an overt process of negotiation. At best, New Delhi could play an indirect, low-key, non-interventionist part — encouraging devolution, nudging all concerned towards negotiation, tell the LTTE that even an outright Jaffna victory won't produce a legitimate state. To do this, India must fully acknowledge past blunders. It must be prepared, indeed poised, to withdraw as soon as there is a hint that it is seen as being heavy-handed. India can offer to use its good offices with the UK to get it to pressure the LTTE, insisting it should not carry on activities on British soil that lead to the violation of international humanitarian law. But under no circumstances must India nurture the delusion that it is "naturally" pre-eminent in the region. Self-delusion is infinitely worse than modest passivity.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 JUN 2000

MISSION UNNECESSARY

95/10/11 Excessive caution was Jaswant's brief

IT is not entirely clear why Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh had to travel to Sri Lanka unless it was to reassure Colombo that Karunanidhi did not mean what he said about Czechoslovakia and, in any event, the Union government repudiated him. He had the advantage of Murasoli Maran's carefully balanced act on TV, a day earlier, desperately explaining away his master's incredibly ignorant forays into history. Maran was in a tight spot and acquitted himself as well as could be expected in the circumstances. Whether Sri Lanka divided or remained united was for the Lankans to decide; he was only concerned about the influx of refugees from the fighting and the only way to stop it was to stop the fighting. A neat argument, but based on defective logic. It is Pirabhakaran who insists on his pound of flesh, not the Sri Lankan government. Why not ask Karunanidhi to get some sense into the terrorist leader's head! If Karunanidhi would stop trying to interfere in the internal affairs of another country, talking of Tamil soil and tribal loyalties, he would be serving notice that he had recovered his balance. He will have noted that Jayalalitha has broken her silence and expressed opposition to the Tamil Tigers, so from now on he will not be able to plead with Vajpayee that he has a local constituency to safeguard. As Maran said, Sri Lanka Tamils are citizens of another country and none of our business. He even deflected an answer to the question whether he would object if arms were sent to Lanka. He said there were plenty of arms in the international arms bazaar and Sri Lanka was able to buy all it wanted. Good answer — it could have been worse!

On his return to Delhi, the foreign minister announced that he had offered a loan of \$100 million to Sri Lanka but not to buy arms. What are they supposed to buy — baby food for Pirabhakaran's young suicide bombers! India had no word of condemnation of terrorist tactics; the latest outrage in which a senior minister and many others were killed, should have evoked a strong response from peace-loving India's foreign minister. Terrorism is international, as we lecture the world in the context of Musharraf's goons. What prevents us from castigating the LTTE for the outrage as we routinely do for the ISI? Was the minister waiting for the findings of a sessions judge in Tamil Nadu before venturing a comment. We frown upon Norway's attempts at mediation, we want to be the only player but we fold our arms and say we will not interfere. Are we afraid of our own shadow? It is no one's case that the IPKF experiment be repeated. If truth be told, the wily Jayawardene was making a monkey out of Rajiv Gandhi who did not see through the game. We had been arming and training the Tigers and under direct orders from Rajiv, we trained them in the use of RDX explosives, despite strong objections from the services. That Rajiv paid for such irresponsibility with his life is of less moment at this time than the need not to go overboard with the hangover. The Indian Navy can police the Palk Straits to see that fishing boats are not used to ferry arms and supplies to the Tigers and we can help in other ways. The Vajpayee government do not lack advice on what is needed, what they lack is the nerve. If we hold that Sri Lanka's territorial integrity is in India's national interests and this is not in question, then follow up action is obvious. And it can be decisive. If we want to be a global player, let us learn to discharge our regional obligations first.

Jaswant's Colombo visit was less serviceable than it was reassuring

By Charu Lata Joshi
The Times of India News Service

COLOMBO: Terror has a way of attracting attention. Especially when it is in the neighbourhood. The recent two-day visit by Indian external affairs minister Jaswant Singh to Colombo, however, cannot be fitted in the paradigm of mere sub-continental interests of a regional power.

To many analysts, Mr Singh's overnight visit was seen as a diplomatic gesture to reassure Colombo of New Delhi's support for Sri Lanka's unity despite a regional Indian leader calling for the partition of the island to end its ethnic strife—a change of tack on neighbouring Sri Lanka's military crisis amid a tight balancing act between domestic political survival and regional stability.

But in the mechanisms of foreign policy initiatives, diplomatic posturing is perhaps as important as proactive action. The credit facility of \$100 million and humanitarian aid in the form of foodgrains and medicines offered by India was not as important as the symbolic significance that Mr Jaswant Singh's trip entailed. For a majority of the Sri Lankan political leadership, the visit was a firm reaffirmation of big brother's support. And even as the sceptical lobby of Tamil leadership felt that "no concrete commitment" had emerged from their appeals to the Indian delegation, there was an overriding consensus on India's sincerity in resolving the crisis.

The joint statement issued at the end of Mr Singh's visit made no reference to India's earlier offers to

help evacuate some 40,000 government troops from the Jaffna peninsula where Tamil Tiger rebels mounted a major offensive in April this year. Nor did the external affairs minister respond to the moderate Tamil leadership demand of effecting an immediate ceasefire to stop civilian casualties in the northern peninsula. But for a beleaguered and war-ravaged people, there was reason for optimism.

Even as Mr Singh clearly specified that the money offer was for 'humanitarian aid', the credit facility is being viewed as an indirect

NEWS ANALYSIS

help to cash-strapped Colombo, which is on a major arms shopping spree to boost its battle against the separatist LTTE. Finance officials say that the credit line is "godsend" considering the government was increasing prices and taxes to meet the additional expenditure for military hardware.

New Delhi's mantra on pressurising both President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the leader of the Opposition United National Party, Ranil Wickeremesinghe, to arrive at an early political solution which would satisfy the minority Tamil community, has reassured Tamils that India would not compromise their interest. Within the power circles of Colombo too, the message appears to have worked: President Kumaratunga has reiterated laying down the devolution package in Parliament before the Parliamentary elections, which are tentatively scheduled for September, this year.

For some, the visit by Mr Jaswant Singh was "over due" both in terms of India's internal political confusion over Sri Lanka and in terms of a larger geo-political context. For, soon after India ruled out military assistance to Sri Lanka in May, the Colombo government announced it was re-establishing diplomatic ties with Israel in a bid to buy weapons for its fight against the LTTE. "Sri Lanka cannot hope much from India in its hour of need," the Sri Lankan daily, *The Island*, commented earlier this week. "We have to be pragmatic and look elsewhere for immediate assistance," it asserted.

What was being interpreted as India's "dithering" in any involvement in the Sri Lankan situation, found support among Sinhalese hardliners, both within the ruling People's Alliance government and outside. And chauvinist organisations like the Sinhala Urumuya continue to be sceptical and accusatory about India's past role in Sri Lankan politics. A scenario where "American interest in the sub-continent," as Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema says in an essay on 'Security in South Asia', argues that "with the lessening of Cold War tensions, U.S. interests in the South Asian sub-system have shrunk; that it no longer adopts policies of material, diplomatic support and assertive engagement in the region." Officials believe that there is perfect unison between India and the U.S. on a rough strategy to resolve the crisis. The Indo-U.S. initiative is being seen as a joint effort to tilt the playing field in favour of the government—through intelligence sharing, financial aid and an overall influencing of international opinion. For starters, both India and U.S. want nothing more than a consensus on resolution within the majority Sinhalese opinion in the country.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 JUN 2000

When Colombo calls

In 1987, in one of the many talks I had with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, he explained his Indian imperative. In his view, the Tamil people's struggle for independence from Sri Lanka could only succeed with an Indian role in the effort. He went on to say that the Indian role could be direct or indirect. The LTTE has thus consciously kept contacts alive with political parties in India. It had links with the Congress in New Delhi and Tamil political groups in Tamil Nadu. It has also helped and encouraged the militant groups in India's Northeast.

When it suited the LTTE, India was eulogized and when it did not, violence was let loose against it. Its choice of techniques for collaboration and conflict is unique. In collaboration, it boldly uses blackmail and in conflict, its preferred instrument is the bomb or the suicide bomber.

The military crisis facing the government of Sri Lanka is not over yet. The scope of the crisis is defined by the major losses suffered by the Sri Lanka army. It has lost well-prepared positions and has had to withdraw from large parts of territory it had captured from the LTTE. This year it has had to incur major military defeats of which the loss of Elephant Pass was the most significant one. This has cut its land route of supplies from mainland Sri Lanka.

The LTTE effectively controls the sea lanes around the Jaffna peninsula. The recent destruction by the LTTE of a merchant vessel which was being escorted by the Sri Lanka navy is a case in point. The Tigers have also made flying a risky affair. This makes it difficult for the Sri Lanka air force to operate relief flights. In effect the Sri Lanka army is beleaguered in the Jaffna peninsula. If its supplies are effectively denied, it may well have to capitulate.

Sri Lanka's economy is in considerable difficulty due to the large scale purchases of weapons and munitions for the Jaffna military endeavours. The political scene in the island nation is also not reassuring. The devolution proposals of the president, Chandrika Kumaratunga, cannot be written into the constitution without the support of the opposition parties. They are unwilling to back the devolution proposals. The halfway house measure of an interim council to which the government and the opposition have agreed is very unlikely to work since the LTTE is not agreeable to it. Even in 1987, Prabhakaran had rejected the interim council proposal unless it first gave the Tigers control of the council even before elections could be held to it.

The author is director, Delhi Policy Group, and former director-general military operations

V.R. RAGHAVAN

A Jaffna debacle will impact on India's security in more ways than one. The full control of the LTTE over the peninsula will bring a flood of refugees into Tamil Nadu. The LTTE will also send its cadres into the state from where they had been cleared with considerable effort. The refugees and the LTTE cadres

tion. And the LTTE is also intransigent in its demands which are of a kind that cannot be met by any sovereign nation.

The calls in India to help in the Sri Lankan crisis are therefore fraught with serious risks. If it is military assistance that is required, it would amount to the continuation of a fruitless conflict. The

military means. The Indian peace keeping force experience and nearly five years of fullscale military operations by the Sri Lankan army have amply proved it. Indian initiatives should therefore concentrate on the resumption of dialogue between the government in Colombo and the LTTE.

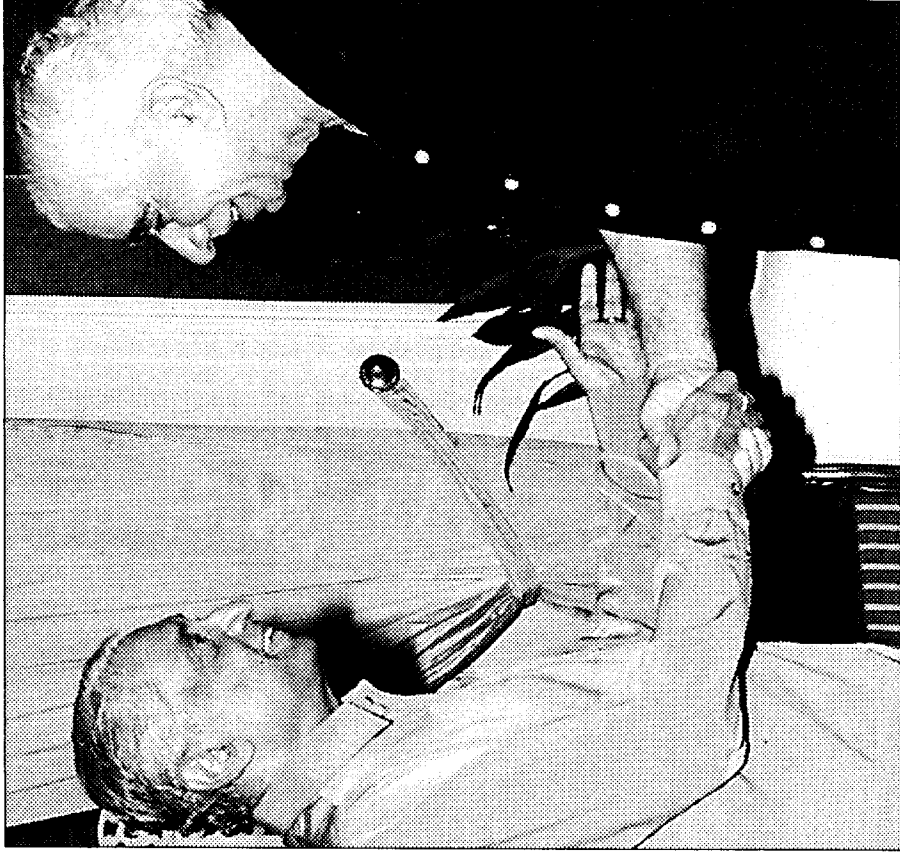
Kumaratunga's government has made it clear that it regards India as the bulwark of Sri Lanka's wellbeing. It would like India to play a part in resolving the conflict. On the other hand, the help it seeks is confined to military assistance. Such assistance is viewed with anger in Tamil Nadu and runs the risk of becoming a political whipping boy. The experience of the IPKF in Sri Lanka was one of being doublecrossed both by the Sri Lankan elements and by some political groups in Tamil Nadu. The Indian army will not take kindly to a decision which involves it once again in Sri Lanka in a conflict situation.

The Indian government is being warned about the prospect of military aid coming to Sri Lanka from other states, more notably from Pakistan or China. There is no substance to this threat. Pakistan is in no position to spare the size of the force needed in Sri Lanka. It cannot also bear the costs of such a venture.

As for China, there is no reason for it to send a major force so far away from its mainland. The impact of such a move on the Asia-Pacific region would be one of fear and anxiety. China has been attempting to improve its relations with India and a Sri Lankan involvement would be the last thing on its mind. As for Sri Lanka obtaining military hardware, India has never objected to such purchases from all over the world.

The challenge before the Indian government is of responding to Sri Lanka's needs without the politics of Tamil Nadu affecting its room for manoeuvre. New Delhi's decision to involve the chief minister of Tamil Nadu in the decision-making is therefore a good move. Karunanidhi has also responded in a mature manner. One only has to recall his attitude when the IPKF was returning from Sri Lanka to know how volatile the politics of Tamil Nadu can be on Sri Lanka's Tamil question.

The Indian decision to commit itself to Sri Lanka's unity and integrity, without getting itself directly involved in the ethnic conflict, is a sound policy. Jaswant Singh's visit to Colombo was part of that approach. India, however, needs to ensure that the conflict does not spill over politically or in security terms on to Indian territory. Whether India involves itself directly, indirectly, or not at all in the crisis facing Sri Lanka, it cannot remain unaffected. The Sinhala-Tamil conflict is inescapably India's Sri Lanka problem.



will create social, economic and law and order conditions in the state which will be exploited by the political group. The ruling party in Tamil Nadu is an alliance partner at the Centre. The strains in the alliance regarding the Sri Lanka issue are already apparent in the statements of M. Karunanidhi on the one hand and the euphemisms used by New Delhi to discount such remarks on the other. The Inter-Services Intelligence's hand in Tamil Nadu has already been established. The combination of the ISI and the LTTE can be a volatile recipe.

Kumaratunga has taken some significant steps towards meeting the aspirations of the Tamil people. The devolution package she has put together is far ahead of anything produced in the country so far.

Political opportunism of the opposition has denied her the majority needed in the parliament to have the devolution proposals incorporated in the constitu-

Jaswant Singh's visit to Colombo was the result of a sound policy on the part of India

Sri Lankan army has shown itself to be incapable of subduing the LTTE. If the LTTE gains full control of the Jaffna peninsula, its demands for a separate state will only strengthen. If the Sri Lankan government has to face a military defeat, it is unlikely to be able to muster support for a dialogue with the LTTE.

What would be in India's national interest? That is the essential question which should decide Indian response. India's interests would be best served by a resolution of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. That conflict cannot be ended by

Sri Lankan nationalists call for Indian Army's return to the island

COLOMBO: Desperate over army reverses in the strategic Jaffna peninsula, nationalist groups in Sri Lanka, who had opposed the presence of the Indian army during 1987-1990, are now calling for its return.

"Yes, I was strongly against the IPKF then, but considering the present situation, it is imperative that we invite the Indian army to help to halt the LTTE's advance into the Jaffna peninsula," Buddhist monk Elle Gunawansa, who led the anti-India campaign when the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) served in Sri Lanka between 1987 and 1990, told a Sinhala language weekly *Lukbima*.

Gunawansa, who was considered to be a protégé of late president R. Premadasa, called for full-scale Indian military involvement to halt LTTE's onslaught in Jaffna.

Recently, the main opposition United National Party (UNP) asked the Chandrika Kumaratunga government to seek foreign military assistance in stopping the LTTE from taking over Jaffna.

The UNP's call has led to speculations among diplomatic missions

here, as it was a UNP government headed by late president J.R. Jayawardene which first invited the Indian army under the Indo-Lanka Agreement in 1987 to restore peace in the north and east.

However, two years later his successor R. Premadasa termed the IPKF an occupation force and demanded its withdrawal.

The IPKF was finally withdrawn in 1990 after the Premadasa government and the LTTE together demanded its immediate de-induction.

Meanwhile in New Delhi, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh has reassured his Sri Lankan counterpart Lakshman Kadirgamar of India's "fullest support" to the island nation's unity and integrity, media reports said on Sunday.

India's reassurance was conveyed to Mr Kadirgamar, when he met Mr Singh in New Delhi early this week.

Mr Kadirgamar, who is currently in New Delhi undergoing treatment for his kidney ailment, met Mr Singh to discuss the Sri Lankan government's protest to India over the alleged remarks made by the MDMK leader V Gopaldaswami,

eulogising the LTTE's failed attempt on President Kumaratunga.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan army has embarked on a multi-billion rupee ambitious programme to re-equip its embattled army in northern Jaffna. It is seeking urgent supplies of military hardware from seven countries. (Agencies)

Colombo's SOS

New Delhi would do well to tread cautiously in Sri Lanka. The Buddhist monks who have appealed for Indian military intervention against the unrelenting offensive of the Tamil Tigers may have abandoned the middle path, but India should stick to the golden mean, or as close to it as it is practicable, in the ongoing war. India is committed to fighting terrorism and the LTTE is a terrorist organisation. However, it would be foolhardy for South Block to seek to prove its credentials in the matter of combating terrorism by plunging into the conflict, especially after its bitter experience in 1987-90. No doubt, India should cooperate with the government of Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga for ending the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. This should be motivated by its own security interests and the fact that the separatist war in Sri Lanka has implications for India's security and integrity. The LTTE's armoury — which includes artillery and multi-barrel rocket launchers not even in the possession of the Sri Lankan army — and its military operations are worrying not only for Colombo and New Delhi but for the entire region. LTTE trafficks in narcotics and weapons which is a challenge to the Indian Navy. These are legitimate concerns of New Delhi. Nonetheless, these do not translate into a case for India's military involvement, as the Buddhist priesthood has argued. The same Buddhist monks, who are now rising in defence of the Sinhala establishment to avert military humiliation of Colombo, had sternly opposed the 1987 Accord and the IPKF. They had threatened self-immolation if Indian armed forces entered the island republic. The monks have now reportedly admitted their "mistake" in opposing the Indian presence 13 years ago.

India's best bet is to stay out of the swamp, even while doing what it can to preserve the integrity of Sri Lanka and curb the terrorist activities of the LTTE. Both Sri Lankan and Indian interests will best be served through a negotiated settlement within a united Sri Lanka with the Tamil minority enjoying the same degree of autonomy as Tamil Nadu does in the Indian Union. It is not in the Indian national interest for the LTTE to seize Jaffna; the international system cannot acquiesce in any scenario in which an avowedly terrorist organisation achieves its goals by force of arms. Conditions should be created to compel LTTE to come to the negotiating table. The most that New Delhi should do is share intelligence, beef up naval policing of the southern coast to cut off arms and drugs supply lines and pursue a diplomatic and military course guided by Indian interests. Insofar as the LTTE's war has implications for India's integrity and security, New Delhi should make common cause with Colombo. Beyond this it should scrupulously avoid any engagement which may lead to a repeat of the 1987 fiasco. While New Delhi has reasons to bring the LTTE to heel, Colombo also needs to realise that the bigger neighbour across the Palk Straits cannot be treated as a military convenience for or against any one combatant in the ongoing Tamil-Sinhala war.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Mission Jaswant 19/6

External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's Colombo visit was meant to convey several messages to different parties. It reassured the Kumaratunga government and the Sinhala community that India was fully committed to a political solution to the Sri Lankan problem within the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. At the same time, the visit emphasised the urgency of finding a solution to the Tamil issue based on a package of appropriate devolution of powers and the need for agreement on this between the two leading Sri Lankan political parties. It is the one-upmanship in Sinhala chauvinism between the United National Party and Sri Lanka Freedom Party during the '70s and '80s that led to a backlash of extremist Tamil secessionism represented by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The concern in India for the distress of its neighbour and the spirit of good neighbourliness were conveyed through the offer of \$100 million credit and wheat, rice and sugar on counter trade basis. These consultations — with the government and opposition of the island country and the moderate Tamil parties — are clearly intended to impress on the Tamil population on both sides of the Palk Straits that India has little sympathy for the LTTE cause of a separate sovereign Eelam. Jaswant Singh has correctly used the opportunity to rule out Indian military involvement in the conflict in Sri Lanka. That should certainly help the Sri Lankan government and opposition concentrate on developing a mutually agreed devolution package at the earliest. The forthcoming Sri Lankan parliamentary elections have made it difficult for the two parties to reach an agreement on the devolution package since there is the usual political jockeying to make use of the issue for electoral gain vis-a-vis both Sinhala and Tamil voters.

The recent military crisis has blown over and the situation in Jaffna has stabilised. This and the forthcoming elections will tend to delay the finalisation of the devolution package. In a sense, this is a testing time for the leaderships of both parties as they must demonstrate the necessary statesmanship to reach a settlement which will preserve the unity of Sri Lanka. Perhaps bearing this in mind Jaswant Singh has talked about setting a time-frame for concluding the political process. It is unreasonable to expect that the gulf between the Sinhalese and Tamils can be bridged when the two leading Sinhala parties have not been able to sink their differences to work out an agreed devolution package. Hopefully, the seriousness of the present crisis will bring them together. The leader of opposition, Ranil Wickramasinghe, was a staunch supporter of the Jayawardene-Rajiv Gandhi accord. In principle, therefore, he should have no problems supporting a devolution package based on the 1987 arrangement. One hopes Jaswant Singh's mission would help to promote an understanding between the ruling People's Alliance and the opposition United National Party leading to a mutually agreed finalisation of a devolution package. The Sri Lankan political parties should not be under the illusion that since India and the international community are committed to Sri Lankan integrity they can afford to play politics with the devolution package indefinitely.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 JUN 2000

Centre clarifies aid to Lanka

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

59-8 14/6 9-S-Lanka

NEW DELHI, June 13. — Amid mounting criticism from NDA allies in Tamil Nadu, the Centre today clarified that the proposed \$ 100-million credit to Sri Lanka was extension of an already existing facility.

The clarification came after the MDMK leader, Mr Vaiko, met the Prime Minister and Mr Jaswant Singh this evening.

After a 45-minute meeting with Mr Vajpayee, Mr Vaiko told reporters he was satisfied that the line of credit would in no way help Sri Lanka buy arms from India, and that there had been no shift in New Delhi's stance since Mr Singh's two-day visit to Colombo. Mr Singh was present when Mr Vaiko met Mr Vajpayee.

Mr Vaiko said Mr Singh had told him that India had such facilities with 30 countries, including Sri Lanka. It was not free aid, and Colombo could not use the credit line to purchase items outside India. The items Colombo proposed to buy too would have to be cleared by the Union finance ministry. Moreover, this was only a proposal, Mr Singh had clarified, the MDMK leader said.

Mr Vaiko also met Mr Brajesh Mishra, National Security Adviser.

PMK upset: Earlier in the day, in a letter to Mr Singh, the PMK leader, Dr S Ramadoss, questioned the move, saying it would encourage state terrorism against Lankan Tamils, adds SNS Chennai.

"While we appreciate your efforts to find a political solution to the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka, we are slightly upset over your offer of credit facilities ... to the tune of \$ 100 million and wheat, rice and sugar on a counter-trade basis."

Dr Ramadoss said he was afraid the offer would "tilt the balance in favour of the Sinhalese and would go against the interests of Tamils". The decision "was not in consonance with the decision taken by the NDA partners", he added. "In our opinion, the financial and material aid would indirectly encourage state terrorism against Tamils and this offer is no different from the military aid supplied to Sri Lanka by Pakistan and Israel," he said. Dr Ramadoss urged Mr Singh to reconsider his decision.

Jaya backs govt: Miss Jayalalitha today said the government had taken the correct stand that a solution to the Tamil problem should be found within the framework of a unified Lanka, adds PTI from Thanjavur.

"India should not support the concept of a separate homeland for Sri Lankan Tamils, as it would have repercussions here. Pakistan might advocate separate Kashmir, while separatist tendencies might crop up in north-eastern states, she warned.

THE STATESMAN

14 JUN 2000

India offers Lanka 'humanitarian' aid

Udayan Nambudhri
New Delhi, May 3

INDIA TODAY committed itself to a "humanitarian" mission in the civil war-torn Jaffna peninsula of Sri Lanka to aid the trapped Lankan Army holed out there against waves of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) assault. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh ruled out military intervention, but did not elaborate how and when this aid will be given. He firmly outlined that the Sri Lankan Government will be consulted.

The Indian offer came after hectic diplomatic activity over the past three days during which New Delhi gradually modified its decade-long Sri Lanka policy in view of the deteriorating situation in the peninsula following the fall of the Elephant Pass to the LTTE. Between 25,000 and 35,000

TN allies happy

- DMK chief M. Karunanidhi to arrive in Delhi tomorrow, at the Prime Minister's behest, for a discussion on Lankan situation.
- MDMK chief Vaiko says he is happy by the clarification that there will be no military action by India in Lanka.
- PMK chief S Ramdoss "relieved" India is to keep out of the "military mess" in the island nation.
- All three parties worry about possible refugee influx into Tamil Nadu from northern Sri Lanka.

Lankan Army personnel are believed trapped there as the LTTE prepares for its final assault to recapture the town it withdrew from in December 1995.

Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga did not ask directly for Indian assistance, but wrapped it with a general appeal to "friendly countries" for assistance to contain the LTTE's advance. Almost at the same time she was confirming making this statement, her

Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, who incidentally has been in Delhi for the past six weeks for medical treatment, emerged from his bed at the Apollo Hospital to call on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Mr Kadirgamar confirmed that Colombo had been keeping New Delhi posted over the past few days of the developments in northern Sri Lanka.

Kumaratunga addressing members of Sri Lanka Parliament assured them that the battle to defend Jaffna would continue "because no sovereign state -- definitely not the sovereign state of Sri Lanka -- is going to yield territory for exclusive use of one group in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural society".

She also admitted that the military had crumbled in the face of the LTTE's advance because the troops were woefully lacking in training, the focus had been on recruitment.

The decision by the Indian Government was cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs this evening after a meeting held at the Prime Minister's residence. The three Chiefs of Armed Forces were present as were foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh and senior officials of RAW.

India rules out military intervention in Sri Lanka

By Atul Aneja

ND-1

NEW DELHI, MAY 3. India today firmly ruled out military intervention in Sri Lanka but said it was ready to render humanitarian assistance to the strife-torn nation.

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, was categorical that "military intervention in Sri Lanka was ruled out". He was briefing reporters on the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security to discuss the fallout of the current developments in Sri Lanka. Asked whether India would send its aircraft and ships to evacuate the stranded Sri Lankan soldiers, he said "evacuation of troops is not India's responsibility... it is purely a hypothetical situation you are talking about. It is for Sri Lanka to arrive at a decision. Sri Lanka has not asked (for evacuation)... the situation has not arisen."

On the nature of humanitarian assistance, he said India was already "host to over 100,000 refugees".

Earlier, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, who is convalescing in the capital called on the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. Talking to a private TV channel, Mr. Kadirgamar said Sri Lanka had not made a request for Indian intervention

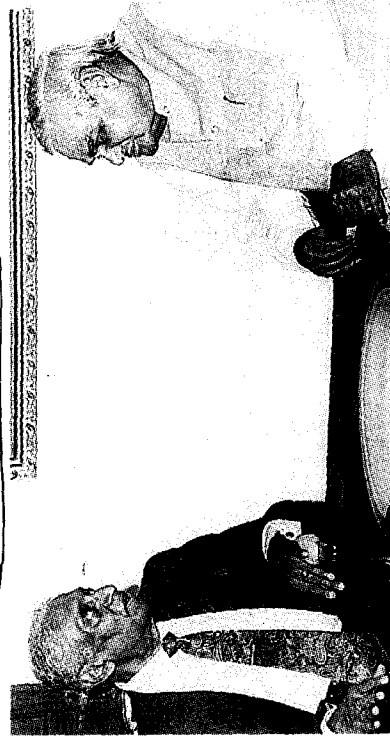
but did not rule out making it later. The CCS meeting was attended by the Prime Minister, the External Affairs Minister, the Finance Minister, the Defence Minister and the three service chiefs.

Government sources said the service chiefs made a presentation on the military assessment of Sri Lankan developments after the fall of the Elephant Pass. According to the assessment, 20,000 Sri Lankan troops have been trapped due to the northern advance of around 5,000 LTTE cadre. Despite their high numbers, the morale of the Sri Lankan forces is extremely low. There is a strong possibility that significant army desertions may occur in case the rebels' advance.

The Sri Lankan Government has three options. First, its soldiers could stiffen their resolve to fight the LTTE. But given the current state of their morale, such an eventuality appears unrealistic.

The Sri Lankans, as a second option, according to the assessment, could press for a ceasefire. However, Colombo is likely to find this highly unpalatable. Given its military advantage on the ground, the LTTE would accept a ceasefire only under the most stringent of terms.

The third option is evacuation of the trapped soldiers. India could



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, with the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, at his residence in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

step in here in case Sri Lanka makes the request quickly. A delay would mean that the port of Kankesanurai, the only available outlet for a pullout, would be closed. If ordered, the Indian Navy would have to hire a big merchant ship to enable a speedy withdrawal. The CCS meeting was preceded by in-house meetings at the service headquarters.

PM invites Karunanidhi

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 3. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to-

day invited the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, to Delhi for consultations on the military developments in Sri Lanka.

It is learnt that after he arrives from Chennai tomorrow, Mr. Karunanidhi will meet Mr. Vajpayee.

Our Chennai Special Correspondent reports:

When contacted, Mr. Karunanidhi said the Prime Minister talked to him around 8 p.m. and asked him whether he could come over to Delhi for a discussion. "I told him that I will let him know the position tomorrow."

Show restraint, India tells Sri Lankan Navy

YD-131
A/S

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, MAY 3. Following the "unprovoked firing" by the Sri Lankan Navy on Tamil Nadu fishermen, India has requested the Sri Lankan Government to ask its Navy personnel deployed in the area to "act with restraint."

The Indian Government has expressed "strong concern" at the firing to the Sri Lankan High Commission in Delhi and the Sri Lankan authorities in Colombo, according to a communication from the Ministry of External Affairs.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, reading out a letter received from the Ministry today, said the Navy authorities had been asked to direct the Naval detachment to prepare a detailed report on the firing including an assessment of the involvement of the Sri Lankan Navy.

The Naval detachment was also being directed to get in touch with the district authorities.

The Chief Minister, replying to a special mention on the issue in the State Assembly, said even if the fishermen had crossed into the Sri Lankan waters, the proper course for the Sri Lankan Navy would be to arrest them peacefully and take them to Sri Lanka and lodge a complaint with the Indian Government. "The Lankan Navy has no right to kill them. I don't know who gave them that right," he said. In the last 10 years, about 80 fishermen had been killed in incidents of firing by the Lankan Navy.

In the latest incident, he said three fishermen — Kumar, Munusamy and Anjappan — died. Another, Velusamy, was injured in the throat. While Rs. 1 lakh had been given to the families of the

dead, Rs. 10,000 was given to the injured, he said.

Referring to demands for the retrieval of the Katchatheevu island from Sri Lanka, he said the then DMK Government had opposed the transfer of the island to Sri Lanka. When the Indian Government decided to go ahead despite the objection raised by Tamil Nadu, he had pressed for the inclusion of two clauses in the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement: one, to allow passage for the people of Tamil Nadu, and to allow fishing by Tamil Nadu fishermen. However, after the dismissal of the DMK Government in 1976, these clauses were dropped from the agreement, he said.

The Chief Minister also promised to take steps to free Tamil Nadu fishermen lodged in Sri Lankan jails.

Indian reaction justified, say Sri Lankan parties

By V.S.Sambandan

COLOMBO, MAY 3. Sri Lankan political parties have taken India's decision to continue with its hands-off policy on Sri Lanka as one which is "justified" based on the past experience of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and the accompanying induction of Indian Peace Keeping Forces in 1987.

While Tamil political leaders said the decision also reflected the "confidence the Tamils in Sri Lanka had over India", the Opposition United National Party (UNP) was of the opinion that the Indian decision reflected not only the current military developments, but was also a reflection of the Sri Lankan Government's handling of bilateral relations.

"Bilateral understanding has failed," the party spokesperson told *The Hindu*, adding "if India is not willing to provide logistics support, it is a serious indication of the failure of bilateral relations."

"We do not want to criticise the Indian Government for the decision," Dr. Karunasena Kodithuwakku said, adding that the present situation was "a national tragedy, though brought upon itself by the Government".

While the Parliamentary Leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) said the decision was reflective of the confidence the Tamils of Sri Lanka had on India, the President of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Mr. D. Sithadthan, said the decision may result in Sri Lanka seeking help from other countries.

THE HINDU

4 MAY 2000

Centre to extend LTTE ban

9.8. K. S. K. P. S.
FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 4: The Centre will soon issue a notification extending the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for another two years. The Tamil Tigers are currently battling Sri Lankan forces in their slow march towards Jaffna.

Sources in the home ministry said the earlier ban, especially in the context of Tamil Nadu, expires on May 14. "The ban will be reimposed for two more years. Even the state government has advised that the terrorist organisation remains outlawed," a source said.

Home ministry officials are particularly concerned about the onward march of the Tigers in the northern parts of Sri Lanka, codenamed "Operation Unceasing Waters III" by Colombo. The Rajiv Gandhi assassination at Sriperumbudur is still fresh in their minds, as also the "murky" role played by some Tamil Nadu politicians at that time.

The latest advance of the Tigers towards Jaffna and, perhaps, further south has shaken up the home ministry, with officials convinced that if Jaffna falls to the advancing rebels, it could have far-reaching consequences for Tamil Nadu.

"In the event of the fall of Jaffna, a time can come in the future when the LTTE gives a call for a greater or united Tamil Eelam. There is considerable sympathy for the Tigers in Tamil Nadu and this can ultimately be translated into a full-fledged demand for a greater, independent Tamil homeland," an LTTE watcher said.

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THE TELEGRAPH

WAR RELIEFS

The parallels inspire caution. The Indian government has agreed to provide humanitarian assistance in the civil war in Sri Lanka. The external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, has not detailed what exactly this means. However, eyes are on the 30,000 Sri Lankan soldiers trapped on the Jaffna peninsula. They will have to be evacuated if the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam launches a campaign to recapture Jaffna. Such an evacuation will require considerable Indian assistance. It should be remembered that an earlier battle for Jaffna led New Delhi to send the ill fated Indian peacekeeping force into Sri Lanka in 1987. Then it was the Sri Lankan army that lay siege to an LTTE held Jaffna. The then Rajiv Gandhi government airdropped humanitarian assistance into the city. Colombo got the message, calling off its army. In return India sent the IPKF to the island. Within months the Indian army was at war with the LTTE and, at one point, in danger of taking on the Sri Lankan army as well. Hundreds of casualties and three years later, the IPKF withdrew. The civil war continued. Complete confusion reigns among most Indians as to what the political and military goals of sending the IPKF were in the first place. New Delhi not only withdrew its soldiers, it cut itself off from the civil war diplomatically, politically, even rhetorically.

But turning its back on Sri Lanka was never feasible for India in the long run. The civil war had domestic political repercussions, especially in Tamil Nadu. It is noteworthy Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee consulted all three Tamil parties in his coalition before announcing the new policy. In addition, the LTTE committed acts of terrorism against India, including assassinating Rajiv Gandhi, and is known to be linked with the Pakistani narcotics trade. More importantly, India's claims to being the dominant south Asia power look hollow as long as it ignores a conflict raging only 14 miles from its coastline. India's announcement will no doubt cheer the Sri Lankan president, Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga. She has sought international intervention to try and temper the LTTE and moderate a civil war which it seems no one can win. Her inviting Norwegian mediation is likely to have been designed to force New Delhi into once again engaging itself in the island war. From Vietnam to Afghanistan, many countries have found foreign civil wars to be a dangerous, bloody and slippery slope. The Vajpayee government must be both transparent and clear about India's present political goals in Sri Lanka. It should also draw a line in the sand and state that India will never involve itself militarily. Statecraft is not merely about showing the flag. It is also about recognizing that a country has only limited resources at hand and must determine its foreign policy goals with comparable humility.

We must come to the aid of Sri Lanka

The situation in Sri Lanka has never been so bad ever since the ethnic conflict began over two decades ago; the Sri Lankan army after some spectacular successes is in disarray. Its morale is at its lowest ebb, desertions have been serious and there is a shortage of trained manpower and command experience at senior levels, arms and ammunition and assertive support of the local population are sadly lacking. This is a recipe for disaster in any language. Elephant Pass, the gateway to Jaffna in the North, is in the hands of Pirabhakaran's Tamil Tigers and upwards of 30,000 troops are holed up in the area with the Tigers in pursuit and only the sea at the rear. It is a hopeless situation and the able and articulate Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, Laxman Kadirgamar, has been in Delhi for several days keeping the Indian Government informed and seeking advice and assistance.

There is no need to recall in detail the disastrous adventure with the Indian Peace Keeping Force sent to contain the Tigers under an agreement between Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayawardene. Rajiv had earlier overruled his own armed forces and insisted on training the Tigers in RDX explosives whose direct consequence was that Indian soldiers under Maj-Gen. A Kalkat, a resourceful and capable commander, had no chance. They suffered heavy casualties and Jayawardene's successor, a bigoted and short-sighted politician, Premadasa, did not hesitate to order the Force to leave forthwith. He is reported, on good authority to have done a deal with the Tigers to this effect, for his political objectives; he died a horrible death blown up beyond recognition in a May Day parade in Colombo.

It is useful to recall two more relevant factors. Pirabhakaran was once inclined to enter the priesthood; it suggests that he is an intensely emotional man but a leader capable of inspiring his followers. He rules his force with a rare degree of cruelty and

q.s. hawk
fear but also of commitment. He seems to have a ready supply of men and women who are willing to be wired as human bombs and die for the cause. One such creature blew up Rajiv and herself. Pirabhakaran decided Rajiv had to go when, like the simpleton he was, he was assuring Pirabhakaran's nominee in Delhi of support if he came to power and Jayawardene in Colombo, that he would help eliminate the Tigers, both at the same time. Pirabhakaran decided such a two-timing fellow had to die and a young family was deprived of a father.

Going further back, the genesis of the conflict had its roots in the action of Chandrika Kumaratunga's father, SWRD Bandaranaike, who suddenly decided that English would be replaced by Sinhala as the national language. The British knew better. For all the time they were there,

C R IRANI

CAVEAT

English was the official language but they were careful to impose the doctrine of equal disadvantage on Tamils and Singhaliese alike. Apart from English every Tamil had to learn Sinhala and every Singhaliese had to learn Tamil. Whole generations had grown up without being conscious of any difference between the two main communities. Suddenly because of Bandaranaike's action, Tamils felt disadvantaged and the feeling of alienation grew as well-qualified Tamils gave way to underqualified Singhaliese on the way to underqualified Singhaliese on the way to underqualified Singhaliese. I have personally reminded President Jayawardene, for whose courage I have great admiration, that it was her father who started it all, just as I reminded President Jayawardene that it was within his power to return the Associated Newspapers Group to the family from

whom it was taken away by Sirimavo Bandaranaike, but without success. Every government finds control of the *Daily News* and the other papers in the group handy and convenient.

Actions and reactions are equal and opposite but it is not always possible to unscramble the omelette. Chandrika has tried valiantly to live down the legacy of her parents, her excuse has always been that the situation on the ground is not conducive to reversing these misguided decisions. The distance separating Tamil and Singhaliese is now almost unbridgeable but an effort must still be made. On this issue President Kumaratunga is right and Ranil Wickremasinghe, the UNP leader, does not have the imagination to respond.

THE Government of India are right not to intervene militarily again but rescue of the 30,000 soldiers of the Sri Lankan Army is on a different plane. We are committed to the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. It follows that we should be sending in the Navy to take them off Jaffna while there is still time and return them to the south of the Island. The Tamil Tigers do not normally take prisoners. We cannot accept 30,000 casualties on our conscience. Besides such a catastrophe will permanently change the contours of the conflict and endanger our own southern flank. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is on his way to Delhi to speak to the Prime Minister at the latter's invitation. It is to be hoped that Karunanidhi will not say that he is in a difficult position with assembly elections due next year and Jayalalitha sure to exploit the issue. The difficult he must do first, the impossible may take a little longer. Our foreign policy interests, our plain duty, our humanitarian concerns, and the interests of a small and friendly neighbour, all require that we act and act quickly.

Godspeed, Prime Minister!

No military role in Lanka: Govt

Delhi only considering Colombo requests, Rajya Sabha told

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, May 4

INDIA HAS ruled out a repeat of the 1987 exercise in Sri Lanka and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh reiterated in Parliament today that the Vajpayee Government will not undertake a military intervention this time round.

A day after committing a "humanitarian mission" to civil war-torn Jaffna peninsula of northern Sri Lanka, the Minister told the Rajya Sabha that India was keen to mitigate the suffering of the civilians affected by the conflict in consultation with the Government of Sri Lanka.

Mr Singh was under pressure for a promise of this nature from not only the Opposition but also from members of Tamil Nadu-based parties which are part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

For the first time he admitted today that "some requests" have been received from Colombo in the context of the present situation and these were receiving the Government's "urgent consideration." He also stated that civilians, not the Sri

Lankan Army trapped in Jaffna in great numbers (varying between 25,000 and 40,000), will be the focus of New Delhi's mission.

The eighties' blunder and the humiliating reverses faced by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was clearly on everybody's mind. Though the Congress, which was in power in 1987 did not rake up the ghost of the exercise, its senior member, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said India should not be made to bear the fallout from the Lanka problem. "Our future steps should be taken with adequate caution," he warned.

The concern evident among members from parties rooted in Tamil Nadu was based on the fear that arms supplied to the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government would be used against Tamils of Sri Lanka. They wanted the Government to categorically rule out such a possibility, to which Mr Singh obliged.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, who was to arrive in the Capital today for talks with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said the

fear was valid. He described the IPKF experience as a "tragedy" and reiterated his government's resolve not to allow the LTTE to operate in his State.

Earlier in the day, the leader of MDMK, a NDA constituent, Mr Vaiko, met the Prime Minister and the Home Minister and sought clarifications based on reports that India would offer arms and ammunition to Sri Lanka. He was assured that there was no such plan.

Later, Mr Vaiko, who had stirred a hornet's nest only last week over his reported pro-LTTE remarks at a meeting in Geneva, said, "The Sri Lanka Government had lost the moral right to ask for the presence of Indian troops as it had asked the IPKF to leave in 1990."

Reading a statement, which he laid in the House, Mr Singh said India was already looking after 100,00 Sri Lankan refugees.

"We are guided by our commitment to a negotiated, peaceful resolution of the conflict within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity -- a Sri Lanka where all communities could realise their aspirations."

145-13A friend in need 95

OVER A decade after it ended, India's IPKF operation remains a bitter memory for most of us. We remember and honour those who lost their lives fighting terrorism in the Punjab. And memories of the martyrs of Kargil are still fresh in our minds. But somehow we have — sadly and unfairly — blacked out memories of those brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice during the IPKF operation. Perhaps part of the reason is our national sense of hurt and bewilderment over that operation. We went to Sri Lanka at the request of the Sri Lankan government to keep the peace between Colombo and the LTTE, who we also regarded as our friends. By the time the IPKF withdrew, we were unpopular in Colombo and at war with the LTTE. Indian lives had been lost, the problem was no nearer a solution and we were seen as the bad guy by both sides.

Given that experience, it is easy to see why few, if any, Indians want the government to accede to Colombo's tacit request for assistance in the battle against the LTTE. In the decade following the IPKF fiasco, we have moved closer to Sri Lanka while recognising that V. Prabhakaran and his Tamil Tigers have turned into an army of murdering, marauding thugs and terrorists. Even so, most Indians refuse to move from the basic position that whatever is going on in Sri Lanka is not our war and that therefore no Indian lives should be lost in trying to sort out another country's problems.

Few can deny the strength of that position. And yet, there are other, legitimate concerns. Given the demoralised and shell-shocked state of the Sri Lankan army, it is possible that the LTTE will be able to push it further and further south. If the 25,000 stranded soldiers are not rescued quickly, then this will further demoralise the army and damage national confidence. If the war against the LTTE is not restricted to the northern tip of the island and becomes a full-fledged civil war, then an unstable and bloodied Sri Lanka is not in India's interests. There will be nothing to prevent Prabhakaran from exporting his brand of ethnic terror to our shores. And other powers will be drawn to involve themselves in that troubled island's affairs. With South Asia already being listed as one of the world's most dangerous places, that kind of conflict is the last thing that India needs.

The easy way out is to say that Sri Lanka must enter into a negotiated settlement with the LTTE. But how does one negotiate with a megalomaniacal terrorist like Prabhakaran? The LTTE has all but torpedoed the latest Norwegian peace initiative by launching this assault and it has a history of not honouring its agreements — as the IPKF experience demonstrates. The truth is that the Lankan Tamil issue lends itself to no easy solution. As a friendly neighbour we must do what we can to help. But we must step well short of landing men on Lankan soil.

PM cautioned against intervention

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, May 5

BUOYED BY New Delhi's decision not to send troops or arms to Sri Lanka, the DMK leaders led by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi today assured Prime Minister A B Vajpayee that they would not seek to influence New Delhi's response to deal with the situation in northern Sri Lanka.

Karunanidhi, however, drew Vajpayee's attention — during an hour long meeting — to the perils involved in any overt role to defuse Colombo's problem after the LTTE's success at Elephant Pass in their bid to free Jaffna peninsula.

The Centre is understood to have conveyed to the Chief Minister the compulsions that would weigh on its mind in the event of another foreign power responding to Colombo's call for

Vajpayee's interaction with Karunanidhi also gave an oppor-

tunity to clear the Chief Minister's misgivings, if any, over the "delay" in consulting the DMK leadership before the Centre decided against military intervention.

Both sides said Karunanidhi's views were heard in all seriousness by Vajpayee, besides virtually all members of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs — Home Minister L K Advani, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and Defence Minister

Sri Lankan crisis

George Fernandes.

Karunanidhi is understood to have made no bones about the opposition in Tamil Nadu in the event of Indian help to the Sri Lankan Government.

The LTTE has had no support in Tamil Nadu since the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 but the arrival of boat people could change people's perception. Their arrival, besides complicating the situation in the State, could pose a

security threat since many rebels were likely to sneak into the country. Karunanidhi had told the Assembly yesterday that his Government was opposed to any move which would lead to further bloodshed against the Sri Lankan Tamils.

He had publicly expressed displeasure that neither his party nor the Union Ministers belonging to the DMK were involved in Wednesday's decision. Attempts to smoothen the ruffled feathers of the DMK were evident in Jaswant Singh's remarks today that Karunanidhi had brought with him a "wealth of experience" relating to Lanka's Tamil problem.

Karunanidhi's clout in forming New Delhi's response is underscored by the fact he was instrumental in the pull-out of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) from the island after a bloody stint in 1990.

In fact, Karunanidhi sought to remind everyone about the events of 1987-90 in his statement after the discussion.

India, U.S. in touch on Sri Lanka

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 5. India and the United States are in continuous contact over the unfolding military crisis in Sri Lanka. The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Lalit Mansingh, has been in touch with the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Richard Celeste, here, for an exchange of views on the Sri Lankan developments.

In Washington, the Indian envoy, Mr. Naresh Chandra, has had a discussion on the subject with the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Mr. Karl Inderfurth. India and the U.S. have the shared objective of preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka with full respect for the rights of the Tamil minority.

The Clinton administration has been formally designating the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as a terrorist organisation since 1997. India, too, has banned the LTTE. Diplomatic sources here say the Clinton administration is seriously concerned about the developments in Sri Lanka, and, like India, is closely monitoring the military dynamics in Jaff-

na. The sources add that while there is no discussion of any joint effort to address the crisis in Sri Lanka, New Delhi and Washington are sharing their respective perceptions on the rapidly evolving situation.

The Clinton administration is fully aware of Indian sensitivities on Sri Lanka and the many complex considerations that drive India's policy towards it. The sources here say: "Washington takes India's views on Sri Lanka very seriously and would not want to do anything that might go against India's interests."

The U.S. has a very modest military relationship with Sri Lanka. Washington has been providing Colombo with a limited amount of military equipment and training. It is unlikely that the U.S. will now embark on a major programme of arms transfers to Colombo to shore up its military position. Washington, however, may consider humanitarian assistance, if asked.

In Washington, the Clinton administration has welcomed the decision by Sri Lanka to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

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THE HINDU

Sri Lanka's call for help

By V. R. Raghavan

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AFTER THE IPKF reached Jaffna in 1987, the Government of India conducted a series of meetings with the LTTE high command. In the breaks for coffee there was always the opportunity to talk informally with the Tigers' Chief, Mr. Prabhakaran. During one such chat, he told me that Jaffna is the symbol of Tamil nationalism. He asserted that the Tigers can never give up on the city. The LTTE has shown repeatedly that it is willing to bear high costs to retain, or regain, the city of Jaffna.

The fall of Elephant Pass and the rapid advance of the LTTE towards Jaffna is a defining moment in the history of the ongoing conflict. A large Sri Lankan Army (SLA) force has been pulled out from and around the Elephant Pass. It could have in the normal course offered enough resistance to the LTTE in the Jaffna peninsula. Unfortunately that seems no longer feasible, due to Sri Lanka's reduced ability to conduct the campaign. The Sri Lankan navy does not control most of the coastline relevant to the campaign. The air force does not dominate the skies in the area. The navy and air force are no longer in a position to sustain the SLA with uninterrupted supplies. Successive and costly defeats in set-piece battles has also sapped the morale of the military. There are large scale desertions from the SLA.

It would, therefore, appear that the fall of Jaffna cannot be delayed for long. There is a clamour in Sri Lanka for obtaining outside military support. India figures high in the calculations, as the probable source of such support. The Buddhist clergy has called on the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo to make such a request. The former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, was in India recently, to size up the response in the event of the fall of Jaffna. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, has also met Mr. Vajpayee, apparently with a message from the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga.

The loss of Jaffna would be a very serious setback to the Government in Sri Lanka. It would need a major military op-

India cannot remain uninvolved with Sri Lanka. That involvement should, however, be of facilitating a peaceful outcome through constructively engaging both sides to the conflict.

eration to recapture the territory. It is no longer in a position to conduct such a campaign. A complete control of the LTTE over the peninsula will inevitably give rise to an influx of refugees into Tamil Nadu. The LTTE will exploit the refugee influx to recreate its presence in the State. A politically explosive situation is therefore a likely possibility. The Government in Tamil Nadu cannot but respond to the public mood about the refugee situation. The ruling party in Tamil Nadu is a partner in the governing alliance in New Delhi. There is the likelihood of strains in the alliance partnership.

The Sri Lanka Government having asked for Indian help, the choices are not any easier for New Delhi. As of now, the talk is of seeking Indian help in evacuating the army elements locked in the peninsula. This would involve Indian military aircraft landing and taking off from the airfields near Jaffna. The Sri Lankan air force and army are in no position to ensure the safety of Indian aircraft which would, therefore, be vulnerable to LTTE attacks. This will be from anti-aircraft missiles or mortar and artillery fire on the airfields. If security is to be ensured for the aircraft on ground and in air, an Indian military presence in and around Jaffna would be essential. This will involve Indian troops in direct conflict with the LTTE. This will also be true of any naval support India may be asked to provide. There has been some reference to Indian military support in the form of artillery and landing ships being made available. The possibility of air attacks against the LTTE by Indian combat aircraft is also being talked about.

It is necessary to identify the fundamental Indian interest which is going to be met by direct military assistance to the Government in Colombo. What India needs most is a peaceful resolution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. A military so-

lution is no longer possible. Sri Lankan experts have also come around to that conclusion. In fact, the misplaced belief in a faction within the SLA that a military solution can be imposed on the LTTE, has led to the present situation. Under the circumstances, the Indian role must be to bring the conflict to an end by means other than military. Allowing the conflict to continue by aiding the SLA, which has failed to subdue the LTTE, will only extend the fruitless military conflict indefinitely.

There is a possibility that in the event of India not responding to its plea for assistance, the Sri Lankan Government may seek it from elsewhere. The Government in Colombo has announced that it has sought such assistance from a number of countries. Such assistance can come from a state or states within South Asia, or from outside the region. The Government of India will have to decide whether such a development will be in India's interests. This is particularly relevant in the context of Sri Lanka's changed perspectives on India. Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga had earlier stated that "The India factor is crucial to our (Sri Lankan) nation. It is a natural and vital ingredient of our national well-being." The choices before the Government of India are therefore complex and sensitive.

India cannot remain uninvolved with Sri Lanka. That involvement should, however, be of facilitating a peaceful outcome through constructively engaging both sides to the conflict. The sensible option would be to work towards the cessation of hostilities in the Jaffna peninsula. A ceasefire jointly agreed between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE, to be followed by serious negotiations, appears the best possible way ahead. A ceasefire would allow the airlift of SLA personnel from the Jaffna peninsula. This can be assisted by Indian civilian or military air-

craft. It would also imply that the Government in Colombo would be willing to substantially reduce its military presence in the peninsula. The LTTE will quite predictably object to a ceasefire on the ground that it will allow the SLA to regroup and recoup.

The situation is, however, not entirely without some positive possibilities. If Jaffna falls, the situation could also stabilise. There are fears expressed that if the SLA manages to hold out in the peninsula, the LTTE would turn its attention towards Trincomalee. However, the LTTE's ability to mount towards Trincomalee, the scale of operations it did at Elephant Pass and in the run on Jaffna, is suspect. It is therefore possible that in the event of Jaffna falling to the LTTE, there would be a stalemate. The LTTE would hold the peninsula and the SLA would concentrate on denying to the LTTE the Eastern province. The LTTE's gains would be confined to Jaffna, while the SLA would have stabilised on the Eastern province. That might be a sobering state of affairs in which both sides could start a serious dialogue.

The immediate need is for preventing a major political disaster in the peninsula of a very large SLA force becoming captive. Such an outcome is going to make nearly impossible any future dialogue between the two sides. It will make it difficult for the Kumaratunga Government to enter into a dialogue with the LTTE. Public opinion and political costs would effectively prevent it. The LTTE would on its part become ever more strident in its demands on the basis of its 'victory'.

India as the major regional player has a responsibility towards the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. It can best fulfil that role by choosing carefully between allowing the conflict to continue, and facilitating an early dialogue between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. An Indian military involvement in Sri Lanka would turn out to be an unpredictable one, both in the time dimension and in its consequences. An Indian military involvement in the ethnic conflict of the island nation would not be in anyone's interest.

T.N. BRIEFED ON SRI LANKAN 'REQUESTS'

We won't tie Centre's hands, says Karunanidhi

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, MAY 5. After a 90-minute consultation with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and other senior Union Ministers on the Sri Lankan situation, and on how to deal with the Sri Lankan Government's "several requests" for assistance, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, agreed that it was "the Government of India's privilege to take any appropriate action in the interest of the nation".

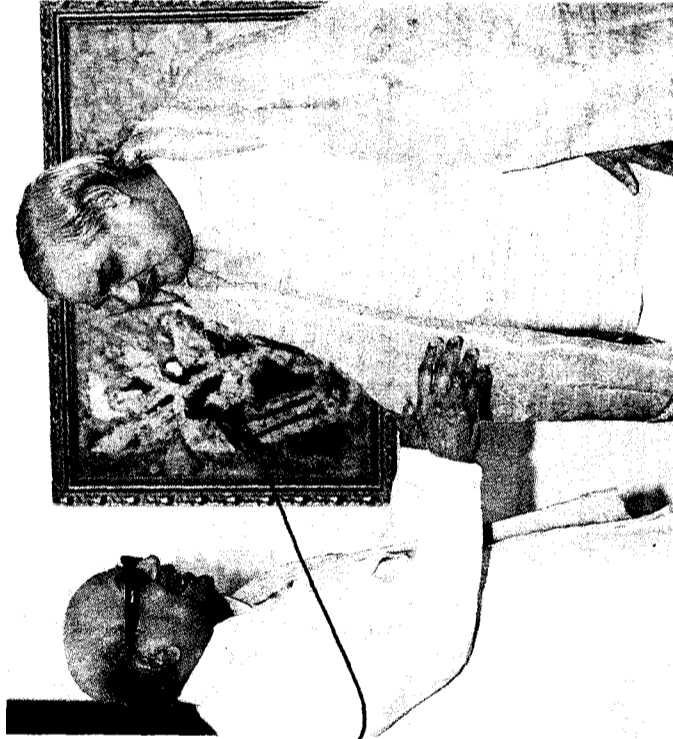
Mr. Karunanidhi came here on Thursday night in response to a request from the Prime Minister. The Chief Minister, accompanied by the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Mr. Murasoli Maran, interacted with Mr. Vajpayee this afternoon over lunch. Also participating in the discussion were the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani and the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes.

Mindful of the political ramifications in Tamil Nadu, and at the Centre, of any stance towards Sri Lanka, the Central leadership appeared keen to be seen as deferring to the words of advice from a senior leader and important alliance partner.

While appearing to endorse the

Referring to the possibility of some kind of "humanitarian assistance" to Sri Lanka, Mr. Karunanidhi noted that "we do not want to tie the hands of the Centre but we should not forget the past". For good measure, the Chief Minister added "we do not want any overflow of Sri Lankan matter into Tamil Nadu". Mr. Jaswant Singh is believed to have briefed the Chief Minister on the exact nature of "several requests" from Sri Lanka, and Mr. Karunanidhi appeared satisfied with what he heard from the Central Ministers.

Interacting with reporters after the Vajpayee-Karunanidhi meeting, Mr. Singh reiterated that "humanitarian assistance could be considered if and when sought but the situation has not arisen yet". He also repeated the formulation he made on Thursday in the Rajya Sabha: no question of travelling the IPKF route and no question of Indian military intervention. Mr. Karunanidhi is also reported to be disinclined to lay down any firm line on the question of humanitarian assistance, and it was agreed that the next course of action be decided only after determining how the situation evolved over the next few days.



The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, presenting a shawl to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

Vajpayee Government's stand of "no military intervention, no arms assistance but only humanitarian assistance", the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's cryptic statement suggested a slight variance in perception between the Central leaders and the DMK. Mr. Karunanidhi is believed to have pointed out lack of consultation with the Central Ministers from Tamil Nadu before the Government formalised its response to the Sri Lankan crisis.

More reports on Page 13

PMK urges India, U.N. to recognise Eelam

By Our Special Correspondent

TRICHY, MAY 5 The Pattali Makkal Katchi has appealed to the Indian Government to immediately recognise Tamil Eelam, for which the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka have been waging a battle. An emergency meeting of the PMK State executive, held here today, also appealed to the United Nations to intervene and help create an independent Eelam, so that the war in the island would come to an end.

The founder president of the PMK, Dr. S. Ramadoss, who briefed presspersons at the end of the meeting, presided over by Mr. G. K. Mani, welcomed the Indian Government's stand of not supplying arms to the Sri Lankan Government or supporting it to crush the Tigers. He wanted India to ensure that no major power gained a foothold in the island, in the guise of establishing peace. In the event of any country providing help to Sri Lanka to fight the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, "India should not hesitate to take counter measures."

On the Sri Lankan Government's reported bid to get Israel's support, Dr. Ramadoss hoped that neither Israel nor any other country would support it when the LTTE "was poised to score a decisive victory." This was the right time for the Sri Lankan Government to "accept defeat" and hold talks with the LTTE and concede its demands. The Tigers would "emerge victorious" in the present struggle for supremacy over Jaffna.

The Indian Government should extend all help to the Tamil civilians in Jaffna, which could be routed through the International Red Cross. A resolution adopted by the PMK wanted the Centre and Tamil-

nadu Government to take steps to meet any big influx of refugees and provide all help.

Dr. Ramadoss said he would convey the PMK's decision to the Prime Minister and was confident that all the constituents of the NDA would welcome the party stand. He urged the political parties in the State to support the LTTE at this juncture "whole heartedly."

Asked whether he would request the lifting of the ban on the LTTE in India, Dr. Ramadoss said the question did not arise at the moment. On whether he thought the LTTE would allow safe passage to the Sri Lankan forces, he said it was not possible to say what the LTTE strategy would be. It had, in the past, allowed prisoners of war and soldiers to return.

Tamils betrayed: Swamy

Our Chennai Special Correspondent writes:

The Janata Party president, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, has accused the BJP-led government of betraying the Tamils of Sri Lanka by promising "humanitarian aid" to the Sri Lankan Government without getting a "time-bound, public, and prior commitment" for the demand of the Tamils for an Indian-type federal Constitution.

"There is no such thing as humanitarian aid at a time of war when Sri Lanka is on the verge of dismemberment," he said in a statement.

The Janata Party would agitate for the resignation of the Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, if he was unable to get the Centre to make Sri Lanka concede the Tamils' minimal demand, by May 15. The Puthiya Thamizagam president, Dr. K. Krishnasamy, urged India to offer help to Tamils in Sri Lanka.

India's stakes in Sri Lanka's unity

By Malini Parthasarathy

At this moment, when the troubled island of Sri Lanka is entering an extremely challenging phase in the prolonged ethnic conflict with the LTTE poised to regain complete control of the Jaffna peninsula, it is time for India's politicians and diplomats to face the implications of this deadly sequence of events. It might certainly make sense for the Vajpayee administration to rule out intervention in the military conflict on the island. But official policy must begin to consider whether or not there is a contradiction between the country's own strategic and political interests and the partisan considerations of the Tamil Nadu politicians who parade themselves as guardians of "the interests of the Tamil people", yet continue to covertly support the LTTE's murderous and fascist rampage in Jaffna. The opportunist manner in which leading Tamil Nadu politicians have seized upon the current crisis in Sri Lanka to whip up Tamil chauvinism in support of the LTTE adds a dangerous dimension to this country's security environment.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, has expressed himself against India's intervention on the basis of the dubious argument that such an intervention would mean that India was "part of the war effort leading to the death of Tamils". Apart from the MDMK's Vaiko, whose recent remark on the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's surviving the assassination attempt evoked sharp controversy, the PMK led by Dr. S. Ramadoss has unabashedly and openly demanded that the Government recognise "Tamil Eelam" now that the LTTE appears to be winning the battle. It is evident that as the Tigers gain ascendancy in northern Sri Lanka, the pro-LTTE forces in Tamil Nadu have begun to shed their inhibitions about demonstrating their LTTE sympathies. What is also important to note is that the chauvinist and incendiary portrayal of the current conflict between the Sri Lankan military and the LTTE as a case of a "Sinhala army hunting down Tamils" is a gross distortion of the ground realities. The LTTE which has systematically and ruthlessly eliminated the entire range of Tamil moderate political leadership and has not emerged from any kind of process of democratic selection can hardly be said to be representative of the Sri Lankan Tamil people. For the DMK and its allies in the NDA to suggest that the current struggle by the Sri Lankan Government to establish its authority in the north of the island is an ethnically partisan effort which is being

resisted by a "heroic fighting force" in the LTTE, is not really in the interest of the Sri Lankan Tamil people who have not been allowed to democratically decide if it is the LTTE who should represent them.

Given this manifest convergence of interests between the LTTE in Jaffna and this section of Tamil Nadu political opinion, it does seem that the Vajpayee administration would have to make unambiguously clear that the reasons for the Government's disinclination to intervene militarily have only to do with the fact of India's past experience in this regard, particularly the embarrassing imbroglio over the IPKF and not at all to do with any sense of "solidarity" with the LTTE. Few would question the logic of the Government's stance that direct intervention in the fighting in Sri Lanka would be unwise given the painful experience of the past when the IPKF was bogged down in the Jaffna peninsula locked in deadly combat with the LTTE guerillas but had unfairly become the target of the ire of the Premadasa regime and the Sinhala Buddhist clergy in Colombo. Given that the IPKF debacle was seen as a humbling of sorts, of Indian diplomacy, and it was followed by the brutal assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by an LTTE suicide bomber, it was not surprising that the assassination of a former Prime Minister traumatised the national psyche and the consequent public and political revulsion manifested in a total retreat from an official interest in Sri Lanka.

It is also evident that despite the fact that New Delhi has been appreciative of the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's earnest efforts for a political solution to the ethnic crisis, reflecting in her proposals for devolution of power and constitutional reform, official Indian policy has kept a scrupulous distance from an involvement in the process of resolving the ethnic crisis. Thus, in this sense the decision of the Vajpayee administration not to intervene in the military conflict is a consequence of the policy approach of the '90s. But it might be time for New Delhi to take a closer look at the implications of the LTTE's resurgence in northern Sri Lanka and judge whether such a development is at all in India's interest.

First, the political context of the ethnic conflict has changed radically since the early '80s. Between 1983 and 1987, India was unwittingly sucked into Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict as a result of the exodus of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees who poured into Tamil Nadu because of the Army's ruthless pursuit of a military strategy that did not

spare the civilian population. Politically, India had every reason to empathise with the efforts of the Tamil political groups, particularly the TULF which was working hard to get the Sri Lankan state to give equal emphasis to Tamil minority rights in crucial arenas. The Indian diplomatic effort which might have ended painfully in the IPKF debacle had also a beneficial consequence in the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement which offered a framework for the articulation and embodying of Tamil minority political and cultural rights. That conceptual breakthrough provided a basis for a paradigm shift in Sri Lanka. Since then, the Sri Lankan state, particularly under the administration of Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, has committed itself to a substantive process of constitutional reform and devolution of power that will place the Tamil minority on an equal footing with the Sinhala majority, with clear control over its destiny in the north and the most part of the east. The Kumaratunga administration, unlike its predecessor regimes, has sought to offer a non-chauvinist dispensation, and even if tactically, it has failed to make headway, it continues to be the most promising instrument of a potential peace process.

This is not to suggest that the Sri Lankan President has not made strategic mistakes or tactical blunders on the way in her attempt to bring peace to Sri Lanka. But in her acknowledgment of the need to address the ethnic crisis through constitutional and political reform, she offers a way out of the morass that is far more healing than the LTTE's trail of murder and destruction. The LTTE's track record as an interlocutor, as Indian diplomatic experience will testify, is one of slipperiness and unreliability. The Vajpayee administration must recognise that this is a crucial moment when it is vital not to be taken in by the orchestrated campaign masterminded by LTTE-sympathising Tamil Nadu politicians whose own partisan designs require them to portray the LTTE as freedom-fighters and the Sri Lankan Government as a chauvinist aggressor. Even if for tactical and strategic considerations, India cannot intervene militarily in the conflict, the Vajpayee administration must make it categorically clear that in political and diplomatic terms, it will throw its weight behind the Kumaratunga Government. It must also indicate clearly that on no account will it offer even the slightest encouragement to the LTTE's separatist and fascist designs, which, in the ultimate analysis, are harmful to India's interests as well.

'We did not want to embarrass the Centre'

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, MAY 5. The Centre remains firm in its decision not to intervene militarily in Sri Lanka and it is also against supply of arms to it, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, said here tonight.

Talking to mediapersons at the Chennai airport on his return from Delhi, Mr. Karunanidhi said, "We will be consulted in whatever decision the Centre takes on the developments in Sri Lanka." He brushed aside a question whether his earlier remarks in Delhi that the Centre had the sole privilege to take any appropriate decision in the interest of the nation meant any watering down of the stand against military intervention in Sri Lanka.

"We did not want to embarrass the Centre," the Chief Minister said adding that "we form a part of the Centre" and whatever decision taken by the Centre should be considered one taken by all the partners of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

On the reported move to send humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka, Mr. Karunanidhi said the question could be decided only after due consultation amongst the allied partners.

"I am thankful," he quipped when a reporter referred to the remark of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, that his (Mr. Karunanidhi's) political expertise would be utilised in finding a solution to the current Sri Lankan developments.

Asked whether the State would seek Central assistance if there was a large-scale influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, he said depending upon the situation appropriate decisions would be taken.

On the Sri Lankan Opposition leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe's view that there could be only a political solution to the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka, Mr. Karunanidhi said discussions and political solution had to be welcomed.

When his attention was drawn to a resolution adopted at the PMK's executive in Tiruchi calling on the Centre to recognise 'Tamil Eelam', he said it was the view of the PMK.

The president of the Tamil Maanila Congress, Mr. G.K. Moopanar, who arrived by an earlier flight from Delhi, told reporters that he welcomed "any humanitarian initiatives" in solving the present ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka.

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THE HINDU

PM calls all-party meet on Sri Lanka

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 6. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has convened a meeting of all Opposition parties on Monday to brief them on the developments in Sri Lanka. The Telugu Desam is also likely to be invited to join this conclave; all other National Democratic Alliance partners are presumed to be briefed by virtue of being part of the Government.

Mr. Vajpayee has already had one round of consultations with the Tamil Nadu allies, and, later, he held special discussion with the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi. On Monday, the Opposition parties in Parliament would get an update from the Prime Minister on the situation in Sri Lanka.

During the short discussion in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee of the Congress(I) secured an acknowledgement from the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, that the Government would keep the Opposition parties informed before taking any substantive initiative on Sri Lanka. Though the Opposition parties, too, are opposed to any kind of military intervention, there is very little sympathy for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and some Opposition leaders believe even Mr. Karunanidhi is not all that excited about the LTTE.

But within the Vajpayee Cabinet itself some senior Ministers are suspected to be sympathetic to the LTTE cause; the consultation with the Opposition could be one way to bypass these pro-LTTE voices and to evolve a policy aimed at serving the national interests, which include a united Sri Lanka.

Informal consultations on at the UNSC

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 6. The members of the United Nations Security Council are engaged in informal consultations among themselves about the unfolding military crisis in Sri Lanka, diplomatic sources here say.

There is no proposal so far from any of the members to convene a meeting of the UNSC to address the situation in Sri Lanka, according to a senior Western diplomat.

Unless the situation in Sri Lanka dramatically worsens, informed sources here say, it is unlikely that the UNSC will formally take up the issue. There might be other political hurdles to cross before the UNSC will enter the picture.

It appears that both Colombo and New Delhi have reservations about the involvement of the United Nations in the current situation.

Colombo has consciously avoided involving the United Nations so far in its civil war with the LTTE. There is some concern in Colombo that such a move might needlessly give some legitimacy to the LTTE as a political entity.

As a matter of general principle, India has long objected to U.N. intervention in the internal affairs of nations. India has no desire to see the internationalisation of a conflict next door.

The U.S. and its allies, as well as Russia, are indeed very sensitive to India's security concerns in Sri Lanka, and would be wary of getting the U.N. involved in a civil war in India's neighbourhood.

But the mood in the UNSC could change if Colombo is unable to resist further advances by the LTTE against Jaffna.

The big unanswered question is whether India can sustain the position that it will neither intervene on its own in the Sri Lankan crisis nor will it let other major powers or the U.N. do so.

Equally important is the question whether India is prepared to countenance the political consequences of the LTTE regaining Jaffna.

The hope here is that situation will not come to that pass, and that the Sri Lankan forces will be able to hold their own.

Sri Lankan troops on alert

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, MAY 6. Sri Lanka's rapidly evolving politico-military dynamics today witnessed a toning down of the sweeping powers given to policemen recently, while on the battle front Government troopers were preparing themselves for possible LTTE attacks in three crucial sectors of the northern Peninsula.

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TN parties acting as LTTE's proxy

G C Shekhar

Chennai, May 7

THE FRINGE parties do it openly while the mainline outfits couch their words carefully. But the intention is the same — be the LTTE's proxy in Tamil Nadu to carry out a relentless propaganda war in favour of the banned militant outfit.

On Sunday, P Nedumaran, a one-time Congressman-turned-Prabhakaran fan, was arrested as he attempted to stage a pro-LTTE conference at Chidambaram. The thrust of the conference was to celebrate the recent military wins of the Tigers and to drum up support for its Eelam cause. It is widely believed that the Tamil Deisya Iyakkam (Tamil Nationalist Movement), run by Nedumaran, is bankrolled by the LTTE or its sympathisers based outside India.

With the Lankan Tamils issue back in focus after the Chandrika Government sought India's help,

these fringe parties now spearhead the open campaign against India sending its troops or arms to Sri Lanka.

The Periyar Dravida Kazhagam, with hardly 2,000 members throughout the State, finds enough money to plaster Chennai with posters urging the Centre not to help the Chandrika Government even while predicting fall of Jaffna to the Tigers.

The ban on the LTTE hardly deters these outfits, which are essentially rabble-rousers for the Tigers and they promptly whip up a forum and assemble so-called Tamil intellectuals whenever an LTTE cause is threatened.

These outfits were in the forefront of the campaign to have the death penalty against four of Rajiv Gandhi's assassins turned down.

While the fringe parties sport their pro-Tiger stripes openly, the mainline parties like the MDMK and PMK are covert canvassing agents for the LTTE.

MDMK chief Vaiko's public speeches invariably have references to the brave battle being waged against Sinhala chauvinists. "Our brothers are fighting a war to save the entire Tamil race," remains Vaiko's favourite line to this day.

The PMK passes a resolution at its executive that Eelam is the only solution to the ethnic crisis and even urges other political parties to recognise the LTTE as the sole representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Within hours of the Sri Lankan request for military help, the PMK's Union Ministers and MDMK's Vaiko asked Prime Minister Vajpayee not to heed the request.

Their intention is not to save Indian lives but to help the LTTE retain its military advantage.

Since Indian involvement would be a setback to the Tigers, the Vaikos and Ramdosses are out to stop such a development.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

High hopes in Sri Lanka of India's assistance

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, MAY 7. Ten years after Indian troops left Sri Lanka, resulting in the adoption of a hands-off policy by New Delhi, expectations have escalated in the island-nation of a possible Indian assistance to ward off the latest advances by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the northern Jaffna Peninsula.

Faced with successive rebel advances since December, the foreign policy line of the Sri Lankan Government, which had steadfastly maintained that the conflict was "internal" in nature, underwent subtle changes with the involvement of a Norwegian initiative to commence direct talks between the Government and the LTTE.

But, it was in April, when the Tigers overran the crucial Elephant Pass gateway garrison to the Jaffna Peninsula, that the overall mode changed — initially on internal perceptions and later on the external front.

When the Sri Lanka Army was on a victorious high, an overall mode of optimism prevailed that the LTTE could be contained and brought to the negotiating table. The 'internal' nature of the conflict was accentuated by the Government, while the rebels, as well as other Tamil groups, missed no opportunity to 'externalise' the conflict.

Elephant Pass and the subsequent military developments, however, have reversed the situation. Calls to "friendly nations" by the Sri Lankan Government contrasted with a stoic silence by the LTTE, for the moment, mark the approach to externalising the decades-long conflict during the past weeks.

Expectations of an external role though divided somewhat along ethnic lines, are linked to the rapidly-shifting immediate military setting rather than the larger end of reaching a political settlement

between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, for which the precondition remains a coming together of the sharply-opposed political parties — the ruling People's Alliance (PA) and the Opposition United National Party (UNP).

Majority Sinhalese thinking is along the lines that the "Tigers would have to be finished or else we are finished", while minority Tamils see the LTTE advances as taking the challenge into the Sinhala polity.

In this context both Tamils and Sinhalese are watching on how India's policy on Sri Lanka would unfold in the days ahead.

While the majoritarian expectation is that the Indian involvement, of whatever nature and degree, would help in containing the military advances of the LTTE, Tamils look to what India's response would be to the LTTE advance in the Peninsula when it "watched the Sri Lanka Army push out the LTTE in 1995".

Delhi will mediate only if Colombo asks: Jaswant

NEW DELHI, MAY 7. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, tonight said that India would consider playing the role of a mediator only if it was approached by the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE to do so.

In an interview to a private TV channel, the Minister said India was already playing a pro-active role on the diplomatic front and was closely monitoring developments in the island nation where the LTTE's recent offensive inflicted heavy casualties on troops of the Sri Lankan army.

He again ruled out military intervention in the Jaffna peninsula to rescue over 35,000 army soldiers trapped there. — UNI

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THE HINDU

Hobson's choice for India

If New Delhi rejects Colombo's request for military assistance, Chandrika Kumaratunga will have no choice but to ask for Pakistan's help, argues ASHOK K. MEHTA

AFTER ITS stunning victory at Elephant Pass (EP), the LTTE is marching inexorably towards Jaffna. The Sri Lankan Army (SLA) seems to have put its hands up. A Tamil Tigers' victory, besides being emotionally devastating for the majority Sinhalese, would also send the welcome message to separatists in the entire South East Asian region that a military solution to protracted struggles is achievable.

Who would have thought that ten years after the IPKF's ignominious expulsion, Sri Lankans, including the Buddhist clergy and the opposition United National Party (which was in power during the IPKF operations), would appeal for a return of the IPKF? Reservists have been called up and conscriptions may be ordered. The end game in Sri Lanka has started.

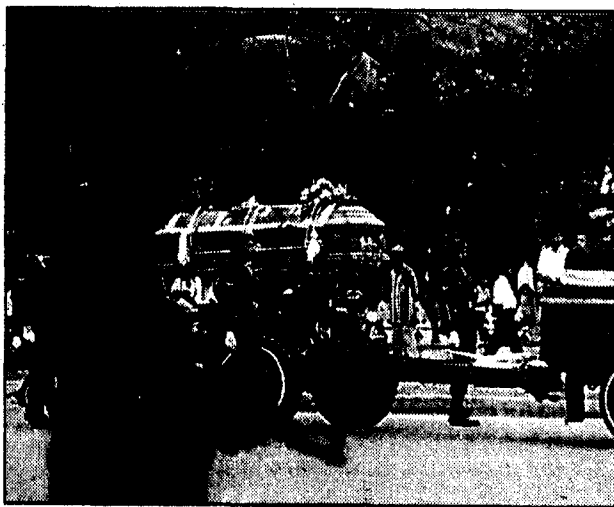
Recently, former Sri Lankan Army Commander at the time of IPKF, Lt Gen Hamilton Wanasinghe, who is Sri Lanka's most level-headed military leader, had said that the LTTE just cannot capture EP. For someone well known for his view that the SLA can win the war provided India did not interfere, even he has now joined the "Help Sri Lanka" brigade. Surprisingly, this help is being sought, not just to defend Jaffna but also to evacuate 40,000 troops who are likely to get trapped there.

As usual, India has been pushed to the backfoot. The Government should have done contingency planning as soon as EP was first attacked late last year. It is now talking of humanitarian assistance but what is urgently needed is a military assistance package. Some defence experts in Sri Lanka have confirmed of a creeping demoralisation among the people as the long procession of body bags from Jaffna arrive in Colombo. Others are pushing a new military strategy under a leadership capable of commanding the respect of soldiers. These are signs of capitulation. Yet, President Chandrika Kumaratunga, while vowing to defend Jaffna, is asking the LTTE to choose between peace (talks) and military defeat.

The truth is that the SLA has been on a los-

SRI LANKA

ing spree since November last year when they lost to the LTTE in six days. The army surrendered 20,000 square km of land. The humiliating defeat last month at EP was the last nail in the Lankan coffin. It has opened the gates to the Jaffna peninsula, retaken by the SLA in 1995. Yet, it is surprising that until a few days before EP fell, military strategists were not sure about the LTTE's



military objectives: will it be EP or Jaffna? This is serious intelligence and operational failure.

The surrender of the military initiative at EP began in December last year when the SLA lost crucial beachhead camps supporting the garrison. It is a riddle as to why crack commandoes were deployed on ground-holding roles when they ought to have been keeping the Tigers on the hop. Unfortunately, the SLA has slipped back into a bunker mentality instead of making the LTTE fight on its terms. Alas, it is too late for a change of tactics as the Lankan military seems to have lost both its cohesion and capacity to fight.

The LTTE is showing rare elan and sophistication in winning the war without fighting any battle. For example, the Tigers encircled

EP, cut off drinking water supply and pounded the garrison with superior fire power, forcing a fighting withdrawal. The LTTE is no longer a rag-tag guerrilla band, but a full-fledged conventional army using guerrilla tactics as a battle adjunct.

What after EP? LTTE supremo V. Pirbhakaran has three choices. Take Jaffna and press for peace. Capture Jaffna, Palaly and Kankasanturai harbour and the issue for peace (like EP, Palaly and KKS were never under LTTE control). Spurn negotiations and attack the strategic Trincomalee harbour. Having tasted blood, the Tigers may go for the final kill at Trinco enabling a military merger of the north and east. Obviously, these options will be calibrated by internal and external responses to the evolving situation.

The fall of Jaffna would be a disaster for Kumaratunga's government which is facing an election in August. It was she who crafted the "War for Peace" strategy which led to the recapture of Jaffna in 1995 and subsequent military operations to reunite the country. Unfortunately, it was a case of one victory too many which led to the failure to hold captured territory.

The seizure of Jaffna by the Tigers and the threat to Palaly would reverse the fate of the adversaries; in 1987, it was the LTTE which had been cornered at Vadamarachchi by the SLA and India's ingenious "bread-bombing" of Jaffna saved the Tigers from extinction. This time around, it is the SLA which is trapped. A LTTE victory would threaten the integrity of both India and Sri Lanka. Like in 1971 and 1987, it is a distress situation for Sri Lanka. Ms Kumaratunga needs immediate help.

Short of another IPKF, the SOS should include provisioning of firepower, on land, air, and at sea, to check the LTTE onslaught and prevent the fall of Jaffna and Trinco which could lead to the disintegration of Sri Lanka. The Indian government (and public opinion) must remember that if India rejects the request for military assistance Ms Kumaratunga will have no choice but to ask Pakistan for the same. For India, therefore, it is a Hobson's choice.

Lanka situation stabilises, New Delhi breathes easy

Govt. concerned over Lankan war's possible effects in TN.

By Manoj Joshi

NEW DELHI: Last week's assessment that the Sri Lankan army was on the verge of collapse and that the LTTE was set to sweep into Jaffna has given way to modest optimism here with news that the Sri Lankan armed forces have stabilised the war front.

Last week, panic reports from Jaffna compelled the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs to reject Colombo's appeal for intervention. But now the government is hoping the situation will stabilise, enabling some breathing space for the embattled Lankans.

The CCSA's policy was:

- ▶ No intervention, military or otherwise.
- ▶ No solution outside the framework of a united Sri Lanka
- ▶ No third party intervention.

The CCSA recognised the compulsions for the Sri Lankan request, but its assessment was that such a course was simply not in India's interest at this juncture. According to a senior minister, this view prevailed not just because of memories of the IPKF experience but from a measured consideration of the present situation and the various options available.

According to a senior official, the CCSA viewed the subject from three points of view:

- ▶ Any hostile activity in a region so close to India is a matter of deep concern to the country.
- ▶ India does not want a situation in Jaffna that could lead to a rush of refugees.
- ▶ The government has to be mindful of anything that could affect the political situation in Tamil Nadu.

In these circumstances, the Indian advice to their Sri Lankan counterparts was the same that it was receiving from its own generals: To redeploy remaining forces in the Jaffna peninsula further south near Vavunia. India is afraid that a humiliating Sri Lankan surrender and massacre of captured personnel could touch off anti-Tamil violence in southern Sri Lanka. This in turn would lead to a reaction in Tamil Nadu.

The reflex influence of developments in Jaffna has been a major concern for India since the 1980s. Dravidian parties are part of the BJP-led coalition and Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee has gone out of his way to keep them in the decision-making loop.

Desertions make the war tougher for Lankan army

By Seema Guha
for www.timesofindia.com

COLOMBO: In the last few months there have been mass desertions from the Sri Lankan army. Estimates vary from 10 and 15 to 20,000. All of them from the ranks. The majority are from poor peasant families of the south, the Sinhala-Buddhist heartland.

This does not indicate that the Sinhala soldier is any better or worse than his counterparts in other armies. He is only ill-trained and unmotivated to fight what is increasingly seen as a dirty war with no definite end in sight.

There is no time for regular two-three years of rigorous training, simply because demand outstrips supply by far. Raw recruits, with just six weeks' training are sent to serve in forward areas. It is more like on-the-job training.

Though many of them fight to the end and get killed, a large number feel they have no stakes in this war, an army officer who did not want to be identified said on Sunday. "It is not a one-time operation which will have quick results and the soldiers know it," he said.

The Lankan soldier is literate, reads the newspapers and thinks for himself. He can often turn round and question his officer arguing against an order. He also

realises that a political solution is the only answer to the ethnic problem, the army can "free" territory but will find it hard to hold on to it.

"Talk of peace—the Norwegian initiative, and rumours about Indian intervention is distracting for the soldier... He gets the feeling why take a risk now, when there is a chance that the fighting will end," the officer said.

Unlike in the 1980's when the army was gung-ho, totally motivated and bent on bringing the LTTE to its knees, today, experience shows that a guerrilla group's staying powers are much more. Everyone here knows that war is not the answer. And no one wants to join the army willingly.

(Tamil groups want India to broker peace: Only at www.timesofindia.com)

Pro-LTTE rally banned

The Times of India News Service

CHENNAI: Even as pro-LTTE outfits in the state were having a field day celebrating the Sri Lankan rebels' victory over the government troops in the Jaffna region, the Tamil Nadu government on Sunday banned the conference organised at Chidambaram by the Tamil Eelam Liberation Supporters Coordination Committee (TELSCO), and arrested its leader P. Nedumaran along with other activists.

According to a press release, the conference, scheduled to take place on Sunday in Chidambaram, was banned under Section 144 of the CrPC as the meet could disturb public peace.

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SHUN FORCES OF DISRUPTION: GUJRAL

Keep Sri Lanka's unity in mind: Opposition

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 7. When the Opposition leaders meet the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, here tomorrow to discuss the developments in Sri Lanka, they are likely to emphasise that the unity of a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka and India's own national interests must determine any Indian initiative. They are also likely to ask the Government to spell out more specifically the nature of help that Sri Lanka has sought, and an indication of how it proposes to respond.

The dominant view in political circles was that the nature of Indian help should be such as to facilitate a "democratic" solution of the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka, and nothing should be done to encourage what the former Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral, called forces of "extremism and disruption" without directly mentioning the LTTE.

In a statement here today, he said India should extend "all cooperation" to the Sri Lankan people to resist such forces. "This will lend added credibility and seriousness to our own fight against such forces at the regional and global levels," he pointed out.

Mr. Gujral stressed the point that India, "keeping its own interests in mind", was committed to a sovereign, united and multi-ethnic Sri Lanka where all minorities, especially Tamils, could live with dignity and without fear. He appreciated the Government's statement ruling out a "repeat of the IPKF experience". This, he said, was in line with the policy of the V. P. Singh's Government in which he was the External Affairs Minister.

Underlining India's own security concerns because of Pakistan-backed militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, he said it was important to ensure that the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka did not "come under duress". He also wanted further consolidation of "mutually cooperative" ties with Sri Lanka particularly the initiatives taken by his erstwhile United Front Government.

The mood in the Congress(I) was to give the Prime Minister a patient hearing and then react. The party has already indicated that it would not like to tie down the Government's hands though it would insist that the Opposition be taken into confidence

before embarking on any initiative. The CPI(M) cautioned against any move that might have a bearing on the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

Tipnis in Colombo

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, MAY 7. The Indian Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal A. Y. Tipnis, arrived here this evening on a 'goodwill visit'.

The visit, at a time when Sri Lanka is facing a serious challenge from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), has generated interest especially given the past Indian experience in attempting to bring about peace in the strife-torn nation.

Indian officials have maintained that the six-day trip of the Air Chief was a scheduled visit and had nothing to do with the shifting military balance between the LTTE and the security forces in Jaffna.

Linking the visit to the current situation, the State-run *Daily Observer* in a front-page report, "India poised to airdrop supplies", said "India will give 'non-military' logistical help if requested" but did not elaborate on whether logistical support would have air or sea transport capability.

The resumption of diplomatic ties with Israel by Sri Lanka, which uses Israeli-built Kfir bombers, and reports in sections of the Indian media that the IAF transport planes were on a standby have also added to the air of expectancy.

On separatism, the report, quoting unnamed 'highly-placed diplomatic sources' said "India would never recognise" Eelam in the eventuality of the LTTE capturing Jaffna and declaring a separate state. On the military front, the Government today said its troops were "consolidating" their positions in the northern battle-zone and alleged that the LTTE was "conscripting children" to bolster its "depleted strength". Though no incidents have been reported, the LTTE "movements were detected in the Jaffna Lagoon", pointing to possible rebel build-up south of the key Chavakachcheri town.

Mediation if Colombo asks: Page 13

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(Continued from page 8)

the Eelam war, the leader, Mr Vaiko, has petitioned India against extending any help to Sri Lanka that would effect the interests of the Tamils there.

At Tiruchirapalli yesterday, Mr Vaiko referred to reports that Colombo had sought help from Pakistan and Israel. "I am confident that the Centre will not help Sri Lanka citing this as a reason," he said.

India had been treating the ethnic strife as Sri Lanka's internal affair and stayed aloof when huge numbers of Tamils were "massacred" by the Lankans at a Jaffna Church in 1995, Mr Vaiko said. He iterated his view that only the creation of Tamil Eelam would be a viable solution.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr M Karunanidhi, in his meeting with the Prime Minister on Friday gave the latter a carte blanche to deal with the Lankan situation.

Today, the Tamil Nadu police arrested Mr P Nedumaran, leader of the Tamizhaga Desiya Iyakkam and a staunch LTTE supporter, and his followers for defying prohibitory orders and gathering at Chidambaram for a "victory conference" to hail the "triumph" of the Tigers.

Though it is part of NDA and so must refrain from any rhetoric that could embarrass the Vajpayee government, the PMK at a recent executive committee meeting called the Kumaratunga government "racist".

PM to meet Opposition: Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee will brief the Opposition tomorrow on the Sri Lanka situation and explain to the government's stand, SNS adds from New Delhi.

Tamil parties whip up frenzy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, May 7. — As a bloody battle rages in northern Sri Lanka between government troops and the LTTE, strident voices are heard in support of the Tigers in Tamil Nadu.

Even prominent NDA constituents openly cheer the LTTE leader, Velupillai Pirabhakaran, and his Tigers and wish them victory.

Posters have appeared all over the state hailing the LTTE's "victories" and saluting the "brave Tamil sisters and brothers" in their "liberation struggle". The posters hail the

JASWANT STAND

NEW DELHI, May 7. — Mr Jaswant Singh does not rule out the possibility of India playing the role of a negotiator to bring about a political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka if "all sides to the situation asked for it".

(Details on page 8)

capture of Elephant Pass and predict the hoisting of "Mother Tamil's Tigerflag" on Jaffna Fort.

LTTE supporters in Tamil

Nadu were lying low so far due to the Centre's ban on the outfit after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. But no more. For example, the hail-LTTE posters bear the name of Periyar Dravidar Kazhagam — an outfit known for its pro-LTTE leanings.

Even prominent NDA constituents like the MDMK and PMK have come out openly in the LTTE's support. The ruling DMK, however, has to do some tight-rope walking to camouflage its love for the Tigers.

While the PMK has demanded that the Centre recognise

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India not for Eelam: PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 8. With the constituents of the National Democratic Alliance and the Government's supporting parties speaking in different voices on the Sri Lanka issue, it was left to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to categorically state that India was not for a separate Eelam, and that it favoured a solution to the crisis in the island country "within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity".

Mr. Vajpayee's clarification came at the all-party meeting at his residence this morning immediately after some members said "some constituents of the NDA who are part of the Government" were "talking about recognition of the LTTE," and the Government should clarify.

In fact, it was Ms. Jayanti Narayan (Tamil Maanila Congress), who demanded a clarification. Some NDA constituents "were saying all kinds of things in Chennai and Tamil Nadu," and the Government should clarify, she said. Strength was added to her argument by the Telugu Desam Party leader, Mr. Yerran Naidu, who suggested that while discus-

sions with parties on the issue should be held behind closed doors, "there should be no public statements, at least from the constituents of the NDA."

Though no names were mentioned, clearly the references were to Mr. Vaiko, MDMK leader, who got up to say Ms. Natarajan was referring to him and his party. His party wanted recognition of Eelam, and "we have a fundamental right to say what we want without embarrassing the Government, and this right cannot be curtailed."

This clash of views between NDA constituents and supporting parties led to the Prime Minister's intervention calling for "restraint" even as he reiterated that India sought a solution within the framework of Sri Lanka's unity.

Briefing reporters later, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, said four issues on which there was a consensus had emerged at the meeting. One, the view was against military intervention. Two, there was an emphasis on remaining committed to Sri Lanka's unity and integrity. Three, there should be full protection for

the island's minorities, especially the Tamils. And four, there should be a peaceful resolution of the crisis within the framework of the Sri Lankan Constitution.

Some of the other issues raised by the 33 representatives of parties at the meeting included fears of intervention in Sri Lanka by countries other than India, the role of Norway in the crisis and the visit to Sri Lanka of the Air Chief, Air Chief Marshal A. Y. Tipnis. Some members were not convinced by Government statements that it was a mere goodwill mission and had nothing to do with the ongoing crisis.

Parties were apparently united in the view that India should carefully monitor the situation to ensure there was no third party intervention. Fears were expressed on the basis of reports that Sri Lanka was looking for help from Israel, Pakistan and even Norway. The Government said India was in touch with Norway.

The Government was represented by the Prime Minister, who chaired the meeting, Mr. L. K. Advani, Home Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, External Affairs

Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan and Mr. P. R. Kumaramangalam, Power Minister. Representatives of the Tamil parties were present in strength — Mr. T. R. Baalu (DMK), Mr. E. Ponnuswamy (PMK), Mr. Vaiko and Mr. N. Kannappan (MDMK), Mr. P. A. Pandian and Mr. R. Margabandhu (AIADMK), and Ms. Natarajan (TMC). The Congress(I) sent Dr. Manmohan Singh and Mr. Pranab Mukherjee while the Left was led by Mr. Indrajit Gupta and Mr. J. Chittaranjan (CPI), Mr. Abani Roy (RSP) and Mr. A. R. Pradhan (FB).

During the meeting, Mr. Jaswant Singh gave a brief update which the Congress(I) found "informative." However, some parties felt the Government did not reveal what it planned to do in a situation fraught with danger. Others expressed fears of a huge refugee problem if the crisis deepened.

Mr. Singh categorically said there had been no change in the military situation in Sri Lanka. He is also reported to have said that the U.S. would support "whatever India does," a point on which some of the participants later expressed surprise. Mr. Singh explained that a Norwegian delegate who would be going to Sri Lanka would also visit India (presumably to debrief India) and that the Government was monitoring the situation carefully. "There have been supplies to Sri Lanka by other countries", he said and that this did not involve sending of troops.

The Congress(I) spokesperson, Ms. Margaret Alva, later told reporters her party "would like to know what kind of help Sri Lanka had sought". The party view was that India should not be dragged into a confrontation and keeping in mind the possibility of a refugee influx, the policy should be cautious. The party reiterated its stand that any resolution should be within the framework of the Sri Lankan Constitution.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

MAY 2000

Vaiko cautions against Indian involvement

By Our Special Correspondent
NEW DELHI, MAY 8. The MDMK chief, Mr. Vaiko, today met the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and cautioned against India extending any "non-military logistics" to Sri Lanka in its battle against the Tamil groups in the Jaffna peninsula.

Mr. Vaiko, who also called on the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, told *The Hindu* that the Prime Minister gave him to understand that there was no proposal before India to extend any "non-military logistics" to Sri Lanka.

In his meetings, Mr. Vaiko referred to reports in the State-controlled media in Sri Lanka about a

possible Indian involvement in the conflict and wanted to know the factual position.

"The Sri Lankan Government is seeking India's help only because its army is defeated. Why should the Indian Government get involved now when it did not get engaged in 1995 (when the Sri Lankan army entered Jaffna)," he asked.

Mr. Vaiko told the Prime Minister and the two Ministers that reports of a possible Indian involvement were causing concern to the people in Tamil Nadu.

"The psyche in Tamil Nadu is in favour of the Tamils. The Indian Government should not do anything which could hurt the sentiments of people in the State."

THE HINDU

MAY 1997

Delhi watching situation

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 8. India is not surprised by the Sri Lankan Government's rejection of the temporary and conditional offer for a ceasefire by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). *S. S. Lakshmi*

While there has been no formal reaction from the spokesman of the Foreign Office to the latest developments in Sri Lanka, the Government is carefully assessing the political and military dynamics in the island nation.

There is some concern here that today's political manoeuvring around the idea of a ceasefire could just be the prelude for a military offensive by the LTTE against Jaffna. The Government is fully aware that any escalation of the conflict now will begin to severely strain the policy framework adopted by New Delhi in dealing with the Sri Lankan crisis.

The threat of an expanded conflict, with possibly high casualties, comes in the wake of India's own readiness made public by the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to facilitate peace talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government.

In proposing an immediate ceasefire, the LTTE seemed to be wrapping itself in "reasonableness". But the devil, as always, is

NO-13
in the detail. The conditions attached by the LTTE for the ceasefire, and the threat to intensify the conflict, were obviously far too humiliating for the Government of Sri Lanka to accept. Any Government in Colombo would have found it hard to accept the offer of "safe passage" to its troops within its own territory under the threat of their decimation.

Today's developments do not mean that the talk of a ceasefire has come to an end. Highly-placed sources here say that the idea of a ceasefire has been floating around for a while in the international community.

The variants of the proposal for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Sri Lanka appear to have figured in the recent consultations between New Delhi and the Governments in Washington, London and Paris. Diplomatic sources here say that the Sri Lankan Government might be prepared to consider a ceasefire that is not conditioned on the withdrawal of its troops from the Jaffna peninsula. An "in-situ" ceasefire, implying that both sides would stop fighting while holding on to their current positions, many hope, could provide a basis for beginning peace talks between Colombo and the LTTE.

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India ready to mediate but only if Lanka, Tigers ask

New Delhi

8 MAY

INDIA SAID on Monday that it would mediate between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) only if both sides sought its intervention in the ethnic conflict.

Addressing an all-party meeting on the crisis in northern Sri Lanka, where rebels are closing in on thousands of government troops, the Indian government said it was ready to provide humanitarian aid but again ruled out any military involvement.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan said India had not been asked to intervene but it was in touch with Norway, which has offered to facilitate peace talks to end to the 17-year-old war.

"...we are ready to offer a

helping hand or negotiate only if the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government ask for it," he said after the consensus-building meeting of 20 parties in Parliament.

"Our directly negotiating at this juncture does not arise because there is no such request."

Sri Lankan military officials said on Monday that weapons and ammunition were being rushed to troops in northern Jaffna in anticipation of a fresh offensive by the (LTTE) to recapture their former stronghold.

Last month, the rebels, who are fighting for a separate homeland for the minority Tamil people in Sri Lanka, seized Elephant Pass, a key military complex straddling the Isthmus gateway to Jaffna.

New Delhi came down firm-

ly last week against any military assistance to the embattled troops.

India has a 50 million-strong Tamil community of its own in Tamil Nadu just across the narrow stretch of sea separating it from Sri Lanka.

It also has bad memories of a previous attempt to intervene in the conflict. An Indian peace-keeping force, which went in to disarm the rebels in 1987, pulled out three years later after losing 1,150 troops.

Mr Mahajan added that there was a consensus that Indian forces should not get involved, but the "aspirations" of the Tamil people should be taken into consideration.

However, there was no question of New Delhi recognising either the LTTE — which it banned after the group was accused of assassinating former

Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 — or the state of Eelam for which the rebels are fighting.

"We should respect the sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka. But at the same time, the aspirations of minorities, especially Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka, should be taken care of and we should try for a peaceful settlement of this crisis," Mr Mahajan said.

He held that some lawmakers had suggested during the 90-minute meeting that if humanitarian aid is sent to Sri Lanka it should be channelled through the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"When the aid goes we will decide what the mode will be," said the minister, who did not spell out what assistance India might offer.

— Reuters

The Economic Times

8 MAY 2000

The Economic Times

Dire threat to India

By Prem Shankar Jha

Help from India will give Sri Lanka the will to continue fighting... The days of easy choices and endless temporising are over.

HD-12 10/5
EVER SINCE 1971, India has followed one steadfast policy towards its neighbours. This has been to minimise the impact of destabilising changes in them on India's domestic affairs. Today that policy is being challenged as never before in Sri Lanka. The Government's first reaction to the defeat of the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) at Elephant Pass and the subsequent run of LTTE victories in attacks on other army camps north of it, was both correct and measured. It ruled out sending Indian troops to Sri Lanka, immediately offered humanitarian aid, and said that it would consider the despatch of arms if Colombo made the request. But it took just one visit from a team of Tamil politicians, headed by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, for the Vajpayee Government to start backing away. The reason, put succinctly by Mr. Karunanidhi, was that the Tamil parties could not afford to allow any Government of which they were a part to do anything that would directly or indirectly take Tamil lives.

The Tamil leaders' fears are understandable. Once word of India's involvement in Sri Lanka on the Government's side spread, they would all face public anger and an erosion of support. Worse still, they would all be forced to respond by taking more Tamil chauvinist postures, and that would destabilise both the NDA and the Indian polity. Faced with the Tamil leaders' implied threat therefore, Mr. Vajpayee chose to beat a retreat.

Since then Mr. Karunanidhi has had second thoughts. But he may still not understand the full gravity of the threat that that recent developments in Sri Lanka pose not just to Tamil Nadu and India, but to him personally. After 15 long years the SLA's will to fight has been broken. Two divisions at Elephant pass simply melted away before the LTTE onslaught on April 27. The remaining two divisions in the Jaffna peninsula have been able to slow down but not halt the LTTE's advance. By contrast the LTTE has no dearth of either funds or volunteers. It has followed the tactics developed by Gen. Giap in Vietnam, threatening and melting away, regrouping and attacking where

least expected. Behind a facade of peace talks it has bought time, used it to extort money from Sri Lankan Tamils all over the world and acquire weaponry from the East European arms bazaar that very few frontline infantry units possess, least of all the SLA. When it was fully ready, it launched a massed attack on Elephant Pass. The entire operation bears an uncanny similarity to the Tet offensive by North Vietnam in 1968.

Today the SLA in the north is in the neck of a bottle. The soldiers know this. It will not therefore take much more to turn their demoralisation into panic and surrender. Once Jaffna is lost in these circumstances, it is doubtful whether any Government in Colombo will have the stomach to start hostilities all over again. What is more likely is that defeat will be followed by peace talks, and the *de facto* if not *de jure* creation of Eelam in the north. It is the consequences of such a defeat for Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu, and India that the Government must consider very carefully. And it must do so very quickly and decisively, for time is running out.

The consequences of the LTTE's victory will be horrific. The reoccupation of Jaffna will be followed by a witch hunt for Tamils who 'collaborated' with the 'Sinhala' regime. Since Jaffna has been a functioning city once again for some time there will be many hundreds who will fit the bill — teachers, civil servants, policemen and social workers. A substantial part of the remaining middle class Tamil society of that unfortunate city will therefore meet a violent end.

Defeat will gravely weaken the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government. Even if it survives it will be in no position to deal with the Sinhala xenophobia that will be released by it. The first, and softest, targets will be the Tamils now living and working in the South. It is to the Sri Lankans' credit that the relentless series of suicide bomber attacks in the South have

almost never triggered a backlash on the local Tamils, but this restraint will almost certainly snap if the Government forces are defeated and Eelam is born in the north. Today the majority of the Tamils of Sri Lanka — around 55 per cent — live in the Sinhala south. Even the Tamils of Jaffna have been migrating southwards for years. These Tamils will become one of the most seriously endangered minorities in the world. It is difficult to predict how far the xenophobic backlash will go, but India should be ready, if the worst comes to the worst and the state begins to break down, for the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees on the Tamil Nadu coast.

Jaffna will be one of the smallest, poorest, and least economically viable counties in the world. But it will also be the most ruthlessly militarised society in the world, with a worldwide system for collecting foreign exchange to purchase arms. To both the leaders and the cadres of the LTTE, peace will come as an anticlimax. Bred on violence, hate and the cult of self-sacrifice and death, their lives will suddenly lose meaning. To keep them occupied the LTTE's leaders will have to find new goals. One could be completing the conquest of the north-east in Sri Lanka. But this would be far beyond its military capabilities, and might be ruled out by the peace accord. The other would be to send their cadres north to fight for the infinitely larger prize of an Eelam comprising Jaffna, Tamil Nadu and eventually the eastern region of Sri Lanka. With a 300-km stretch of Tamil Nadu coastline within easy reach, Jaffna will become the safe haven and arms supply and training centre for a new wave of terrorism, foreign-inspired insurgency.

What these developments could do to Tamil Nadu hardly bears thinking about. The arrival of hordes of refugees with their tales of horror will spark a huge

wave of anger against the Sinhals which will completely drown out awareness of the original cause of the refugees' distress. At the same time the LTTE's victory will further enhance the halo of power and invincibility around it and its leaders, while diminishing respect for the supine Indian state. This will attract thousands of unemployed and semi-literate Tamil youth, disaffected intellectuals and others to its local affiliate the Tamil National Renewal Army and breathe new life into the never-quite-dead movement for a separate Tamil nation-state. The LTTE would thus find a ready-made base and innumerable safe havens in Tamil Nadu.

What would follow would be uncannily like Punjab in the later stages of its insurgency. The democratic Tamil parties would find themselves caught, like the Akalis, between a small but extremely violent secessionist movement, and a reluctantly repressive Indian state. Should they refuse to align themselves with the LTTE their leaders will suffer the fate of moderate Tamil leaders such as Neelan Tiruchelvam, Amrithalingam of the TULF, as well as the thousands of cadres of other Tamil movements for self-determination in Sri Lanka, whom the LTTE eliminated.

As the violence mounts, central repression will become more and more indiscriminating. Industry will leave Tamil Nadu in droves, life will become indescribably mean and nasty, and growth and prosperity will become a distant dream. Tamil Nadu will become another Jaffna.

Finally, India cannot fight two insurgencies at the same time. Having to divert much of its armed forces to Tamil Nadu will leave Kashmir at the mercy of Pakistan and the Jehadis. It is still not too late to nip this disastrous chain of events in the bud. Help from India will give Sri Lanka the will to continue fighting. But only if the goal is to eliminate the Tigers once and for all. This is not an easy choice. But the days of easy choices and endless temporising are over. What India will soon face is a fight for its survival.

THE HINDU

Norwegian team coming

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 9. As part of a collective international initiative to address the current crisis in Sri Lanka, the Government is stepping up consultations with the United States and Norway who are keen on promoting a peace process in the island nation.

The apparent American backing to an Indian diplomatic effort in Sri Lanka and the proposed Indo-Norwegian talks this week do lend some weight to the latest offer by the Government to mediate between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

A Norwegian delegation led by Mr. Erik Solheim, principal interlocutor between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE over the last few months, is arriving here on Thursday for interaction with the Government.

Diplomatic sources here were unwilling to confirm whether Mr. Solheim would travel to Colombo after his visit to New Delhi. India has been sceptical of the Norwegian efforts till recently. It remains to be seen whether New Delhi and Oslo will be able to find some common ground now.

Mr. Solheim, a special adviser on Sri Lanka to the Norwegian Foreign Minister, was recently in Washington for talks with senior officials of the Clinton Administration.

Washington, which has been in continual touch with New Delhi,

has apparently conveyed its backing to a collective international effort on Sri Lanka led by India, according to well-placed sources in the Government.

The U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Thomas Pickering, will arrive in New Delhi later this month. While his visit to India was scheduled earlier, he now plans to travel to Colombo as well.

The sources say India has been in diplomatic contact with a number of key nations in the last few days. These include apart from the U.S., France and Britain. The consultations are apparently focussed on the idea of a ceasefire between Colombo and the LTTE.

India is also in touch with the European Union, which is holding consultations among its member-states and could come out with a statement on Sri Lanka.

Two Sri Lankan refugees questioned

By Our Staff Reporter

RAMANATHAPURAM, MAY 9. The personnel of the Tamil Nadu police's Q branch are interrogating Chittambalam of Jaffna — with bullet injuries in his right shoulder — and Mary Grace Anjalika, suspected of having links with militant groups. The two arrived in Dhanuskodi along with other Sri Lankan Tamil refugees on Tuesday.

10 MAY 2000

THE HINDU

Eelam no threat to India: Vaiko

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, May 9

MDMK CHIEF Vaiko today said Eelam — a separate homeland for the Sri Lanka Tamils — was inevitable, but fears in India of a repercussion in Tamil Nadu on its creation were unfounded.

The MDMK chief, who had strongly defended his party's stand on the Eelam issue at the Prime Minister's meeting with the Opposition on Monday, said it was unfortunate that the forces opposed to the Sri Lankan Tamils and the NDA Government were spreading unnecessary fears among Indian political parties about the likelihood of secessionism in Tamil Nadu.

"Such fears will become valid only if, under the guise of preventing secessionism in Tamil Nadu in the future, they force India to take steps to subvert natural gains of Sri Lankan Tamils, who have been struggling for their rights for so many years," Mr Vaiko said, striking a warning note.

Mr Vaiko said frustration and

Support for Lanka

MORE THAN thirty countries have pledged support to Sri Lanka in its battle against the LTTE separatists. Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Lakshman Kiriella has told the state owned *Daily News*.

Detailed report on page 14

anger could then be sown in the minds of the Tamil Nadu youth only under this condition and not in the event of Eelam. "The Tamils of Tamil Nadu today enjoy full rights and freedom as proud citizens of India, whereas the Sri Lankan Tamils have been suffering under repression."

Besides, he said, the Sri Lankan Tamils were original inhabitants of the island like the Sinhalese. They must not be confused with the Indian Tamils, who went to work in plantations there in the 18th and 19th centuries. "Many people here are not aware of the history of the island's ethnic problem."

He termed Colombo's rejection

of the LTTE's latest offer of ceasefire as an ample indication of its policy not to seek a peaceful resolution but to pursue military methods to "decimate" the Tamil resistance to the Sinhala domination.

Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's contention that there was no Eelam in existence for India to recognise was understandable, he said, while ruling out the possibility of the Tamil Tigers declaring independence if Jaffna fall into their hands.

Asked about the demand of the BJP's other ally, PMK, for recognising the Eelam, Mr Vaiko said, "We do think Eelam is the final solution but we are not asking the Centre to do anything now."

On the recapture of Jaffna, he said it would only help the Tigers to gain better leverage, as they had prior to 1995, in negotiating a settlement.

www.hindustantimes.com

The unabridged interview can be accessed at your favourite website

10 MAY 2001

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

BJP opposes creation of separate homeland for Tamils in Lanka

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 10

NOTWITHSTANDING THE stand of some of its allies, the BJP today said it is opposed to creation of Eelam -- a separate homeland for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Instead, it fully supports the Vajpayee Government's stand for a settlement to the island's ethnic crisis within the framework of a united Sri Lanka.

BJP spokesperson M Venkaiah Naidu said Prime Minister A B Vajpayee had clearly told the Opposition at a meeting on Monday that the Government did not support the concept of Eelam.

Mr Vajpayee had told the Opposition leaders that Eelam was not in the Government's mind. He also disapproved any statement in favour of recognition of Eelam because "there is no Eelam today".

The BJP's clarification on the issue today was in response to questions on the stand taken by the southern allies, the MDMK and the PMK, and now, the Shiv Sena, in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Mr Naidu said even though the allies of the NDA held a different view, the position of the BJP and the Government was clear that any settlement of the Sri Lankan crisis would have to be within the parameters

of a united Sri Lanka.

He denied that the allies were exerting pressure on the Vajpayee Government on the issue. "They have themselves said they are not asking the Government to do anything."

While the major Tamil Nadu ally, the DMK, has been circumspect on the question of Eelam, the MDMK and PMK have held that the creation of a separate State was the ultimate solution desired by the island Tamils because of years of strife and attitude of Colombo on the question of devolution of powers for them.

A new dimension was added after Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray announced support for the Sri Lankan Tamils after MDMK chief Vaiko met him in Mumbai yesterday.

Meanwhile, PMK chief S Ramadoss today clarified his party had not demanded the NDA to support Eelam.

MDMK chief Vaiko had said yesterday that his party had not asked the Centre to support the concept of Eelam. He held that Eelam was seen as a final solution by the Tamils of the island because of years of repression and betrayal. "The idea of Eelam did not take birth recently. The armed struggle came about only after peaceful agitation failed to bear fruit."

11 MAY 2000

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Navy asked to push back Lankan refugees

Rezaul H. Laskar
NEW DELHI 10 MAY

THE GOVERNMENT has instructed the Coast Guard and the Indian Navy, which have intensified patrolling in the Palk Bay separating India and Sri Lanka, to push back refugees fleeing from the war-ravaged Jaffna peninsula.

"Coast Guard and Navy personnel have been instructed to push back any refugees from Sri Lanka who enter Indian waters as the first resort. If this fails, however, the refugees are escorted to relief camps," a senior Coast Guard official said. He said it was

often difficult to push back refugees once they had entered shallow waters off the Indian coast.

"Although there hasn't been a sharp increase in the number of refugees leaving Sri Lanka, that is always an eventuality in a war-affected region," the official said. The Coast Guard has also been instructed to ensure that LTTE cadres do not slip into India posing as refugees. There are some 2,500 Lankan refugees in eight relief camps in Tamil Nadu.

The Coast Guard and the Indian Navy, which have been conducting Operation Tasha in

the Palk Bay since 1991 to prevent the infiltration of LTTE cadres, have intensified patrolling by ships and aerial surveillance in the area since last week, the official said.

The Coast Guard has been responsible for the security of the Tamil Nadu coast ever since the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) pulled out of Sri Lanka. It also conducts Operation Nakabandi in Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar to check the influx of refugees from Sri Lanka.

"Three ships from the Coast Guard and navy are now

patrolling the bay and aircraft from both forces are carrying out surveillance in the area," he said. The official described the intensified patrolling as a "routine" increase made in view of the crisis in Jaffna. "We want to keep an eye on things so that we are prepared to deal with any contingency. We don't want to be taken by surprise," he said.

Coast Guard officials in Chennai and its operational base at Mandapam on the Palk Bay are in regular contact with senior officials of the navy's Eastern Command, the official said.

— IANS

The Economic Times

11 MAY 2000

India, Norway see eye to eye on Sri Lanka

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 11. India and Norway concluded their talks on Sri Lanka today with the broad understanding that there is no contradiction between their respective efforts to promote peace in the island nation.

The two sides agreed on what the ultimate "product" of any peace effort in Sri Lanka should be — a solution that respect the aspirations of the Tamil minority within a united and sovereign Sri Lanka.

The talks have also helped reduce the differences on the kind of "process" required to promote peace in Sri Lanka. New Delhi and Oslo now believe there is no real political tension between their separate moves to end the tragic conflict in Sri Lanka.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Hindu*, the visiting Norwegian envoy, Mr. Erik Solheim, said he was "very satisfied" with the talks he had today with the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh.

Mr. Solheim today briefed the

developments in Sri Lanka.

In a statement issued here at the end of the talks, the Ministry of External Affairs said the two sides shared the view that the Sri Lankans themselves must find a solution to the conflict "in a manner by which all communities can realise their aspirations within the context of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country."

Despite the shared political objective in Sri Lanka, India had recently voiced some scepticism about the Norwegian peace diplomacy in Sri Lanka.

After his meeting with the Indian interlocutors, Mr. Solheim told *The Hindu* that "there is better understanding now between the two nations."

Mr. Solheim added that Norway "recognises India's legitimate interests in Sri Lanka" and "has no desire to come in the way of any Indian initiative" to end the extended conflict within its southern neighbour.

Indian officials say Mr. Solheim conveyed the Norwegian assessment that India is the only external power with a role in the

resolution of the Sri Lankan conflict. He had also told the Government that Norway will continue to keep India informed about its Sri Lankan diplomacy.

Mr. Solheim said Norway is aiming at a "low key effort" to "stay in touch with all the parties in Sri Lanka", "prepare the ground for a negotiation" and "assist them in moving towards serious talks."

The Norwegian side believes that there is no contradiction between its efforts and India's larger role in getting the warring parties in Sri Lanka to accept the broad political framework of a solution in Sri Lanka.

Questioned on his recent discussions in Washington about Sri Lanka, Mr. Solheim said, "the Clinton Administration clearly understands the important role of India in leading any peace process in Sri Lanka."

The U.S., Mr. Solheim believes, is unlikely to make an independent move in Sri Lanka and would like to see the peace efforts of India and Norway succeed.



The Norwegian special envoy, Mr. Erik Solheim, at South Block in New Delhi on Thursday. Photo: V. Sudershan

Indian Government on Norway's efforts to bring the warring parties in Sri Lanka to the negotiating table. The two sides also exchanged views on the unfolding military

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India's wise decision

By P. Sahadevan

SRI LANKA'S appeal for Indian military assistance in the wake of its army's worst-ever debacle at the Elephant Pass has reactivated the 'India factor' in the ethnic war on the island, after the gap of about 10 years. This was a choice exercised by the Sri Lankan Government out of strategic exigencies created by the advances made by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to recapture Jaffna, which it lost in 1995.

It is admitted that the army suffered reverses without putting up resistance; such a retreat is even defended by the military spokesman as a tactic. If the tactical retreat was to save the lives of a huge contingent deployed at the Elephant Pass, the loss of territory was conceded as a trade-off. This is rarely accepted in military practice, especially in internal war situations. Had the army gone down after a bitter and protracted fight and thus demonstrated its true professional commitment, the erosion of the faith that the state and society had in the military would not have been so deep. The Government sent out an appeal for external military assistance. It was primarily to boost the morale of the army, which touched a new low following a series of reverses it suffered periodically since 1996. In terms of number and weaponry, the government forces are far superior to the LTTE. But they alone do not determine victory in the Eelam war. If a highly motivated and tactful but comparatively understaffed LTTE holds the army to ransom, it is because of the military's deficiency in training, intelligence gathering, motivation and operational tactics.

It is to this military establishment that India's assistance was sought. The fact that New Delhi did not reject the appeal out of hand and considered it for a decision by the Cabinet Committee on Security showed its continuing interest in the conflict. It was also a measure of regard for a friendly regime. But friendship could not make the Indian Government favourably disposed towards Sri Lanka's request. Hard decisions on strategic matters are not made on compassionate grounds and by turning down Colombo's appeal, New Delhi has shown a sense of realism and a perfect understanding of the nature of the war. In the past, India

had to pay a heavy price for its proactive involvement in the conflict because of its miscalculations and overconfidence, arising from a self-assumed central position in regional strategic affairs.

Although the nature and level of military assistance sought by Colombo is not disclosed, it may be assumed that any help by India will not only lead to its direct participation in the war but also make it a long-drawn-out affair. Indian help will not be confined to evacuation of the besieged soldiers from the Jaffna peninsula but in course of time will inevitably be extended to many operational matters. The execution of any critical military as-

sensitive to New Delhi's regional security concerns. In the mid-Eighties, much of the problem between the two countries arose out of their differing approaches to regional security and Sri Lanka ignoring India's sensitivities. Also, any external military input in the war machinery should be solely to tackle the LTTE, and civilians should be spared by all means. Doing so will minimise the spillover effect of the conflict on Tamil Nadu.

Understandably, a section of the Sinhalese community mostly belonging to the influential Buddhist sangha is disappointed with India's stand. It is strange that contrary to their earlier militant pos-

Many predict that since the Elephant Pass is the gateway to the Jaffna peninsula, the army will find it difficult to control Jaffna. It will be a worse scenario fraught more with political than strategic consequences. A strategic fallout of the recapture of Jaffna by the LTTE will be manageable because the trend in the war shows that any loss or gain of territory is temporary; neither the LTTE nor the security forces could ever hold onto any part of territory indefinitely. That is why it is a no-win war. If Jaffna falls now, it will just be a matter of time for the rejuvenated army to retake it even without any external military support. But the Government is worried about its political fallout. Colombo's control of Jaffna is made to symbolise the preservation of Sri Lanka's territorial integrity and its loss is equated with the creation of Eelam. This is not a correct interpretation. The LTTE ruled Jaffna for five years (1990-95), yet it could not declare a separate state. Since this is an election year, any setback in the war will make the Government unpopular.

If India has no military role to play in the war, it does not mean it has to simply follow a hands-off policy. Its stakes in the unity of the island are as great as protecting the legitimate interests of Tamils. Unfortunately, many in India and Sri Lanka club all Tamils with the LTTE. Any plausible Indian policy should make a clear distinction between the two and acknowledge that a large chunk of the Tamil population rejects all forms of violence. If cultivated and empowered, this section can emerge as a political force to support the Government vis-a-vis the Tigers. While politically backing Colombo's military drive against the LTTE and encouraging it to seek negotiations under Norway's facilitation, New Delhi should impress on the Sinhalese parties the need for working out a clear consensus on the 1995 devolution package. A concrete peace plan is needed as an alternative to the war plan; a meaningful war for peace strategy denotes that both the war and peace processes go together. Of course, there is no quick-fix solution to the war and sustained efforts alone can increase the chances of peace.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

Hard decisions on strategic matters are not made on compassionate grounds. By turning down Colombo's appeal for military assistance, New Delhi has shown a perfect understanding of the ethnic war on the island.

sistance needs the presence of Indian forces on the ground and in such a situation, they will run the risk of having a direct confrontation with the LTTE. There will be no escape for the Indian forces once the Tigers fire at them and a repetition of the 1987-90 bitter operations will become inevitable. Fighting Sri Lanka's war when it does not really advance India's critical interests is undesirable. It will once again be a no-win war for India. It will also reopen the wounds of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force. New Delhi has been quite conscious of its limitations and difficulties in undertaking another military role on the island.

The LTTE may be gratified by India's decision. But it should not be seen as a step taken to embolden the Tigers under pressure from the BJP's coalition partners from Tamil Nadu. A negotiated political settlement will not be possible without weakening the LTTE. It is primarily the duty of the Sri Lankan army to achieve this task, for which the Government has every sovereign right to mobilise military support. Sri Lanka does not face constraints in this matter.

Whereas India cannot question Sri Lanka's sources of external support, the island Government would do well to be

ture, the monks articulated their desire for Indian military involvement in the conflict. It is not out of their love for India but purely in self-interest. They believe that India is capable of changing the course of the conflict. But, unfortunately, they expect a partisan Indian role in protecting the majority community's interest and disapprove of any proposition to give greater autonomy to the northeast. The people who are demanding Indian military support are the ones who have been in the forefront of opposing the President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's peace package. As many as five drafts have been produced since 1995 under pressure from Sinhalese hardliners, resulting in a significant watering down of the original peace proposals. Their immediate aim is to prevent the fall of Jaffna into the Tigers' hands; they draw greater pride in retaining it under the Government's control. But the feeling is that once it is achieved, they will be as vociferous in opposing the peace package as ever. It is exactly for this reason that even the moderate Sri Lankan Tamil opinion is not inclined to welcome India's military role.

At this critical juncture, the concern of the Sri Lankan Government is not to concede any more territory to the LTTE.

12 MAY 2000

Govt ignores allies' proposal, ban on LTTE to continue

Anil Anand
New Delhi, May 12

THE GOVERNMENT has decided in principle to continue the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) while setting aside the suggestions of some of the NDA allies to lift the ban on the Sri Lankan Tamil militant outfit and accord it recognition.

According to official sources here, the ban on LTTE will be reimposed when it expires on May 14 for another two years by invoking the provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

It may be recalled that NDA's ally Pattali Makkali Kachi (PMK) had, at an all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee early this week, demanded that the ban be lifted as it would facilitate India in playing an effective mediatory role in resolving the current Lankan crisis. The Government's decision to continue the ban assumes significance in the face of reports ema-

guards have been keeping a vigil in the area because of the volatile situation in Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, the Government has discounted reports that large-scale migration of Sri Lankan refugees is taking place because of the ongoing battle between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army in the Jaffna peninsula.

"No significant influx of refugees has taken place in the recent past. Only 198 refugees crossed over to Tamil Nadu during April, as against 92 in January, 181 in February and 257 in March", a senior Home Ministry official said.

While stating that a close watch was being kept on the people trickling in from Sri Lanka, the official said that most of the refugees reach Rameshwaram from where local authorities take them to the transit camp at Mandapam after a thorough police verification of their antecedents.

Later, they are shifted to refugee camps situated at different places in the State.

See also Page 14

WHO STANDS WHERE ON LTTE BAN AND EELAM

BJP : Ban should continue, is against Eelam	Congress : Against lifting of ban, for solution within united Sri Lanka
Shiv Sena : Against ban, favours Eelam	CPI(M) : Ban should continue, favours autonomy for Tamil areas in Sri Lanka
TDP : Against Eelam and Tamil Tigers	CPI : Wants ban to continue, for solution within united Sri Lanka
DMK : Would be happy if Eelam is formed	AIADMK : Strongly against LTTE since Rajiv's assassination, not so vocal against Eelam
MDMK : Supports Eelam and LTTE	NCP : Against LTTE (Sharad Pawar)
PMK : Lift ban, recognise Eelam	TMC : Against LTTE and Eelam (G.K. Mooppanar)
Akali Dal : Supports Tamils' right to a homeland	Dravidar Kazhgam : Supports LTTE (founded by Periyar) and Eelam
Tamil Rajiv Cong. : Against LTTE (Vazhpadi Ramamurthy)	CPI(ML) : Supports self-determination for Sri Lankan Tamils
Trinamool Cong. : Wants ban to continue	
Samata : Will back Govt decision on ban; for devolution of powers to Tamils	

nating from Jaffna that the outfit had been expecting the ban to be lifted and had expressed its readiness to accept Indian mediation in resolving the prevailing crisis.

The reports further suggest that the LTTE camp is amenable to Indian mediation, to ward off the possibility of a conflict in view of the heavy concentration of Indian Coast Guards on the Indo-Sri Lankan coastline. The Coast

DMK for Tamil Eelam through war or talks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, May 12. — The DMK leader, Mr M Karunanidhi, says his party is in favour of a separate Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, "either through war or through negotiations".

The statement, made in the Tamil Nadu Assembly today, is bound to embarrass the Vajpayee government, going as it does against the Prime Minister's stated position. The Union government is set to extend the ban on LTTE, due to lapse on 15 May, for another two years under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Replying to a debate on the issue in Tamil Nadu Assembly, the chief minister said today: "It will be a welcome solution if Tamil Eelam is formed either through war or through talks."

He said, however, that his government would not tolerate any violence or campaign for violence in Tamil Nadu in the name of Eelam.

The PMK leader, Mr S Ramdoss, today issued a statement in Chennai saying Israel and Pakistan were oppressing the "freedom struggle" in Sri Lanka by supplying arms and ammunition to the government.

At a recent all-party meeting in New Delhi, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said his government was not in favour of a separate Eelam. Mr Vajpayee even pulled up the MDMK leader, Mr Vaiko, and the PMK for openly airing their views supporting the LTTE's war in Sri Lanka. The DMK is an important constituent of the BJP-led NDA.

The TMC, an erstwhile ally of the DMK, suggested that the state government was "helping to revive the LTTE movement in Tamil Nadu". The party also alleged that the state government turned a blind eye to the way LTTE members freely roamed the state's coastal districts.

The Union government, which has ruled out military intervention in Lanka, has said mediation is possible only if both parties to the conflict want it. Neither the Lanka government nor the LTTE has so far sought Indian mediation.

India's armed forces continue to feel that ground conditions in the Jaffna peninsula dictate against any kind of Indian military intervention.

This assessment is understood to have been conveyed to the external affairs minister today by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal AY Tipnis, in Delhi shortly after his return from Lanka.

Though the Air Chief did not visit the operational areas, it is unlikely that he would not have

■ Editorial: Soft state, page 6

used his meetings with the Sri Lankan President and defence officials to make an assessment of the war situation.

Since any Indian decision on a response to the developments in Jaffna would have to be essentially political in nature, there was no official comment from the defence ministry on the visit.

Air Chief Marshal Tipnis told reporters at Parliament House that his five-day visit had nothing to do with the crisis in northern Jaffna. Yet, experts observed, he would hardly have been required to keep Mr Jaswant Singh posted of mere ceremonials.

In Colombo, senior leaders of Tamil United Liberation Front today met the Indian High Commissioner, Mr Shivshankar Menon, to seek humanitarian assistance for a million people caught up in the fighting in Jaffna, PTI reported.

The delegation, led by the party's vice-president, Ananda Sangari, also requested India to ensure the safety of over five hundred thousand civilians in Jaffna and prevent military

excesses, a TULF release said.

Chandrika exhortation

President Chandrika Kumartunga has exhorted her army to fight hard to defend the Jaffna peninsula. The most modern weapons, equipment and technology, she assured the armed forces, would reach Jaffna in a few weeks to "silence" rebels' guns.

"Already steps have been taken to provide you with most modern armaments, equipment, technology needed for it. These equipment will reach you within the next few weeks," she told the troops in a special address, which was carried by the official media here today.

Government radio said this evening that troops today destroyed the Pooneryn signal centre, used by the LTTE for communication across the Jaffna lagoon. Tigers, meanwhile claimed they were getting closer to Jaffna city centre, which the government denied.

During the five hours of battle yesterday afternoon, two officers and seven soldiers were killed and 86 army personnel injured, the spokesman said.

Jet fighters from Israel

Lanka is buying additional Kfir jet fighters from Israel to boost its campaign against Tigers in Jaffna, SNS adds from Jerusalem. Orders were placed with Israel Aircraft Industries after Colombo announced earlier this month that it was establishing full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state, SNS adds from Jerusalem. Israel's assistance to the island government goes back at least to the mid-eighties, when its anti-terrorism experts trained Sri Lankan security squads. At that time, Israeli diplomats served in an "interests section" in the US em-bassy, but they were later withdrawn at Colombo's request.

THE STATESMAN

13 MAY 2000

Sri Lanka open to Indian mediation

PTI & UNI

COLOMBO, May 14. — The Sri Lankan foreign minister has said his country would "possibly" let India mediate between Colombo and the LTTE, provided New Delhi made an official offer.

Mr Jaswant Singh had told Star TV that India would consider playing "mediator or honest broker" between Colombo and the Tigers if both the warring sides asked it to.

In an interview published in *The Sunday Times* of Colombo, the Sri Lankan minister, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, said he did not consider Mr Singh's offer official.

"No, they (India) have not told us officially (about their willingness to broker peace). What they have told us officially is that Mr Jaswant Singh did make a statement to the television (channel)."

Asked if Colombo would accept India's offer, Mr Kadirgamar said: "Possibly. But we must await official intimation."

The minister also said he personally disapproved of the press censorship his government imposed on 3 May as part of the war effort on the island.

"I always regret censorship," Mr Kadirgamar told the daily. "My feeling is that censorship is often counter-productive. I know there are many responsible journalists who report only what they see and much of it is in our favour. Speaking for myself, I would like to see the end of censorship without delay."

According to Mr Kadirgamar, many "extraneous" issues like press freedom and human rights complicated matters at a time the country was fighting for its survival. The interview was published without any cuts from the censors.

Govt denial: The Sri Lankan government denied tonight a statement by the leader of the main Opposition United National Party, Mr Ranil Wickra-

masinghe, that the Tigers have taken Jaffna town.

Media minister, Mr Mangala Samaraweera, said on official Rupavahini TV that the UNP leader had "committed treason" by making a false claim that even the LTTE hadn't.

Colombo today charged the LTTE with firing at densely-populated civilian locations in besieged Jaffna town, and said army authorities had requested the International Committee of the Red Cross to advise the Tigers to stop the firing.

A government statement said troops continued to hold forward defence lines at Columbuturai in the Ariyali sector and repulsed rebels attempts to advance further today. The air force raided targets in the Ariyali, Tanankilappu and Pooneryan areas.

PoW swap offer: Colombo has offered to free detained Tamil Tiger suspects in exchange for government soldiers held prisoner by the guerrillas, AFP said, quoting officials.

Mrs Kumaratunga is reported to have asked her officials to draw up a list of detainees believed to be LTTE members who could be freed in a prisoner swap. The exact number of Sri Lankan security personnel held by the LTTE is not clear. In February, the Tigers freed four of 15 prisoners they had admitted to the ICRC as being in their custody.

LTTE ban extended: India has extended its ban on the LTTE for two years, Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, announced in Nashik today.

Vaiko upbeat: MDMK leader, Mr Vaiko, today said in Madurai that the prospect of Jaffna coming under the Tigers' control was brighter now, and slammed Colombo for seeking international help after oppressing the Tamils for the last 17 years.

■ Lankan navy targets TN fishermen, page 8

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THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

Waiting for Delhi's word: Kadirgamar

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, MAY 14. As Sri Lankan soldiers continue to battle rebels in the northern Jaffna peninsula, creating the setting for a possible Indian role in resolving the conflict, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, has said they would wait for an "official intimation" from the Government of India while continuing to keep the recently-commenced Norwegian initiative on board.

Mr. Kadirgamar's views, expressed in an interview to the *Sunday Times*, gain significance in the immediate context of a flurry of activity on the external policy front, with Sri Lanka seeking help from friendly countries in the face of advances by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam towards Jaffna town.

Asked whether India's offer to negotiate was official as yet, Mr. Kadirgamar said, "no, they haven't told us officially, but they have told us that Mr. Jaswant Singh did make that statement" to a private TV channel, "that India is prepared to negotiate a settlement, that they have never been anything other than an honest broker. They want both parties to give their consent."

On whether Sri Lanka would accept the offer, the Foreign Minister said, "possibly. But we must await official intimation," reiterating the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kirielle's statement in Parliament a few days ago in response to a query by the Opposition United National Party on the Government's response to the Indian offer.

Mr. Kadirgamar, asked about "moves by a western nation to bring a resolution at the UN Security Council to discuss the Sri Lankan situation" emphasised the sovereignty factor saying the island's conflict was an "internal situation".

Pointing out that "the Chinese and the Russians will not allow the U.N. Security Council getting involved," he said, "this is our internal situation. We appreciate

Air Force strikes rebel targets

By V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, MAY 14. With "sporadic mortar and artillery fire" by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) marking the fighting in Sri Lanka's northern region, the island's air force "engaged identified" rebel targets at positions east and south of Jaffna town.

The Government charged the LTTE with "conscripting 140 school children despite continuing protests from parents" adding that it had requested the International Committee of the Red Cross to "advise the LTTE to refrain from firing shells into populated areas".

"Troops continue to hold the forward defence localities at Colombuthurai and have re-

pulsed all attempts by the terrorists to advance further," the Government said in its situation report, adding "aircraft of the Sri Lankan air force engaged identified terrorist targets in Ariyalai, Tanankillappu and Pooneryn areas."

Citing "monitored LTTE transmissions" the Government said "terrorists have suffered heavy casualties" and that "their leaders have been requesting for reinforcements". Details released by the Government on the fighting said, "sporadic mortar and artillery fire was directed by the LTTE at the security forces at Colombuthurai. The rebels continue to fire artillery and mortars at densely-populated locations in Jaffna town."

the help of friendly countries, but we must maintain the dignity and self-respect however small a country we are, whatever difficulties we have got ourselves into. Our position is still that sovereignty is paramount."

On the request for Indian humanitarian intervention, he said, "by consent, a friendly Government can ask a friendly government to help. Our sovereignty is our sovereignty. A Security Council decision is not necessarily by consent. That is a decision that can be imposed on a state."

On India's response, the Foreign Minister said, "it is perfectly understandable that the Government of India would take time to reach decisions on the Sri Lankan question". Refuting the charges that his comments to the media in India had pre-empted chances of Indian assistance, he said, "it is incredibly naive to believe that Indian policy on such a sensitive issue as the current situation in Sri Lanka can be made or unmade on a chance remark. Indian policy

has to take into account complex issues of domestic and international concern to India and her interests."

Fall of Jaffna denied

COLOMBO, MAY 14. The Sri Lankan Government tonight denied a statement reportedly made by the opposition United National Party (UNP) leader, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, to the BBC that the Jaffna town had fallen.

The official television, in its news broadcast tonight first aired a brief interview of Mr. Wickremasinghe followed by comments from the Media Minister, Mr. Managgala Samaraweera, who accused the UNP leader of "committing treason" by making false statements. Mr. Samaraweera said the UNP leader had claimed that Jaffna town had fallen even though the LTTE itself had not made such a claim so far as the town was well defended by the army.— PTI

India ignored warnings: Page 14

THE HINDU

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There is little New Delhi can do about Sri Lanka but wait and watch

Good old middle path

MAHESH RANGARAJAN

The crisis in Sri Lanka finds the ruling coalition deeply divided against itself. The premier party within it, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has publicly opposed the creation of a separate Tamil homeland or *eelam*. But two of the smaller partners in government from Tamil Nadu have exactly the opposite view. For now, there is little New Delhi can do but wait and watch. If nothing else, it is clear that any hasty Indian intervention, especially an armed one, will probably lead to the kind of dead end reached by the Indian forces deployed in Sri Lanka in the period between 1987 and 1990.

The historic imperative of Indian foreign policy over the last few decades has been to ensure that no hostile power plays a key role in any neighbouring country in the subcontinent. At odds with this is the deeply held conviction of virtually all the regional forces from Tamil Nadu that no Indian intervention in Sri Lanka should either directly or indirectly go against the basic interests of the island state's beleaguered Tamil minority. The Atal Behari Vajpayee government has for now taken the middle path, eschewing any military assistance to the 35,000 odd troops trapped in the Jaffna peninsula, while arguing it will not remain indifferent to Sri Lankan concerns about keeping that country in one piece.

The foreign policy angle may be clear to some, but the bitter memory of the Indian peacekeeping force in the three year aftermath of the ill-fated Indo-Sri Lanka agreement in 1987 has yet to fade away. In its most extended engagement outside Indian territory yet, the Indian army and its sister forces found themselves in a no-win situation. The Tamil militants, who were saved from being ground down by the Sri Lankan army, turned against India, while the very powers at the helm of affairs in Colombo did all they could to sabotage the mission. The result was a stalemate. Indian forces withdrew in January 1990, but the experience remains in the background, doing much to restrain any knee-jerk response from New Delhi.

The political scenario in the country is also far removed from the one 13 long years ago. Rajiv Gandhi ruled a single party government with a steamroller majority. Tamil Nadu was under the iron grip of M.G. Ramachandran who backed the prime minister to the hilt, despite his own old links with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, especially with their leader, V. Prabhakaran. Today, the 22 members of parliament from the southern state, who are part of the ruling alliance but are not from the BJP, are a force to reckon with. No decision on the issue can move ahead

The author is an independent researcher on ecology and political affairs and former fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi



if they do not consent to it. Further, three of the parties, especially M. Karunanidhi's Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, have old links with the issues of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Even if they stop short of supporting the Tigers, they cannot, at least in a pre-election year, be seen as acting in the interests of the Sinhala-dominated regime in Colombo.

The real tragedy in the tale is, of course, not in India but in the island nation. Through the Eighties, as things went from bad to worse, it was the then ruling outfit, the United National Party, which fanned the flames of the conflict. In contrast, Chandrika Kumaratunga had backed the Indo-Sri Lanka accord in public. Her husband, Vijay Kumaratunga, was assassinated by Sinhala extremists for favouring a dialogue in place of a confrontation with the Tamil minority. In 1994, she began with a mandate for peace and devolution, and opened talks in the very early days of being in power. Things never really got going.

There was clearly a huge gulf between the two sides. The Tamil Tigers were never going to settle for anything less than a sovereign state of both the north and the east of the island, the territories they refer to as a Tamil homeland or *eelam*. They have used all means possible, including assassination and

Sri Lanka is not an ally to be bailed out on its own terms every time it is unable to rise to the admittedly difficult task of reconciliation

terror to achieve their aims. For her part, the president was never fully convincing that she would accept a merger of the north and the east within the context of a federated nation state. This is the very least that could have won over even moderate Tamil opinion. The Tigers struck back in the way they know best, nearly killing Kumaratunga on one occasion. The Sri Lankan army and the highly influential Buddhist clergy pushed for a military solution to the issue.

The J. Jayawardene approach, in the absence of the late president, was back. Try for an armed solution to the issue. If things go wrong, turn to India to bail the Colombo regime. But this is not an easy rerun of history. Rajiv Gandhi was a relative newcomer to politics when he committed Indian forces to action on the ground in Sri Lanka. He did not appreci-

ate the depth of the resentment among the Sinhala elite, which mistakenly sees India as the fount of what is essentially a homegrown failure at giving a minority the due share of power. Today, the foreign policy establishment in India notwithstanding, there is a grudging realization among the political class that cannot resolve a decade old political issue by rushing in where angels fear to tread.

The fact is that any bid to assist the Sri Lankan forces in the peninsula will end up ultimately in coming down on one side of Sri Lanka's internal conflict. What India gains by doing so is unclear. It will end up alienating one side without really earning the gratitude or loyalty of the other.

While this country cannot extend recognition to *eelam*, there is no reason to go out of its way to prevent the Tamil militants from being a force to bargain with at the table when they eventually sit down to talks with the Colombo regime. It is true that the Rajiv Gandhi murder makes it impossible for a government in New Delhi to be on good terms with the Tamil Tigers. It is equally the case that Sri Lanka is not a firm ally of this country, to be bailed out on its own terms every time its leadership proves unable to rise to the admittedly difficult task of reconciliation.

Even while gung-ho intervention is ruled out, there are other voices raised about the possible dangers of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka to this country. Such speculation misses a vital point; namely that Tamil Nadu's political and economic position in the Indian union is vastly different from that of north and east Sri Lanka. If India can leave with a Bengali-speaking nation state on its eastern flank, there is every reason to believe the analogy holds true in the south.

The last decade has seen a deepening of the economic integration of the Tamil-speaking India with the rest of the country on terms highly advantageous to the former. Many senior local politicians are opposed to having to their south a militant-dominated state that may become a factor in regional politics. But if *eelam* ever does come about, its seeds will have been sown and nurtured by decades of neglect of legitimate aspirations by the leadership in Colombo.

The existence of a coalition in New Delhi has tempered Indian policy with a dose of realism about the limits of power. It looks unlikely that the Kumaratunga government can regain or hold onto the north, while the Tamil Tigers have been checkmated in the east.

While it is in India's interest that Tamil aspirations and Sri Lankan unity be reconciled with each other, such an objective is a virtual non-starter in the present climate. There is nothing to be gained by rushing into such a situation, except as a mediator acceptable to all sides.

Karunanidhi attacks LTTE

Chennai, May 15
THE DMK today 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.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President M. Karunanidhi 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, Sabarathinam (TELO), K. Padmanabha of the (EPRLF) and Umamaheswaran 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 the demands of grants for police. He 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

Troops pound Tiger positions

SRI LANKAN troops, backed by Air Force cover, on Monday relentlessly bombarded LTTE positions and reported a "drastic drop" in the intensity of rebels' attacks on the embattled Jaffna town even as 15 guerrillas and three security personnel were killed in the fighting. A government statement said 15 rebels and three soldiers were killed.

PTI, Colombo

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 rebel outfit.

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.

(PTI)

16 MAY 2000

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2000

CONTINUING WITH THE BAN

THE UNION HOME Ministry had no alternative except to extend the ban on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by another two years. Though there was a predictable wave of propaganda by some pro-LTTE fringe groups in Tamil Nadu calling for a lifting of the ban this time, the Centre did not waver in its decision. Two of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners from Tamil Nadu, the PMK and the MDMK, not only voiced their support for a separate Tamil Eelam, but also strongly advocated the lifting of the ban on the LTTE. The MDMK leader, Mr. Vaiko, even persuaded the Shiv Sena chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray, to come out in favour of this move. But the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, appeared determined on both counts — to extend the ban and to unequivocally reject the Eelam demand. The Home Ministry's notification extending the ban has put the lid on this controversy and sent out clear signals that there is no material change in New Delhi's Sri Lanka policy — of continuing to outlaw the LTTE, while advocating a negotiated, political settlement to the Tamil question within the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. Being part of the Government, the PMK and the MDMK had no option except to accept the Centre's decision.

There were specious arguments from several quarters on why the Centre must review the ban on the LTTE now. The most common theory was that if India wanted to play the role of mediator on the Sri Lankan ethnic issue, it must renew its contacts with the LTTE. Till now, New Delhi has not conveyed its formal intent to Colombo, nor have the Sri Lankan Government or the LTTE requested India to mediate. The Centre can cross that bridge when it comes to it. But the truth of the matter now is that the Tamil Tigers have done nothing to warrant a review of the ban. They continue their terrorist activities;

campaign for a separate homeland for the Tamils; Mr. V. Prabhakaran and two of his colleagues remain 'proclaimed offenders' in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. Under these circumstances, there was no choice for the Centre but to extend the ban for two more years. Under the procedure laid down, the Home Ministry will set up a special tribunal to consider the ban notification. All interested parties, including the LTTE, will be free to depose before the Tribunal and present their case. Only the Tribunal can confirm the extension of the ban, within six months.

Merely banning the LTTE cannot solve the problem in India. The Centre and the Tamil Nadu Government must maintain a constant vigil on the seas and the coast to contain both LTTE infiltration and its propaganda activities here. Its smuggling and funding activities must also be monitored closely. For those who fear that the ban may come in the way of India playing the facilitator's role, it can be clearly said that the ban will not prevent New Delhi from doing that. When Sri Lanka, which has also proscribed the Tamil Tigers and is facing the wrath of the LTTE, is not handicapped in negotiating with the secessionist group, nothing can stop India from encouraging both parties to get engaged in meaningful negotiations. If the LTTE wants to make a transition and get recognised as a genuine representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils, it must at a minimum come forward to negotiate a peaceful settlement within a democratic framework and abandon its path of secession and terrorism which may be asking too much, considering its record. The violence and unnecessary loss of precious young lives in 17 long years have solved nothing, on the other hand, the moderate Tamil leadership has been eliminated and the LTTE's stranglehold strengthened.

'LTTE a threat to India's sovereignty'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 15. The continuing militant pursuits of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of the objective of a separate homeland, Eelam in Sri Lanka for all Tamils, its anti-India posture and violent activities threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India, according to the notification extending the ban on LTTE.

The LTTE continues to be an extremely potent terrorist force in Sri Lanka and is presently one of the deadliest terrorist organisations the world over which has strong connections in Tamil Nadu, according to the Centre's notification.

The notification, issued here on Sunday, extended the ban on the LTTE for two more years under the provisions of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. It was first declared unlawful association on May 14, 1992 following former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. The ban was extended in 1994, 1996 and 1998.

The Tribunals set up in those years confirmed the ban imposed by the Centre on the LTTE. To adjudicate the notification of May 14, 2000, a Tribunal consisting of a High Court Judge would be set up shortly in pursuance of the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, it was officially stated here today.

The notification said the Central Government was of the opinion that LTTE has continued its violent and disruptive activities prejudicial to the integrity and sovereignty of India and also continued to adopt a strong anti-India posture, posing a grave threat to the security of the Indian nationals. "It is necessary to declare the LTTE as an Unlawful Association," it said.

The notification said most of the criminal cases involving the LTTE and pro-LTTE groups like Tamil National Retrieval Troops (TNRT) and Tamilar Pasarai, have ended in conviction and the Tamil Eelam concept still remained a goal among the pro-LTTE groups in Tamil Nadu and the forces were still at work to further its cause, thereby contributing to the highly vulnerable milieu in which LTTE's free functioning in India as a law association, if allowed, was likely to be highly detrimental to the sovereignty and integrity of India.

It said the demand of for Tamil Eelam has found a strong echo in Tamil Nadu due to the linguistic, cultural, ethnic and historical affinity between the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka and the separatist Tamil chauvinist forces in Tamil Nadu, the pro-LTTE groups would always try to stimulate the secessionist sentiments to enhance the support base of the LTTE in Tamil Nadu which would have an adverse influence over the territorial integrity of India.

It emphasised the need to control all separatist activities by all possible lawful measures.

Send the army to Lanka?

To interfere militarily in the internal affairs of another country - in this case a close neighbour - is fraught with great difficulties; especially when it is well known that the root causes of the problem are preferential policies put in in the mid-50s. We present three views:

Lalita Panicker
Senior Assistant Editor,
The Times of India

The cycle of death and terror sparked off by Rajiv Gandhi's ill-fated decision to send the IPKF to Sri Lanka still haunts the Indian psyche. The gruesome pictures of dead Indian soldiers lying under the malevolent gaze of triumphant LTTE forces and later the mangled body of Rajiv Gandhi in Sriperumbadur are still vivid, and let us admit, too frightening to contemplate a military intervention in Sri Lanka. It was with ambitions of projecting India as a great power that a naive Rajiv Gandhi got lured into Sri Lanka by the wily Jayawardene.

In the first place, Rajiv Gandhi should have kept in mind that peace-keeping troops are generally drawn from a number of countries and usually under the aegis of the United Nations. The Indian army had to fight according to the conventions of war, keeping in mind the human rights of the civilians while the LTTE was hampered by no such considerations. It was a pathetic sight: the mighty Indian army biting the dust before a puny but vicious enemy. We have enough on our plate keeping intact the integrity of our northern borders; the last thing we need is to open up another front in the south. The LTTE, as we found out all too painfully is one of the most brutal and fascist outfits in the world and Velupillai Pirabhakaran does not forget or forgive. Not only would our military get bogged down in the treacherous quicksands of Jaffna, the LTTE would not hesitate to export its unique brand of terror to Tamil Nadu, today one of our showpiece states in terms of social development and IT.

Certainly, India has enormous strategic interests in the area and these are best served not by militarily intervening in a neighbouring state but by securing our borders from the spillover of the island's war. The reasoning that if India does not intervene, Pakistan or Israel will do so does not

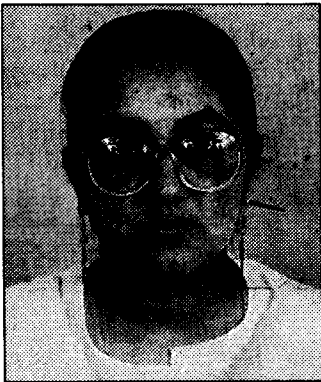
hold any water. If the Pakistanis want to go and get themselves a bloody nose, good luck to them. Third party intervention, howsoever justified, only breeds resentment; a lasting peace cannot be imposed on any one. Let us also not forget that the Sri Lankan government which once invited the IPKF into the country, did not bat an eyelid when it came to stabbing India in the back. Of course, there is world of difference between Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ranasinghe Premadasa, but realpolitik is not about personalities.

The sentiments of Tamil politicians in favour of Sri Lanka's suffering Tamils is often cited as a reason why the

Vajpayee government's hand might be forced. Indeed, exaggerated pronouncements in favour of Eelam have been made by various Tamil leaders in recent times with an eye purely for reasons of local politics. At the end of the day the BJP's Tamil Nadu based allies know that they have no choice. The Congress is in

tatters and even if it were in a position to challenge the BJP politically, its views on intervention will be sharply tempered by Rajiv Gandhi's fate. In fact, even as they bemoan the fate of Sri Lanka's Tamils, Tamil politicians in India have made it clear that they will not go so far as to rock the NDA government's boat. The no alternative factor will work in favour of the BJP-led government since the pro-interventionist can do no more than indulge in some amount of sabre-rattling.

But, all this does not rule out some diplomatic initiative. If the Norwegians can get into the act, why not India which is vitally interested. Without taking sides, a credible team could be put together drawing eminent people from the foreign policy establishment, the government and opposition and academic experts, people who have no axe to grind and who command the respect of both sides. In fact, we ought to invite the Pakistanis to join such an effort, whether Islamabad responds favourably or not. This would prove that India is not in the mediation game for prestige but out of genuine concern for the suffering of Sri Lanka's people.



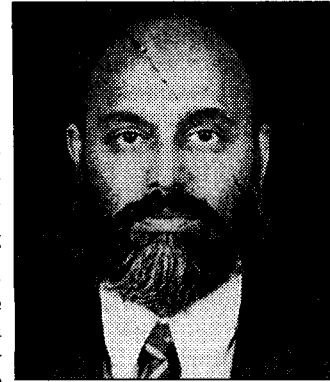
C Uday Bhaskar
Deputy Director,
IDSIA, New Delhi

Any reference to the question of India intervening militarily in the current Sri Lankan crisis invokes the IPKF experience of 1987. India sustained a total of 3,266 casualties - both killed and injured - in that military operation; and in retrospect it is evident that there was inadequate harmonisation of the political and military objectives of the Indian initiative of that period. The subsequent assassination of the former Indian PM, Rajiv Gandhi, by the LTTE, has added to the trauma of the collective Indian psyche.

However in assessing the present situation it merits reiteration that the Sri Lankan situation of 2000 is not comparable with 1987. The entire geo-political and strategic context - from the domestic to the regional to the global - is dramatically different. In that sense a linear comparison with the earlier experience may be misleading.

It is clear that India does not wish to 'intervene' militarily as it did in the past. This is reflected in the official Indian articulation. Yet India does not have the option of being a distant spectator vis-a-vis developments in the island republic. Given the proximity and the complex historical bonds that link the Sri Lankans of Tamil origin with the Indian mainland, there is already an Indian involvement that cannot be ignored. Thus the nature of the resolution of the current Sri Lankan-LTTE military stand-off has long term strategic implications of India's comprehensive security, image and credibility - in a holistic sense.

The facts on the ground are that India is committed to the territorial unity and integrity of Sri Lanka even while seeking the accommodation of the anxieties and aspirations of the Tamil minority. Evolving such a framework will test the patience and ingenuity of the principal players but in a way this is the abiding security chal-



lenge of the post Cold war world; how to subsume sub-nationalism that takes the terrorist route and invokes all the elements of micro-security that can de-stabilise state and society viz.: narcotics, arms trafficking and ruthless fundamentalist ideology. Predictably, the LTTE continues to be a banned outfit as far as the GoI is concerned.

The current LTTE objective is the attainment of Eelam - or a Tamil homeland - in Sri Lanka. While noting the palpable emotive aspect of such a concept as regards the Indian mainland, one should objectively review the implications of such a possibility. Personally I do not subscribe to the

argument that this will weaken the Indian union and fan Tamil separatism. The Indian state and the sense of national identity has now acquired the requisite degree of resilience to deal with such an exigency - though one may not have said this 15 year ago. But the implications of endorsing - however

tacitly - the division of Sri Lanka along ethnic lines, by a non-state actor using methods that are far from democratic, through a long drawn out and bitter military campaign, is a recipe for potential turbulence and instability. This will be inimical to the security and prosperity of the regional grid and would trigger off reverberations that may not be anticipated just now.

India may not 'intervene' but it would prudent to be 'involved' in the current imbroglio. A collective regional or multilateral effort with India playing a substantive role is a possibility that would encourage both sides - the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE - to cease hostilities and come to the negotiating table with greater sincerity of purpose than now demonstrated may yet stabilise the situation. But the bottom-line is that India's wriggle-room is limited and calls for an astute and objective comprehension of the national interest and how it is to be distilled and pursued through the filter of animated, subjective politics - conceptual challenges that robust democracies have always grappled with.

Karunanidhi disclaims LTTE leanings

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, May 15. — Desperate to bury all speculation about his party's stand on the LTTE and its struggle to carve out a separate Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, the Tamil Nadu chief minister and DMK president, Mr M Karunanidhi, was at pains today to stress that his party had never supported the Tigers after the EPRLF leader, Padmanabha, was killed. It had in fact distanced itself from the guerrilla group.

Parrying Opposition charges in the Assembly today that he was openly backing the LTTE, Mr Karunanidhi said "How can you expect that those who annihilate their own people would protect the race?"

Mr Karunanidhi also clarified that he had never said he would support a separate Eelam but had merely said he'd be

PIRABHAKARAN'S MOTHER ILL

CHENNAI, May 15. — Parvathy (70), the mother of LTTE leader, Pirabhakaran, was taken ill and has been admitted to a private hospital in Musiri in Tiruchirapalli district in Tamil Nadu. Parvathy was admitted to hospital last week after she suffered a paralytic stroke. Her husband and Pirabhakaran's father, the 75-year-old Velupillai, a retired Sri Lankan government employee, is said to be attending on her at the hospital.

The couple, who were leading a quiet life here away from media glare later shifted their residence to Tiruchirapalli. — SNS

"happy" if Eelam was formed. On Friday, Mr Karunanidhi had said in the Assembly that he would be happy if Eelam was formed either through war or through negotiations.

Tracing the genesis of Tamil Nadu's support to the Eelam cause, Mr Karunanidhi said earlier, every political party in the state had supported one Lankan militant group or the other.

who had admonished him for not "supporting the cause of the Tigers and their struggle for a separate Eelam," the Chief Minister said.

He recalled that in an interview to an English newspaper on 4 October, 1990, Miss Jayalalitha had the Tigers were waging a courageous battle in Sri Lanka and that he (Karunanidhi), who was the Chief Minister then, had not extended any support to the Tigers' cause. "He is busy protecting his chair," Miss Jayalalitha had said, Mr Karunanidhi pointed out.

With the dismissal of his government in January 1991 by the then Prime Minister, Mr Chandrasekhar for allowing the Tigers a free run of the state still haunting him, Mr Karunanidhi was keen to list out the various measures taken by his government to stall any LTTE movement in the state, especially in the coastal

THE STATESMAN

16 MAY 1991

Light on LTTE

Tamil Nadu chief minister Karunanidhi has done well publicly to dissociate his party from the LTTE even as he reaffirmed support for the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Distancing himself from the LTTE, the chief minister noted that the organisation rose to power in the 1980s by eliminating all other Sri Lankan Tamil leaders. At that time, most Tamil Nadu parties were allied to different Sri Lankan Tamil parties, with the LTTE being associated with the AIADMK. The then chief minister of Tamil Nadu, M G Ramachandran, played a major role as a link between the government of India and LTTE leader Prabhakaran. According to one version, Prabhakaran who had indicated his acceptance of the draft India-Sri Lanka accord changed his mind when he met MGR en route to Delhi. There is no denying that Sri Lankan Tamil politics and Tamil Nadu politics were intensely interactive in the eighties. Some observers have alleged that money generated by the LTTE through drug trade and smuggling played a role in Tamil Nadu politics. There are also other allegations, some of them from former officials, that the LTTE and Indian intelligence were in clandestine contact with each other even as the IPKF was fighting the Tigers. There are reasons to believe that South Block's Sri Lanka policy — including the induction and withdrawal of the IPKF — was determined by Tamil Nadu state politics, with Delhi being influenced at the time by narrow considerations of electoral advantages. Prabhakaran took full advantage of this parochial politics, both in Chennai and Delhi.

An objective understanding of the developments of the 1980s will help the government to formulate an appropriate policy and win as broad support as possible in the current context. At that time, the LTTE operated freely in Tamil Nadu; the organisation caused the Meenambakkam airport explosion, shot down Sabarathinam, and institutionalised drug trafficking in the area. There was significant inflow of illicit money into Tamil Nadu politics. Even the national parties have, for considerations of electoral alliances, deliberately obfuscated the LTTE's political role in Tamil Nadu. Trying to trace the LTTE's labyrinthian connections, the Jain Commission got totally befuddled, went off at a tangent and lost its credibility. Today when the LTTE operates internationally in league with other terrorist outfits, it is in the interests of both Chennai and Delhi that the role of the organisation is fully publicised. These considerations have to be taken into account while assessing the full consequences of a LTTE victory in Jaffna. There are other lessons to be learnt about our own intelligence, decision-making and accountability. It cannot be forgotten that while Kargil cost this country around 500 lives, the IPKF operations claimed the lives of 1,200 Indian soldiers. Now that another Sri Lankan crisis is likely to involve India in one way or the other, the country ought to be told the whole truth about the LTTE and its dealings with Chennai and Delhi. This is the best way to ensure that the IPKF tragedy is not repeated.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

THE TIMES OF INDIA

India, Lanka try to talk through crisis

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, May 16

IT IS now exactly a fortnight since External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh announced India's decision to get involved, even if partially, in the Sri Lankan theatre. But curiously, Colombo continues to deny any official intimation from New Delhi on this.

In the light of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's second announcement today for military hardware from "friendly countries" combined with US Under Secretary Thomas Pickering's decision to visit both capitals later this month to discuss "Asian security" this assumes some significance.

It seems as if the two countries have embarked upon a novel diplomatic course: talking through media interviews and parliament statements. On May 9, the Sri Lankan

High Commissioner in New Delhi, Mr Mangala Moonasinghe, reacted in an interview to Star TV on Mr Singh's public offer on mediation. But he did not say anything about a direct offer through normal diplomatic channels.

Over the past two days, Mrs Kumaratunge and her Foreign Minister, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, have been quoted as saying that India has not made clear its intention to mediate.

Asked for a comment on this, the spokesman of India's External Affairs Ministry said, "The Sri Lankans are aware of our position which has been openly stated on several occasions."

On the Sri Lankan purchase of arms from other countries, he said India has no comment but will not supply hardware itself.

In this unique exchange of public opinion aimed generally in the direction of each other, New Delhi and Colombo have confirmed their inability to reach a convergence of views. Senior officials said initial enthusiasm in Colombo on India's perceived stepping into the breach came a cropper when the Vajpayee government refused to get into a dispute with Tamil Nadu allies and recalled the

Taming Tigers

"1987 experience", much to Sri Lanka's chagrin. For, the latter was hoping that India would in the very least, forget the past and grab the opportunity to play big brother again expressing its inability to bear the refugee burden as a ruse.

But the excessive caution with which the government is proceeding, combined with the Indian objective of talking to the LTTE

despite continuing with a ban on it, is making Mrs Kumaratunge look a little small before the nation. Observers say her inability to achieve Junius Jayawardene's feat of getting the Indians to fight on the Sinhala's behalf, is not helping the President's public image in an election year.

On the other hand, India is willy-nilly already a part of the action. Having established its anti-Eelam stand, India has offered Sri Lanka assistance in the form of expert advice on air operations to aid the fight-back in Jaffna. It has also decided to use the Norwegian channel to talk to the LTTE.

However, sources confide that talking to the LTTE is not expected to achieve anything. From the Indian experience, the LTTE supremo V Prabhakaran is the person to be influenced by promises on power devolution.

THE CHRISTIAN LEADER

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17 MAY 2000

Indian dilemma

W. 11 1975

After vacating Subic Bay in the Philippines and coming under pressure in Okinawa, the US military could well want a long-term presence at Trincomalee, argues ANAND K. SAHAY

PLATFORM

THE UNITED STATES badly burnt its fingers in Vietnam, but this does not stop Washington from spraying the Monroe doctrine to the farthest corners of the globe, and acting as an interventionist state-actor whenever it perceives its interests to be in jeopardy. Pakistan must be still retaining a bad memory of 1971, and yet Islamabad thinks nothing of launching a Kargil. But, being Pavlovians, we have announced that Indian forces will not get involved in Sri Lanka again.

Mercifully, this is not a resolution of Parliament, only the declaration of intent of a particular government. This saves us from being bound hand and foot to a policy line that might become too hot to hold should the sounds of the civil war in Sri Lanka begin to reverberate on our shores, as they did in 1987, turning Tamil Nadu into a frontline state.

This is not to plead for raising a second edition of the IPKF here and now. That would be alarmist and irresponsible. But it is worthwhile to appreciate that, at the conceptual level, no option can be foreclosed, given Sri Lanka's geographical coordinates on our immediate periphery.

But the government has done exactly that. Worse, it made its defining statement from inside the chamber of Parliament. This may not close all the escape hatches should the Sri Lanka situation worsen from our point of view, but certainly resiling would be made difficult in the Westminster party system. There would necessarily, therefore, be a political price to pay.

For better or worse, India cannot remain immune or indifferent to goings-on in its neighbourhood. This is why, even while being a constant seeker and promoter of peace, it must at all times keep its antenna up on what is happening not only in Sri Lanka, but also in Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, or even little Maldives and Nepal. This is not a matter of chauvinism or having great power illusions, but is driven by the necessity of survival as a composite and capable state.

Indeed, since 1998, when this country effectively became a nuclear weapons state, its responsibility for anticipating difficult regional situations, and nipping them in the bud, has become all the greater. If it cannot do so, and permits the easy chipping away of any of its vital interests, it would become an

object of derision since it is big in size, has a large modernised economy, and is also thought to have powerful armed forces.

In that event, it will suffer an inestimable erosion of prestige and power, with negative consequences running down the line, including in the internal domestic sphere. Then it can become an easy picking for an adversary foreign interest. Kargil, for us, must be a warning. It very nearly opened the doors for an overt show of interest by powerful external forces, making a mockery of India's de facto nuclear status.

Actually, no country can pretend to be

(ISLA) of 1987 blew up on our face.

In retrospect, it is evident that the UNP, the Sri Lankan ruling party of the time which signed it, was divided in appreciating ISLA's merits. The opposition elements were naturally opposed. And when the cookie crumbled, the political temperature in Tamil Nadu had risen immeasurably since the Indian military force had willy-nilly come to be deployed against the Tamil guerrillas.

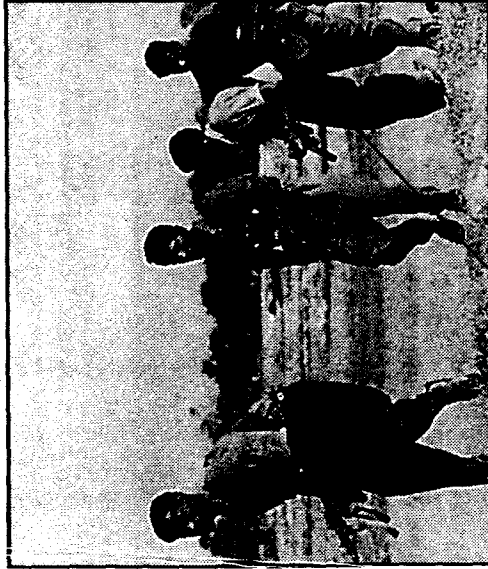
Will this domestic political factor continue to hold since assembly elections in Tamil Nadu are due in less than a year? Frankly, no one can say, but the ruling coalition here is crucially dependent on its Tamil Nadu allies for survival, and will have to be sensitive to their perceptions.

In Sri Lanka too this is an election year, and there is no knowing the flip-flops the domestic political opinion in that country might take on the question of a perceived interventionist role by India. Therefore, this cannot be a clean option unless alter-natives have been explored and found wanting in a fast deteriorating situation, for instance, if a Tamil refugee tide rises and the internal security situation in Tamil Nadu risks being seriously compromised.

In 1987, the Indian state was widely perceived as supporting the Tamil cause for greater self-governing powers within the state of Sri Lanka, though eventually it came into conflict with the LTTE. This time round it may risk being seen as bailing out the government against overflowing Tamil sentiment.

So, offering to be a peace-broker, as the government has done, may be the only starting point left. But its limits will be exposed soon unless the LTTE is persuaded to revise its goal, or is comprehensively defeated on the field of battle. India has nothing more to offer than the Rajiv era ISLA — still the best peace plan on view — and the LTTE seeks nothing less than a separate Tamil state.

However, if India cannot act, extra-regional powers could then rush to fill the vacuum. For instance, after vacating Subic Bay in the Philippines and coming under pressure in Okinawa, the US military could well want a long-term presence at Trincomalee, the best natural harbour in the world. If that happens, India's own position could be distinctively undermined.



LTTE in action: On the offensive

untouched by rumblings in its vicinity, whether these are of a political, military or economic nature. How it responds, or whether it is able to respond at all, would depend solely on its capacity to do so. Fortunately, India is not utterly helpless in this regard. And it is a truism, in the modern era, to suggest that our security concerns cannot automatically end at our physical frontiers.

In Sri Lanka, this time around, India faces an acute dilemma. Psychologically, there is the memory of a prolonged and debilitating military stalemate even after a politically acceptable accord had been stitched up with the formal consent of all parties concerned. And yet, the India-Sri Lanka Agreement

Sri Lankan Tamils unhappy at Karunanidhi's somersault

P.K. Balachandran
Colombo, May 17

SRI LANKAN Tamils both at home and abroad are incensed against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi for his "somersault" on the issue of supporting the Eelam movement and the LTTE. The avowedly pro-LITE Tamils are livid, and are pouring scorn on him, if one is to go by the matter appearing in the pro-LITE websites.

But the more moderate Tamils wonder if Mr Karunanidhi has come under some pressure from the Centre to stay in line with the Centre's Lanka policy. New Delhi is clearly neither for Eelam nor for the LTTE.

At least one Tamil analyst wondered if Mr. Karunandhi was preparing the Tamil Nadu political ground for an Indian intervention in Sri Lanka if and when the situation there warranted it in India's national interest.

The moderate Tamils also wonder if Mr Karunanidhi's statements are the result of a perception that the Sri Lankan Tamil issue may prove to be a drag on the DMK's fortunes in the coming State

assembly elections.

The pro-LITE website "Tamil Canadian" has stated in its views section that the Tamils expected Mr. Karunanidhi to act as the "midwife" at the birth of an independent Eelam, now seen by the Tamil diaspora as being "imminent" given the forays made by the LTTE in Jaffna. But his tight rope walking and his latest statement rejecting the LTTE's claim to represent the Tamils, has "disappointed" his own followers, Tamil Canadian said.

The website warned that the Tamils should not take Mr. Karunanidhi as a supporter of the creation of Eelam.

The website set the tone for the comments to come by dubbing the Tamil Nadu CM's unhelpful stance as being the result of the hegemony of Brahmins, branded as the "historic enemies of Tamil nationalism."

Marath Thamilan of Norway described Mr. Karunanidhi as the "Cheap Minister" who had not only "betrayed" Periyar (the father of the Dravidian Self Respect Movement) but also the people of Tamil Nadu and Tamil Eelam.

In an ominous note of warning,

Marrath Thamilan said that Mr. Karunanidhi should know Newton's third law: "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction." Mahen Mahendran of UK said that Mr. Karunanidhi was a "senile and corrupt" politician, who had "learnt to survive by bending with the wind blowing from New Delhi."

Referring to some well-known Brahmin opponents of Eelam and the LTTE in India, Shanthi Balakumar of Canada said Mr. Karunandhi was worse than the Brahmins she named. "These Brahmins stab you in the chest. Karunanidhi stabs you in the back," she said.

In Colombo, TULF MP Joseph Pararajasingham, said perhaps Mr. Karunanidhi had come under pressure from the Centre which had expressly opposed the creation of a separate Eelam and had extended the ban on the LTTE. But the Director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, Dr Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, felt that Mr. Karunanidhi's statement could mean that Tamil Nadu's political ground was being prepared for an Indian intervention in Sri Lanka if the situation was conducive to it.

A tiger by its tail

IN BUDDHISM, existence is a never-ending cycle of birth and death. The pattern of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict seems to closely mirror this concept of its predominant religion, dying and flaring up again and again. Today, as Sri Lanka looks to India for assistance to solve its crisis, the wheel can be said to have turned yet another cycle.

Only 13 years ago, when India stepped into the crisis, the Sri Lankan Government had little choice but to accept the intervention. It sparked a huge public outcry against India, setting off an armed insurgency that took two years to put down.

In contrast, this time, as the battle for Jaffna rages, there is outrage against India for "doing nothing". Analysts, foreign policy makers, Buddhist monks, politicians, newspaper leader writers, and ordinary people, Tamil and Sinhalese all want India to "do something" though there is no one view on what that "something" ought to be.

With the expectation is deep anxiety at India's perceived inaction till now. "We understand India's constraints for not doing what it should do, but still, we are deeply disappointed," said Mr. Nanda Godage, who was Deputy High Commissioner in India when the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was signed in 1987. "The statement about providing humanitarian

assistance' is wholly inadequate. India must be seen to be on the side of the democratically-elected Government of this country and helping counter a terrorist organisation that is banned in that country."

As the battle for Jaffna rages, the Sri Lankans want India to "do something", though there is no one view on what that "something" ought to be, writes

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN.

A senior official in the Foreign

Ministry, who did not want to be named, painted a scenario in which the Sri Lankan armed forces, in their desperation, resort to the aerial bombardment of Jaffna, leading to civilian deaths in the densely-populated region. "If that happens, passions in Tamil Nadu will rise again. Can India handle that? Is it not better to pitch in now and avoid such a situation altogether," he asked.

There is also the view that India's role in fanning the flames of Tamil militancy placed an obligation on it to douse the fire now. In a heavily-censored editorial last week, the influential *Sunday*

Sunday

Times newspaper castigated India for not standing by Sri Lanka in its hour of crisis. "For all his pious talk of eliminating cross-border terrorism vis-a-vis Kashmir, Indian Premier Atal Behari Vajpayee has been unable to respond to the needs of this country today, which trace back to a brand of cross-border terrorism spawned by India several years back."

Despairing that the influence of politicians in Tamil Nadu had paralysed the Centre, the editorial said: "It is chronic sentimentality to have visions of India as the land of the Buddha, of the Mahatma or of Nehru and so forth. The fact is that India has changed to our detriment. The sooner we square with that reality, the better for all of us."

While these views represent, more or less, the majority point of view, the minority Tamils are also seeking India's help, but from a different perspective.

Mr. Dharmalingam Sithadthan,

leader of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and member of Parliament, neatly summed up the range of views across the communal divide: "While the Sinhalese want India to do a repeat of 1971 (when Indian forces helped crush an armed rebellion by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna against Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike's Government), against the LTTE, the Tamils want India to mediate and force both sides (the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE) to go for a settlement."

Underlying the Tamil point of view is the belief that India understands these aspirations better than any other country. "We know it will be difficult, and no one has any moral right to ask any help from India after all that has happened, but if India is prepared to forget all that and come forward as a mediator between the Government and

the LTTE, we would be very happy," said Mr. V.



Anandasangaree, vice-president of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

Mr. A. Varatharaja Perumal, now the most openly anti-LTTE Tamil politician left in Sri Lanka, who returned to the island in 1999 after years of a self-imposed exile on Indian soil, went one step further. He demanded that India not only help Sri Lanka retain Jaffna against the LTTE, but also help reach a political settlement among the Government, the Opposition, and all anti-LTTE Tamil parties, and stay to implement it. "Without the participation of a third force, no political solution can be arrived at or enforced," he said.

France shares India's appreciation of Lanka

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 19

INDIA AND France today discussed the Sri Lankan situation within the framework of the ongoing intense politico-strategic dialogue between the two countries.

Mr Alain Richard, visiting French Defence Minister, held delegation level talks with his Indian counterpart George Fernandes at the Defence Ministry this morning. Mr Richard later called on President K.R. Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Addressing newsmen in the evening, Mr Richard said that Sri Lanka featured in the wide-ranging discussion he had with the Indian authorities. During the discussions, the two sides compared the evaluation of the strategic environment in Asia and in Europe.

On Sri Lanka, Mr Richard said that there was "common assess-

ment on the security matter," and that the French delegation shared the Indian appreciation of the Sri Lankan situation. The Indian authorities apparently explained to visiting French dignitary their assessment and perception of the ongoing fighting between the Sri Lanka forces and the LTTE.

The matter assumes importance in the light of France taking over soon the Presidency of the European Union and the interest Paris is showing on developments in the Indian Ocean and South Asia. In his speech, delivered at the USI earlier in the day, Mr Alain said: "I am getting during my visit here in New Delhi a direct insight into the Indian vision of Asia, including South Asia and the Indian Ocean."

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India keeps a close watch on Lanka

Call for help may put Centre in a tight spot

By Seema Guha

NEW DELHI: India is keeping a close watch on the ding-dong battle for Jaffna where fierce fighting for the control of the provincial capital continues. Anxiety is mounting in New Delhi as there appears to be danger of the Tigers gaining the upper hand.

While there is no danger of the LTTE harming the civilian Tamil population from which it draws its strength, the fate of the 40,000 soldiers trapped in the peninsula will continue to be a worrying factor if the LTTE onslaught continues. If President Chandrika Kumaratunga appeals to India for help, what will New Delhi do? Although India has excellent

relations with Sri Lanka, it would be politically disastrous for New Delhi to step in, given the sensitivities of the Tamil Nadu government.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee gave a non-committal answer when asked about India's stand on the unfolding drama in the island state. "If we have to take any step, we are ready for it, if necessary. The situation is changing rapidly. We are keeping a close watch," he said, adding that the offer of humanitarian assistance to Colombo was on.

Mr Vajpayee has kept all his options open but has not given any hint about what he intends to do. However, defence minister George Fernandes categorically ruled out armed intervention.

No putting back troops: Chandrika

COLOMBO: Seventeen LTTE rebels and 12 soldiers were killed in heavy fighting in northern Jaffna on Saturday even as the Sri Lankan government maintained that its troops had continued to repulse attempts by well-armed LTTE rebels to penetrate the army's defences in the vicinity of Jaffna.

"The counter-attack force, supported by heavy and medium artillery, went into action and caused many casualties among the terrorists," a government release said, adding that further reinforcements had been sent into the trouble-torn area. The government, however, declined to react to the LTTE's claims from London that the Tigers had continued to fire artillery shells at the Palaly air base and Kankesanthurai harbours, the lifeline for food and weapons supplies.

Meanwhile, amidst calls from the LTTE asking over 30,000 government troops in northern Jaffna to lay down their arms and surrender, President Chandrika Kumaratunga asserted that she would not withdraw the troops even if the Tamil guerrillas attempted to kill her again. (Agencies)

21 MAY 2000

Indian, Sri Lankan officials meet

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 20. Senior Indian and Sri Lankan military officials had a key two-day brainstorming exercise in Bangalore even as Sri Lanka's Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kiriella, was in Karnataka's capital today.

According to sources, the Sri Lankans sought the meeting as they were finding it difficult to interpret the surveillance data on LTTE strongholds, such as radar images which India was passing on to them. The meeting began in the backdrop of the visit of the Sri Lankan Chief of defence staff, General Rohan De'Silva Daluvatte, who was also in Bangalore on Thursday.

In the wake of the LTTE's relentless onslaught on Jaffna, both sides also discussed the possible road map towards negotiations. India was considering various options after the fall of Jaffna. The assessment was that India, at some point of time, would have to intervene to steer the course of violence in the Jaffna peninsula towards negotiations. The key lies in determining the right moment for nudging both parties for talks.

The moment for negotiations might arrive when the LTTE clearly gained an upper hand over Jaffna town, symbolised, for instance, in the takeover of the strategically-located Jaffna university. With the centrally-located university as the base, the Tigers could establish control over the town by combining popular support with terror. Much would depend on how the Tigers project their de facto dominance over town.

Initiating talks would be easier in case the Tigers decided against proclaiming that Jaffna had "fallen". A formal declaration of Sri Lankan defeat would mean a total loss of face which would drive the Sri Lankans away from the negotiating table.

While the LTTE is aware of India's preference for the use of calibrated force, it is not certain whether the Tigers would exercise restraint. The Tigers are aware that the Indian leverage over them is restricted as New Delhi, on account of present political compulsions and the bitter history of the IPKF operations, no longer has the option of using force against them.

As of now, the LTTE is on a military high. Sources pointed out that the LTTE have captured seven 122mm. field artillery guns from the forces. Besides, it has taken over an artillery ammunition dump close to Elephant Pass. Nevertheless, its supplies of ammunition are not endless. With the onset of monsoon, the LTTE will find it difficult to operate the small ships which are used for ferrying its arms and ammunition. This will have a negative impact on its preparedness in the long run.

The Indian Navy is gearing itself up for evacuation from the Jaffna peninsula along a "safe passage" which the Tigers may earmark soon after their movement into the town. The first to leave are likely to be the leaders and cadres of the EPRLF, TELO, PLOTE and TULF, who have been targeted by the LTTE in the past.

Minister in Bangalore

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, MAY 20. The Sri Lankan Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kiriella, arrived here today on a private visit.

He went to Sri Satya Sai Institute of Higher Learning at "Brindavan" Whitefield, where a summer camp of spirituality and culture is being held. He also had the darshan of Sri Saibaba. He is expected to be here for another day.

Sri Lankan minister to meet Karunanidhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BANGALORE, May 21. — The Sri Lankan Deputy External Affairs Minister, Mr Lakshman Kiriella, said today that he hoped to meet Mr M Karunanidhi in Chennai tomorrow on his way back home. He refused to spell out the purpose of his intended meeting with the Tamil Nadu chief minister.

Mr Kiriella, who is visiting Indian Godman, Sri Satya Sai baba, at Whitefield here, said his government was determined to beat back the LTTE offensive on Jaffna. It was vital for the troops to retain the Palaly airbase, which was under heavy LTTE shelling, he said.

On the kind of Indian help sought by his government, the minister only said Colombo and New Delhi had worked out the details of assistance sought.

He admitted that Pakistan and Norway were extending help but refused to elaborate.

Most of his countrymen were now regretting their opposition to the intervention by the IPKF in the late eighties and early nineties, he said. Stressing that Colombo's ties with New Delhi were good, he said that the very people who had earlier opposed the Indian Peace Keeping Force were now favouring Indian intervention.

He conceded that the media censorship in force in his country could prove counter-productive,

but said the situation in the island nation left on alternative. Admitting that it was not a correct thing to distort news, he said prospect lifting censorship was quite bright.

Mr Kiriella's presence in the city within days of the Sri Lankan Defence Minister, Mr Rohan de Silva Daluwate's visit had set off speculation that India was all set to intervene in the Lankan ethnic war.

This was probably why the minister repeatedly stressed that details of the possible Indian role had already been discussed between his senior minister, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, and his Indian counterpart, Mr Jaswant Singh. His own visit to Bangalore, Mr Kiriella said, was a private one. Palk Straits vigil: The Navy, meanwhile, has stepped up patrol in the Palk Straits to preempt any influx of refugees from Sri Lanka, adds SNS from New Delhi.

The Navy and the Coast Guard have been jointly patrolling the area and smaller ships as well as Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft have been pressed into service over the past few days. Naval officials have been checking against an influx from Sri Lanka primarily because it is likely to increase tension in Tamil Nadu.

The number of ships involved has increased, but the overall structure of Operation Tasha remains the same.

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THE STATESMAN

Navy on 72-hr alert for Jaffna evacuation

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, May 22

THE NAVY is understood to have been placed on a 72-hour notice in the eventuality of Colombo asking New Delhi to assist in evacuating Sri Lankan troops trapped in the Jaffna peninsula.

Highly-placed sources said the armed forces' assessment, conveyed to the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), is that there are three possible outcomes to the rapidly changing Sri Lankan situation. This appreciation is based on the premise that the hold of the Sri Lankan forces over Jaffna town is precarious and it could fall to the LTTE in the coming days. The matter was discussed at a CCS meeting held today.

The first scenario is that the LTTE could allow the Sri Lankan forces to withdraw to Palali airbase for aerial evacuation. The second scenario, that has been deliberated upon in South Block, is that the LTTE could give a safe passage to

the trapped Sri Lankan troops. However, the Indian defence establishment feels that the above two scenarios are a remote possibility given the trust levels of the LTTE.

The third and the most plausible

Jaffna: As seen by New Delhi

Jaffna, Palali airbase
● Jaffna Peninsula

① LTTE could allow the Sri Lankan forces to withdraw to Palali airbase for aerial evacuation.

② LTTE could give safe passage to the trapped Sri Lankan troops.

③ Sri Lankan Govt would ask India to assist in the evacuation of its stranded soldiers.

Graphic by VINEY

scenario is that the Sri Lanka Government would ask India to assist in the evacuation of thousands of stranded soldiers. The Navy has been placed on an alert notice in case Sri Lanka makes a formal request in this regard.

However, these three scenarios

are being counterbalanced by a perception held by an influential section of the military establishment, which feels that Jaffna might not fall after the Sri Lankan forces changed battlefield tactics last week.

Highly-placed Government sources said the Sri Lankan Chief of Defence Staff, General Rohan De Silva Daluwatte, had a meeting with top Indian military officials during his visit to Bangalore last week.

While the defence establishment chooses to maintain silence over the General's visit, it is understood that Sri Lankan CDS and his team were briefed by the Indian military on LTTE tactics, intelligence, battlefield leadership and guerrilla warfare.

The Indian side shared with the visiting Defence Chief their assessment on how the beleaguered Sri Lankan troops could change the ground situation in the Jaffna peninsula by adopting various offensive or defensive strategies.

CHALLENGE IN LANKA

Fernandes should keep quiet, he talks too much

THE Prime Minister did well to enunciate India's stand in the on-going Sri Lankan conflict. Noting that the situation is "changing rapidly" he assured everyone that his Government was "keeping a close watch". Lest someone mistake his meaning, he made it plain that India was ready for all eventualities and would do its duty. Various shades of opinion within Sri Lanka must continue to be carefully monitored, India cannot be blamed for remembering the IPKF fiasco. At the same time, the situation is quite different this time and India's commitment to the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka is firm and unequivocal. This is also in India's national interests. It is difficult to know what exactly is going on with the total censorship imposed by the Sri Lankan authorities, but enough is known to suggest that Israel is helping in material ways and the pace of the LTTE's advance is slowing down. This may mean very little, advancing troops need to halt to regroup before the next major initiative. If Jaffna falls, it will represent a tremendous boost for the Tigers, well beyond the intrinsic worth of the town.

The Prime Minister spoke on 20 May and he was at his best. He was careful, cool and determined. It is a pity that the ebullient defence minister, George Fernandes, chose the same day to make contrary noises. His sympathy for the plight of innocent Tamils, caught in a war not of their own choosing, is sincere and shared widely, but as usual he goes overboard. He is old enough to know, and his experience in the ministry should have taught him, that emotion has no place in defence matters, or indeed in foreign policy. The postures over minority rights he adopted in his early years must give way to realpolitik otherwise he has no business remaining in the ministry. Someone should point out to him that the Tamil Tigers have assumed the role of terrorists and spurned offers of negotiations, except when it suited them to acquire breathing space for further excesses. Like Karunanidhi in Tamil Nadu, he must realise that if Tamil Eelam comes about, the state of Tamil Nadu will be adversely affected. Chauvinism and worse will sweep aside both these innocents abroad, and the country's integrity will be endangered. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Next, Israel and Pakistan will be thrown into the argument. In the post-IPKF era, Pakistan is helping with the wherewithal, although it is doubtful whether it is decisive. No one should mistake the turning towards Israel. President Kumaratunga has no choice, in the situation facing her she must seek help wherever it is available. India understands. Desperate situations demand drastic remedies and the Lankan situation is indeed desperate.

This is a time for cool heads and strong nerves, both in Sri Lanka and in India. All shades of opinion in Lanka must want Indian intervention and the international community must both understand and applaud. While Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is engaged in delicate and difficult terrain and in a fast moving scenario, grappling with it with his usual cool and competence, the least the defence minister can do is to stop repeating himself and to accept that to hold the same opinions in the face of a rapidly deteriorating situation is to behave like the proverbial schoolboy, well birched but none the wiser.

Godspeed and good fortune in your task, Prime Minister, the country is with you.

Service chiefs meet to review Lanka crisis

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 22. — The Cabinet Committee on Security and the Chiefs of Staff reviewed the Sri Lanka situation this morning. Later in the day, the Chiefs examined various options should India decide to intervene.

(The Lankan government today said it would explore "diplomatic means" to invite India to join the mediation process while the visiting Norwegian delegation said India had played a very important role and would continue to do so in reaching a solution. After days of dithering, the Lankan foreign minister today said his ministry was looking for avenues to "approach" India's offer to mediate, adds PTI from Colombo.)

Defence sources said it would be premature to draw conclusions from the Chiefs' meeting today and their meeting with the National Security Advisor last evening.

Helping to evacuate an estimated 30,000 Lankan troops

from Jaffna could be undertaken by India, but top defence officials said such a mission would be dictated by events on the ground.

Though the Lankan government has said there will be no let-up on part of its forces, Indian military observers note that the LTTE is pushing the troops back to Jaffna town. Whether the LTTE will go ahead with threats to overrun the town or settle for laying siege to it is a crucial question.

Armed intervention by India has been ruled out. Defence officials maintain that even a evacuation mission would depend on a ceasefire agreement between the Lankan government and the LTTE, more importantly its terms and conditions.

When calling upon the Lankan forces to surrender, the LTTE is understood to have offered them safe passage. Defence experts are not sure if that would cover an evacuation mission by the Indian Army.

A substantial sea-lift would have to be arranged (which

would fall into the ambit of humanitarian assistance), Indian warships would have to first secure the sea-area and then some merchant vessels might have to be requisitioned to move such large numbers. Since Indian personnel would have to take up position on the ground, an assurance of their safety would be a pre-requisite.

The naval units are already standing by, the IAF has moved radars and communications equipment to coordinate and facilitate air cover to a evacuation mission. Should an airlift be involved, transport aircraft could be moved in a day or so.

Any sudden or emergency action by the Indian forces is unlikely, defence sources said, as a great deal of preparatory work would have to be done first.

On whether any other country could undertake a evacuation mission, defence experts said the USA might as it has a fairly strong naval presence in the Gulf and boosting its air assets at Deigo Garcia wouldn't be difficult.

While such an action might suit India in the short term in that it would not have got involved, India might be seen as having ducked the responsibilities of the regional player it seeks to project itself as.

Lanka today claimed that the Tigers had suffered heavy casualties over the past few days, with some 150 casualties. The government said the air force carried out assaults in Tanakilappu, about 10 km off Jaffna town while troops successfully repulsed two attempts by the LTTE to breach security forces defences in the outskirts of Chavakachcheri. Fighting raged on in the outskirts of Chavakachcheri — the second biggest town after Jaffna — when reports last came in, adds UNI.

The government ordered the closure of pro-Opposition weekly *The Sunday Leader* and its Sinhala publication *Perumuna* for "repeatedly violating" the censorship regulations.

■ See Editorial: Challenge in Lanka, page 8

Intervention in Sri Lanka

By V. R. Raghavan

Moral-cum-political support for the political devolution which the Sri Lankan President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, is determined to implement is the best help India can give.

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THE CLAMOUR for an Indian response to the situation in Sri Lanka is growing in some quarters. The Government of India, after consultations with political leaders in Tamil Nadu and others, has offered humanitarian assistance but has ruled out a military involvement. There is criticism of the Government's stand on the grounds that Indian ambivalence will allow other countries inimical to India a foothold in Sri Lanka. Some elements in Sri Lanka, particularly the clergy, have been unequivocal in asking for a military intervention by India against the LTTE. At the recent all-party meeting convened by the Sri Lankan President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, there was a plea by some that Sri Lanka should formally invite Indian help. As one political leader said, the patient (Sri Lanka) should go to the doctor (India) to get the cure for its problems. General Rohan Daluwatte, Sri Lanka's Chief of Defence Staff, has visited Chennai and Bangalore. The pressures to provide more than humanitarian assistance are therefore likely to increase, particularly if the LTTE gains further ground in the battle for Jaffna.

The Government of India's decision to desist from a military involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict is sound. Its offer to provide humanitarian assistance on the other hand is an ambiguous one. Is such humanitarian aid going to be made available during the conflict or after it ends? Will it be confined to medical supplies, rehabilitation, restoring communication etc? Can the assistance extend to Indian military protection of innocent civilians? Keeping the Sri Lanka Army and the LTTE separated, if they agree to a ceasefire, can be both peace-keeping and a humanitarian service. Evacuating Sri Lanka Army personnel and equipment from the peninsula can also come under the rubric of humanitarian aid. It is not yet clear if the Indian involvement will be before or after a ceasefire between the LTTE and the Government in Colombo.

New Delhi has spoken of humanitarian assistance and not of intervention on grounds of humanitarian needs. The former is restricted to goods and services

provided to the legitimate Government of the country. Intervention on humanitarian grounds involves a proactive role with the use of military force, if necessary even in opposition to the Government in power. Such intervention cannot be easily undertaken unilaterally. It needs a substantial international consensus and acceptance. Sri Lanka, where a legitimate Government is doing its best to find political reconciliation in the face of an armed offensive by a terrorist group, is quite clearly a different situation.

In the event of a situation requiring a direct Indian military role in the conflict in Sri Lanka, the decision to do so will have to be carefully weighed. While the decision would be a political one, its military dimensions will need the closest attention. Whether India should send its military would depend on first establishing some facts. It would need identifying if some vital national interest would be at risk by not sending the military force. The military instrument should also be brought in only after all other means have been tried and found to have been unsuccessful. There would be an essential requirement of public and parliamentary support for such an option. None of these issues were clearly and unambiguously established in 1987, and the consequences of that military intervention still haunt the Indian nation.

Assuming that the use of a military force is necessary, clarity on what that force is to achieve would be essential. The political and military objectives of military operations will have to be clearly understood. It is always better to use the appropriate amount of force to quickly attain the objectives. That will decide the size and shape of the force. More often than not, political decisions are arrived at without considering the time dimension. An open-ended approach will inevitably lead to an indefinite and costly military involvement. In

the IPKF venture in the 1980s, all these factors remained inadequately defined until the end. As for the military, the best force can fail if it is not given the resources to complete the job, or, if it is constrained in its operational freedom. Fighting with one hand tied behind the back, was a phrase widely used by the IPKF and its commanders. A military force also cannot by itself solve the problem without a simultaneous and viable political initiative.

The situation in Sri Lanka is currently uncertain. It is poised to turn to success or failure or partial success to either of the two contenders for control of the Jaffna peninsula. The best outcome for the Government in Colombo at present would be the retention of Jaffna town and its air and naval bases. It is possible for the Sri Lanka Army to get its act together, and hold the LTTE on a line extending from east of Jaffna town to the air base at Palaly or even to Point Pedro. It could then fight in a much better and balanced manner instead of being stretched as it was all the way to Elephant Pass. Air attacks in the open countryside of the peninsula, would make the LTTE quite vulnerable to attrition and losses in hardware. The worst situation would be the loss of the complete peninsula to the LTTE. Even in that situation, the LTTE would not be able to make any important territorial gains outside the peninsula. A stalemate is therefore possible which would amount to a virtual ceasefire.

In the possible outcomes indicated above, a military force from India will have no role. No major Indian interest would be threatened by the stalemate between the Sri Lanka Army and the LTTE. If the LTTE is contained in the peninsula, it would amount to its having exhausted its military options, other than of bombs of the human and improvised variety. If the Sri Lanka Army can at best bring the LTTE offensive in penin-

sula to a halt, or at worst stabilise on the eastern province frontiers, it would have placed the Colombo Government in a strong enough position to negotiate with the full authority of the state.

What the Sri Lanka Government needs more than everything else is Indian support in maintaining its unity and integrity. It needs to continue the fight against the secessionist LTTE. Sri Lanka needs even more, a considerable encouragement and assistance to evolve the political consensus necessary on the political issue of devolution. The major political parties and the Buddhist clergy need to put their shoulders to a political package which is seen in and outside Sri Lanka as fair and just. If that happens, the LTTE's *raison d'etre* would be permanently eroded. India can do much to make this outcome possible for the good of Sri Lanka and its Tamils. That is the essential national interest for India vis-a-vis Sri Lanka.

An Indian military involvement in Sri Lanka cannot be for the purpose of keeping others out of that country. As a sovereign nation, Sri Lanka can seek assistance from any source which meets its interests. It has done so for many years by obtaining military supplies and advice from sources other than India. There is little possibility that any other country can afford to place a military force at the disposal of Sri Lanka. Military action has not helped Sri Lanka in resolving its essentially political challenge of state-making. The lesson in this is clear.

A military solution is not feasible to the challenge Sri Lanka is facing. The military, either foreign or of Sri Lanka, can neither push through a devolution package nor entirely quell the LTTE. India has neither a direct military role in, nor a military solution for, Sri Lanka's ethnic war. The resolution of the ethnic war is the primary Indian interest in Sri Lanka. India's help to Sri Lanka in facing the LTTE's aggression, and moral-cum-political support for the political devolution which the President, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, is determined to implement, is the best help India can give.

THE HINDU

23 MAY 1988

Navy put on 72-hour alert

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 22. Apprehending a possible call for evacuating Sri Lankan soldiers stranded in Jaffna, the Indian Navy has been put on a 72-hour alert, highly-placed sources in the Government have said. According to the sources, the security establishment is visualising three possible scenarios.

First, the Sri Lankan soldiers, under relentless pressure from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam may make a "tactical retreat" to the Palaly airbase, which can be defended far more easily than Jaffna town. However, there are few indications, now, that the Army is considering this option. Second, the Sri Lankans, it is presumed may strike a deal for a "safe-passage" with the LTTE out of Jaffna. This possibility is, however, remote as Colombo may find it hard to "trust" the rebels even if such an arrangement was successfully negotiated.

It is likely that Sri Lanka may ask India to evacuate its troops from the Jaffna peninsula. New Delhi, half-expecting such a request, is gearing up for the contingency. Indian ships as well as the Indian Air Force are expected to undertake this task, provided the Palaly airbase as

well as the Kankasanturai port in the peninsula remain open in the next few days. Indian ships, along with a battleship escort, however, will move in only on the basis of a formal request from Colombo. Effective coordination, especially between the IAF and the communications wings of the national security establishment is necessary for successful implementation of this task.

While the dominant view in the Government is that the Sri Lankan forces, suffering from low morale are finding it extremely hard to hold on to Jaffna, a minority view is that the troops may hold on for longer.

According to the latter, the troops fighting for survival, have not actually fled from the battlefield in the last week and the reverses they faced were not so much due to "panic" setting in but more because of "poor tactics". Besides, the Sri Lankans are not familiar with fighting an "offensive-defensive" battle, which means persistent employment of counterattacks while retreating. This is necessary to acquire more time for regrouping and launching a counter-offensive later. Not surprisingly, India during last week's meeting with Sri Lankan military officials advised them to adopt the "offensive-defensive" profile against the LTTE.

INDIAN AIR FORCE

23 MAY 1997

PICKERING, SOLHEIM ARRIVING FOR TALKS

Troop evacuation on proper terms: India

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By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MAY 23. India today said it was ready to evacuate the 30,000 Sri Lankan troops from Jaffna only under "proper conditions" even as multilateral diplomacy to resolve the Sri Lankan crisis gathered momentum.

The National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, told presspersons at the end of the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) today that "if evacuation is desired, obviously there should be proper conditions for it".

He, however, did not clarify whether India would de-induct Sri Lankan forces only under conditions of a formal ceasefire. "I am not going to spell it out (conditions for evacuation)."

Mr. Mishra pointed out that the Sri Lankans had so far not made any request for evacuating the troops from Jaffna. The CCS met twice today and was presided by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, who cancelled his visit to Bhopal.

Mr. Mishra said the Norwegian special envoy on Sri Lanka, Mr. Erik Solheim, was arriving here tomorrow for talks with the Foreign Secretary to resolve the crisis in the island nation.

The U.S. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Thomas Pickering, is also arriving here tonight and discussions on Sri Lanka are part of his agenda, sources said. Mr. Pickering is also traveling to Colombo as international diplomacy involving the U.S., the European Union and India to resolve the crisis gathers momentum.

India's refusal to get militarily embroiled in the conflict was reiterated by senior Cabinet Ministers. In Teheran, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said India would not get involved in a "fire-fight". In Shimla, the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, reiterated that India would not take the "IPKF route".

Chandrika appeals to people

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, MAY 23. The President of Sri Lanka, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, went over national television this evening appealing to her people to stand by

the country's soldiers as they fought the LTTE in the northern peninsula.

Pointing out that the soldiers were engaged in a battle to prevent a "division" of the country, she asked the people to make "some sacrifices" that would send out a message to the troops that the country was behind them.

Ms. Kumaratunga appealed to Government employees to donate two days' pay during the "next few months" to the war chest and asked people to refrain from "unnecessary celebrations".

This morning's state-run newspapers carried huge advertisements aimed at youth urging them to ask how they could help soldiers at the front and their families.

Sporadic fighting

In the north, the Government reported "sporadic fighting" after claiming a major victory over the LTTE in the Thenmarachchi division. In an indication that there was fighting also near the municipal limits of Jaffna town, the Government statement said soldiers killed "10 to 15" LTTE cadres last night at Chemmani, which is on the outskirts of the provincial capital.

The Government claim that over 150 LTTE cadres were killed in a confrontation near Sarisalai outside Chavakachcheri in the Thenmarachchi division yesterday was rebutted over the clandestine LTTE radio, Voice of Tigers, today.

The LTTE claimed to have lost only seven members in the battle. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said it had been given only 12 bodies by the Army to hand over to the LTTE.

Ranil meets Indian envoy

In the capital, much significance was attached to a meeting today between the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, and the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Shiv Shankar Menon, as speculation grew that India was preparing to take the plunge into Sri Lanka.

However, Mr. Wickremesinghe said it was "a routine meeting", during which the current situation was discussed. "I cannot see a military force coming but India's help is available in other areas," said Mr. Wickremesinghe.

'Three conditions' for evacuation: Page 13

'Delhi can bring LTTE to the table'

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, MAY 23. The President of Sri Lanka, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, has expressed disappointment at India's refusal to give her Government military assistance in the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and concern at pro-Eelam statements made by political leaders in Tamil Nadu.

In an interview to *The Hindu* today, she said India could still contribute to the peace process in Sri Lanka by "strengthening the hands of Norway, our chosen facilitator".

Amid mounting speculation here that New Delhi is once again preparing to play a role, Ms. Kumaratunga stressed India's importance in South Asia, and said she believed the Indian Government could still bring to bear some influence on the LTTE to come to the negotiating table.

India's reticence to get involved militarily after being treated "shabbily" by the previous United National Party (UNP) Government, but voiced a widely-held view that as the Indian Government had trained and armed Tamil militants, there was an obligation on its part to defuse the situation now.

The President appeared relaxed during the 45-minute interview, but her statements alternated between hope and despair over the military situation in the Jaffna peninsula. Admitting that there had been mistakes in "overall strategy" on the battlefield, Ms. Kumaratunga expressed confidence that her troops would be able to retain Jaffna with the help of the new weaponry that had been sent to them over the last few days.

She strongly reiterated that Jaffna and its people were an integral part of Sri Lanka and

could not be allowed to slip back into the LTTE's hands, but she also dwelt at length on the consequences of losing Jaffna to the LTTE.

She characterised the LTTE's demand for withdrawal of troops from the peninsula as a "joke" that no "self-respecting government" could accept. But in an indication that the eventuality does exist, she said troop withdrawal was not a possibility "at this moment". She also said the battle had not reached "that stage yet" when the Government might require help to evacuate soldiers and civilians.

Ms. Kumaratunga said the ambitions of the LTTE leader, Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran, did not end at Jaffna. "He would like to be king of Sri Lanka," she said, adding that it would be worse than having "Hitler and Idi Amin put together".

Detailed interview: Page 14



Chandrika Kumaratunga ... 'mistakes in overall strategy'

Ms. Kumaratunga said her Government was exploring the possibility of taking India on board a joint diplomatic effort involving "several countries" along with Norway. She said she understood the reasons for

No operation from TN soil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, May 23. — Mr M Karunanidhi said a firm "no" today with regard to providing any military assistance to the Sri Lankan government using Tamil Nadu soil to avoid any political backlash from the pro-LTTE political outfits here.

The Chief Minister is said to have indicated his stand to the Prime Minister who is in constant touch with him considering that the situation has a direct impact on Tamil Nadu.

According to sources, with the Centre having decided to extend assistance "on humanitarian grounds" and help evacuate the 35,000 Lankan troops trapped in Jaffna, Mr

Karunanidhi is said to have discussed the issue with the Prime Minister over telephone on Sunday night.

The Chief Minister is said to have made it clear that Tamil Nadu would not be used in any manner in the evacuation operation. Interestingly, Mr Karunanidhi had taken a similar stand in 1990 when the rul-

ing Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front and its Chief Minister, Mr Varadaraja Perumal, were evacuated from Trincomalee.

Mr Karunanidhi, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, feared internecine war among the Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups. In deference to Mr Karunanidhi's fears, Mr VP

Singh, the then Prime Minister, agreed to take ENDLF group to Malkangiri to Orissa.

According to reports here troops are being moved to air force bases in Bangalore, Cochin and Mangalore. About 15,000 troops were moved to Thiruvananthapuram, the headquarters of the southern air command, a few weeks ago.

Sources say the operation was discussed with both General Rohan Daluwatte, the overall commander of the Sri Lankan armed forces, and Mr Lakshman Kiriella, the Lankan Deputy External Affairs Minister, when they visited Bangalore recently.

Bail for Bihar ex-minister

PATNA, May 23. — Patna High Court today granted provisional bail to Mr Jaiprakash Yadav, former education minister, in a vigilance case related to according recognition to a fake BEEd college at Katihar under the BN Mandal University. The vacation judge, Mr Justice Nagenra Rai, ordered that Mr Yadav would remain on provisional bail till 23 June. "The Court will resume hearing on Jaiprakash Yadav's anticipatory bail petition on 23 June when the court opens," he said. — SNS

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COLOMBO:

(Continued from page 1)

The USA, Mr Pickering said, was taking action against the LTTE under its laws and had made clear its deep concern about its terrorist activities.

India and the USA also discussed the situation in Fiji. Mr Pickering said the USA believed the democratically elected government ought to be supported.

With the focus having shifted to diplomatic activity to prepare ground for any Indian assistance, defence sources maintained there was little change in the situation as far as they were concerned. Both the Navy and the Air Force remained geared up. The Army too has its role would be essential, its role would be essentially a supporting one.

Air Chief Marshal AY Tipnis today held a closed door meeting with station commanders of the Southern Air Command. He, however, denied that it had anything to do with the Lanka crisis and that the visit was planned long back.

India's declaration that it was prepared to help evacuate troops from northern Jaffna in fact appeared to have irked the Lankan government. A Colombo mandarin criticised the statement as a blow to the morale of Lankan troops.

"We have asked for help, not to withdraw from Jaffna," he reportedly said while running down the Indian statement.

Mr Brajesh Mishra, National Security Adviser had yesterday said India was prepared for an operation to evacuate troops, provided there were "proper conditions".

Lankan Deputy-External Affairs Minister, Mr Lakshman Kiriella, said in Chennai today that the ground situation didn't warrant an immediate evacuation and that, the next four or five days would be crucial.

The Norwegian Special envoy, Mr Eric Solheim, who flew to Delhi to brief India about the developments and the Norwegian efforts, said all options were being discussed. Mr Solheim, who met Foreign Secretary Mr Lalit Mansingh, refused to go into specifics but expressed hope that India would play a "role". India's importance was paramount, he iterated.

The Norwegian role was

Delhi help offer irks Colombo

TWICE

24. — The immediate to evacuate troops from Jaffna today, saying it to Colombo not seeking evacuation.

EMBASSY ATTACK

COLOMBO, May 24. — Two motor-cyclists threw a hand grenade at Norway Embassy which missed the target and exploded in an empty house next to it today. No one was injured. The Norwegian ambassador was in the building at the time. — PTI

■ Another report on page 11

described today as a "highly developed" one by the visiting US Under-Secretary of State, Mr Thomas Pickering, who also met Mr Mansingh. They discussed the situation in detail, with the USA expressing support for both the Norwegian initiative and any step to reverse the catastrophe.

At a joint Press conference with Mr Pickering this evening, Mr Mansingh said there was no request from Colombo for evacuation of troops. On whether the conditions sought by India for intervention existed, he said fighting was on and India would consider the step if there is any fresh development. He said there was no refugee exodus yet.

The USA iterated that a military solution was impossible and it would support a "positive" role by India. Mr Pickering said neither the USA nor India had been asked to

play a role by the Lankan government or the LTTE, adding that Washington was keeping a close watch.

(Expressing disappointment at India's refusal to grant urgent military help, President Chandrika Kumaratunga said in an interview published today that Delhi could still help persuade the Tigers to talk peace, adds AP.)

Mr Mansingh said the USA had expressed its decision not to support any kind of independent Tamil state, adding that India's position on this remained the same. On India's stand vis-a-vis the LTTE, he said it was a banned organisation and the government was not in touch with it.

■ See COLOMBO: page 6

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No effect in TN if India helps Lanka: BJP

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, May 24

THE BJP leadership has ruled out any negative political fallout in Tamil Nadu if India intervenes to help Sri Lanka against LTTE.

The party also does believe that any success for the LTTE in the northern Sri Lanka, which enables it to declare Eelam, does not augur well for India.

On the other hand, senior BJP leaders believe that in case Colombo and the LTTE seek New Delhi's help, India's stature as a responsible power in the region will be enhanced.

Senior BJP leaders Kushabhau Thakre and K Jana Krishnamurthi

spoke to Tamil Nadu BJP leaders in Chennai two days ago for an assessment and feedback of the political situation in Tamil Nadu following the latest crisis in Jaffna.

They were told that there would be no political fallout in Tamil Nadu if India intervened to evacuate Lankan troops on a humanitarian ground, without any bloodshed.

According to local BJP leaders, barring the MDMK and the PMK, which do not hide their support for the Tamil Tigers, no major political party has come out in support of the LTTE.

While the AIADMK has always opposed the LTTE, the DMK too has now decided to adopt an anti-

Tiger stand. This is in a sharp contrast to the political climate when Indian troops went to the island in 1987 under an accord between New Delhi and Colombo.

Since the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and activities of the Sri Lankan Tamil militants, people's perception in Tamil Nadu of the Tigers' role has undergone a complete change.

There is still concern for the suffering of the Tamils but there is fear concerning revival of the LTTE's activity in the State.

According to BJP vice-president K Jana Krishnamurthi, the BJP has always been opposed to the LTTE right from the beginning. "Today, there is no support for the cause of

the Tigers. There is definitely sympathy for fellow Tamils who are suffering because of the two-decade-long war."

Mr Krishnamurthi says the BJP has always opposed the creation of a separate Tamil Eelam and is against the lifting of the ban of LTTE in India.

In September 1991, the Bharatiya Janata Party national executive, in a political resolution, had then accused New Delhi that it had "instead of making Colombo see reason and justice to Tamils, most irresponsibly armed, trained, equipped and financed the LTTE, which has now become a Frankenstein monster for India and Sri Lanka."

News Analysis

25 MAY 2000

25 MAY 2000

'India can help evacuate Sri Lankan forces'

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, MAY 24. The evacuation of trapped Sri Lankan Army personnel could be considered by India, on obtaining the consent of all sides involved in the conflict, the MDMK general secretary, Mr. Vaiko, said today.

Addressing a press conference, Mr. Vaiko endorsed the Centre's stand on the Sri Lankan crisis and expressed hope that "appropriate decisions" would be taken at the "appropriate time" by the Union Government.

While continuing to oppose Indian military intervention in favour of the Sri Lankan Army, the MDMK leader made a distinction on evacuation saying the LTTE itself had offered a ceasefire to allow the Sri Lankan Army to withdraw.

However, Indian help in evacuation should depend on the conditions of ceasefire.

On MDMK's differences with the Centre over the extension of the ban on the LTTE, he said his party went by the majority decision and accepted the ban. On whether he supported the LTTE in its war against the Sri Lankan Government, Mr. Vaiko said, "the rebels are fighting for a just cause."

Continuing to insist that a "Tamil Eelam" alone would provide a solution to the conflict, he said if the Sri Lankans were not able to protect the unity of their

country, "it should be their botheration (and not India's)".

He defended his support for the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils and said while he was being accused of treason, those calling for help to Sri Lanka, to perpetrate genocide on Tamils, were being described as patriots.

Asked about the LTTE indulging in terrorism, he said, one should not be blind to the State-sponsored terrorism in Sri Lanka. On several occasions, the Sri Lankan Government had reneged on agreements made to solve the issue. He refused to answer persistent questions on the LTTE attacks on Muslims in the Jaffna peninsula saying he would not allow himself to be cross-examined as if he were in a court.

Mr. Vaiko criticised the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, for stating that South Indians were being recruited by the LTTE and refugees living in South India were acting as LTTE cadres. The statement was "baseless, vicious, and malicious."

Challenging Ms. Kumaratunga to prove the allegation that he had made a speech in Geneva in which he said that the LTTE should continue its campaign to kill her, he said he had "audio and video" evidence to back prove his stand. Sri Lanka must produce similar evidence and not merely offer to produce "witnesses."

Delhi waits for SOS from Lanka

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 23. — India is prepared for an operation to evacuate the beleaguered Sri Lankan troops from northern Jaffna provided "proper conditions" are obtained and a formal request is received from Colombo, it was officially stated here tonight.

A key element to the equation would be the result of the Norwegian peace moves. Norwegian special envoy, Mr Eric Solheim, reaches here tomorrow from Colombo.

That an Indian humanitarian assistance is likely to be initiated shortly was indicated by the Cabinet

Committee on Security reviewing the Sri Lanka developments twice today and the Prime Minister cancelling a visit to Bhopal to preside over the evening session.

After the meeting, the National Security Adviser and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister said India was ready for a rescue act but "if it comes to evacuation, if evacuation is desired, obviously there should be proper conditions for it".

Though Mr Brajesh Mishra declined to expand on the conditions and whether or not a ceasefire agreement would be

humanitarian aid. He ruled out military intervention.

The brief Mr Solheim will carry could dictate the course of events. While India has never been optimistic about the Norwegian initiative, it would await Norway's assessment of its endeavours before initiating its own moves.

Norway has repeatedly stressed India's role, but officials here maintained it was difficult to define it. There are unconfirmed reports of Sri Lanka having sent some feelers to New Delhi.

Though Lanka maintains its forces are not on the verge of being overrun, observers

believe they are. Lanka would be embarrassed

to seek help for evacuating troops, more so since India appears to be insisting on "proper conditions" — a formal ceasefire and the LTTE's assurance that it would not hinder evacuation. Lankans are understood to be unhappy with speculation in the Indian media that a rescue mission is hours away.

The Navy today stressed that it had received no orders from the government, it might have to act only after a political decision. Top Navy sources ridiculed reports of a "72-hour alert"

LANKA:

(Continued from page 1)

assistance revolve around the nature of a possible agreement between Colombo and the LTTE, as availability of ports and airfields would be critical to any Indian attempt at evacuation. The focus is on Kankesanthurai, the only port in the north. At present, Trincomalee appears the likely disembarkment point.

Nearly 200 Lankan refugees have arrived in Tamil Nadu in May, 85 of them in the past two days. While the Union home ministry maintains the influx isn't significant, it is believed the numbers would go up drastically if the crisis drags on for a few more weeks. **Karunanidhi:** The Sri Lankan Deputy-External Affairs Minister, Mr L Kiriella, who arrived in Chennai late last night, failed to get an appointment with Mr M Karunanidhi. Sources said the CM was reluctant to meet without the Centre's clearance.

THE STATESMAN

A necessary intervention

EXPRESS FOCUS NEIGHBOURS

India should take up Sri Lanka's offer and restore normalcy to the island nation, argues S GURUMURTHY

OR some like Vaiko and Ramdas, Tamil Eelam may seem just inches away. For them, Jaffna's conquest by the LTTE will not just mean Tamil military supremacy over the Sinhalese. It will also mean independent Tamil Eelam. But is that so simple? No doubt, the LTTE is on the offensive. It rids over-run Jaffna soon and re-conquer the peninsula. That is, it may rule Jaffna yet again. But will ruling Jaffna mean the establishment of Eelam? Or, the end of the woes of the Tamilian people? Obviously, no. Another military victory for LTTE in Jaffna, just as another military

It would even ally with its arch-enemy, the Sri Lankan government, as it did during Premadasa's time, but not allow India any say in Lankan Tamil affairs.

Yet, the Sri Lankan government has continued to trust India for a solution to the Tamil issue.

This trust is rooted in its understanding of the Indian civilisation, which is non-conflicting and non-conquering. Probably, it recalls India's 'no' to its offer to cooperate with India at one point of time. This intrinsic quality of the Indian civilisation, diplomacy naturally looked to India for help. But once the LTTE eliminated other Tamil forces and became the monopoly Tamil voice, this trend changed. It abhorred any Indian intervention. Here was a paradox. Despite India's interest in Sri Lankan Tamils, the Sri Lankan government has continued to repose faith in India. But the LTTE is keen to avoid India

forces leave the moment Bangladesh became capable of looking after its affairs?

Even now, the Rajiv-Jayawardane Pact remains the best solution to the Sinhalese-Tamil stand-off. It was sabotaged first by the LTTE, later, jointly by the LTTE and the Premadasa government.

Sri Lanka now suffers the nemesis of the collusion between Premadasa and LTTE to betray India. India lost hundreds of its best soldiers for a cause which was not a national cause, even in Tamil Nadu, thanks to the pre-Rajiv assassination politics. Unlike in the Kargil war, where every soldier who died became a hero, the soldiers who laid down their lives in the IPKF operation died unsung by the nation at whose call they laid down their lives.

Even now, as in the past, Sri Lanka has invited India to intervene, even militarily. It is unthinkable in today's world that a country like India, which has con-

verging self-interest in the Sri Lankan Tamil cause, would be invited to settle that very cause. This shows India's moral standing in Sri Lanka founded on India's civilisational conditioning.

Unlike in 1987, now there is greater national consensus in Sri Lanka about Indian intervention. The Sri Lankan ruling and opposition parties are unanimous; as also the Buddhist establishment, which had opposed the 1987 Pact.

Even in India, specifically in Tamil Nadu, there is a greater degree of consensus, particularly on the distinction between the LTTE and the Tamil cause. The opinion about the LTTE was divided in 1987. Now the near unanimous view is that the LTTE is a criminal force. Even for its supporters, it is like a local dada defending the locality on his terms. It now looks as if the 1987 Pact was a little ahead of time. As if the time for such a pact is ripe today more than it was 13 years ago.

In India's case, intervention means not mere humanitarian aid. It includes military intervention. It means that India will de-

side the terms of peace between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Sri Lanka knows this. Even the US, which hardly wanted to see India as the unqualified regional power, has implicitly approved this. But how and when should India intervene militarily and how to avoid the kind of casualties which the IPKF suffered will have to be worked out. But to exclude the military option would be to create a vacuum in Sri Lanka and between Sri Lanka and India.

Why should India intervene? If India does not and Sri Lanka suffers humiliating military defeat, its disappointment with India will be matched only by its hostility against the LTTE. It will lose confidence in India, and will be forced to look for an alternative power for support and protection. In this complex world, any one might step in. Only a novice would presume that Sri Lanka would find no other supporter or protector. China is the most likely candidate, since it has very large interests in South East Asia.

If a China site in and parks

its war ships in Trincomalee, India cannot even object any more. India cannot be heard to say that neither will it intervene, nor will it like any one else to. Such a development will mean not just the end of Indian primacy; it will be equally be the end of Lankan Tamil dreams. This is only one of the possibilities. Even a multinational action to save Sri Lanka cannot be ruled out. Here too, the consequence will be the same. There is every possibility that the issue may be internationalised if India does not take initiative.

It's ironical that the Sri Lankan government asks India to intervene, but, the marginalized surrogates of the LTTE in Tamil Nadu oppose it. It is clear as daylight that Sri Lanka's acceptance of Indian supremacy is in the best interest of the Tamils. Only so long as the initiative lies with India, Tamil interests are safe. No other country will understand the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka better than India. Many in Sri Lanka may be comfortable with a non-Indian initiative, seeing the apparent convergence of interests between India and Tamils in Sri

Lanka. Thus, Tamil interests are best protected by India's participation and intervention, if needed.

The only dissenter to Indian intervention is the LTTE. This is understandable. The LTTE equates itself with Tamil interests. It has mentally cloned a Tamil Eelam of its own taste. While in truth, the Tamil interests require a proper institutional mechanism. No organisation or individual can substitute such an institutional safeguard.

The LTTE lacks the wisdom and maturity to work out an institutional mechanism and to lead a people. Being a mixture of crime and despotism, the LTTE is today as much the problem for Lankan Tamils as the Sri Lankan government. So the LTTE is inherently disabled to solve the problem. The Sri Lankan government has time and again conceded that it cannot solve the issue. Who else can help restore normalcy in Sri Lanka and settle the terms of durable peace between the Sinhalese and the Tamils? Only India. Not the Sri Lankan government, not the LTTE.

Lanka prefers Indian mediation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DEHRADUN, May 27. — Sri Lanka today expressed doubts over Norway's peace efforts and said India must try and bring the LTTE to talks.

"Sri Lankan people might not trust them (Norwegians) as an impartial peace broker," said the country's fisheries and aquatic resources development minister, Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa, here to start a PG diploma launched by an NGO.

"We'll always prefer an Asian country because we've had had experience with the West."

Indian forces are on stand-by. For, if humanitarian help is needed, the USA may want India as a regional power to take over, says SNS from Delhi.

Indian officials said plans to evacuate 30,000 (Lankan) troops were ready but there has been no demand and nor are the conditions suitable.

If an operation was launched other powers with a naval presence in the region may expect India to lead it. The US warships will stay at a distance. But reports say US PC-3 Orion planes are on recce flights. The Indian Navy has enough

flat-bottomed landing ships (LSTs) to get to Kankesanthurai harbour that has a five-metre draught or even beaches. But the question is: will the LTTE just watch the Lankan soldiers get onto Indian ships?

"We are awaiting orders. If the government wants us to go in during hostile conditions, we will, but so far there has been no such move," said an official. The Services chiefs are understood to have advised against such a move and senior armed forces officers said proper consultations with the Services on the issue had taken place.

The IAF's role too will have to be considered. If Palani airfield is clear, it could airlift soldiers and reduce the burden on the Navy. The Navy's LSTs and LST-Ms are present in the southern tip awaiting orders.

War on: War is continuing in Jaffna, for Sri Lanka has ignored the LTTE's 12-hour ceasefire, adds PTI from Colombo.

Two LTTE barges loaded with supplies sailing in Kilaly Lagoon in Jaffna sank after being hit by an army tank.

■ **Editorial: All Indian soil surely's: page 8**
■ **Lankan held: page 10**

Candidates selected in

Following is the list, in order of merit, of candidates who have been recommended for appointment to the: (i) Indian Administrative Service; (ii) Indian Foreign Service; (iii) Indian Police Service; and (iv) Central Services, Group 'A' and Group 'B', based on the results of the Civil Services (Main) Examination held by the Union Public Service Commission in October — November, 1999 and interviews for Personality Test held in May, 2000. The total number of candidates recommended for appointment is 411 including 127 belonging to the Other Backward Classes, 63 to the Scheduled Castes and 30 to the Scheduled Tribes.

Appointment to the various Services will be made according to the number of vacancies available with due consideration to the provisions contained in Rules 2 and 18 of the rules for the Examination relating to restrictions on the eligibility of candidates appointed to Indian Police Service and Police Services Group 'B' Central Services Group 'A' and Group 'B' based on the results of an earlier examination and subject to final decision of the Supreme Court/High Courts/ C.A.Ts. on the S.L.Ps./R.As./W.Ps./O.As. pending therein. The number of vacancies expected to be filled is 56 (29 General, 15 Other Backward Classes, 08 Scheduled Castes and 04 Scheduled Tribes) for the Indian Administrative Service; 08 (04 General, 03 Other Backward Classes, and 01 Scheduled Tribes) for the Indian Foreign Service; 36 (21 General, 07 Other Backward Classes, 05 Scheduled Castes and 03 Scheduled Tribes) for the Indian Police Service; 234 (124 General, 59 Other Backward Classes, 36 Scheduled Castes and 15 Scheduled Tribes) for the Central Services Group 'A' and 77 (56 General, 13 Other Backward Classes, 04 Scheduled Castes and 04 Scheduled Tribes) for Group 'B' Services. The vacancies indicated above are subject to revision.

The selection of candidates with Roll Numbers — 000506, 000559, 000762, 000959, 001440, 001442, 002101, 002607,

S. Suresh Kumar, 052084 — G. Prakash, 008192 — Vinod K. Jacob, 092696 — Manju Rajpal, 284647 — Diwakar Nath Misra, 255674 — Sujata Rout, 107259 — Vinod R. Rao, 202519 — P. Hemalatha, 000422 — Rajkumar Dinesh Singh, 180852 — Santanu Basu, 000426 — Anil Meshram, 049620 — Kumar Rahul, 135407 — Anand Singh, 132185 — Abhijit Sinha, 094485 — Rahul Tiwari, 015873 — D. Anandan, 003271 — Nitin Kumar Yadav, 002613 — Sonali R. Ponkshe, 012477 — Pooja Singhal, 059522 — Vivek Kumar Porwal, 224240 — M. Thennarasan, 006812 — Pankaj Kumar Pandey, 283129 — Syed Sabahat Azim, 261173 — V. Karthikeya Pandian, 094590 — Shobhit Jain, 038716 — Armit Gupta, 003712 — Manmeet Kaur, 070243 — Jitendra Srivastava, 158463 — Namgya Choden Khampa, 000887 — Deepak Agarwal, 120380 — Sonal Verma, 050776 — Laxmi Singh, 170953 — Alaknanda Dayal, 012519 — Joyana Asthana, 006535 — Ganesh Kumar, 074464 — B. Shyam, 096428 — Mohit Agarwal, 265719 — Mrinal Kant Tripathy, 015543 — Prateek Mohanty, 228321 — A. Praveena, 072497 — D. Roopa, 178282 — J. K. Manivannan, 024812 — Prashant Kumar, 099244 — Ranvir Prasad, 007795 — Vinay Sinha, 122008 — Sheo Dan Singh Bhadoriya, 099306 — Amisha Srivastava, 127922 — Manish Kumar Sinha, 000874 — Maneesh Kumar, 047344 — Maneesh Chauhan, 000749 — Prem Singh Meena, 079849 — G. Aswati, 047447 — Parikshit M. Gogate, 001394 — Madhup Vyas, 187514 — K. Venkata Ramana, 002124 — N. Nawin Sona, 185732 — Jai Prakash Singh, 039573 — K. Dhanalakshmi, 028892 — Salil Mishra, 000573 — Basant Kumar Rath, 002761 — Santosh Kumar Singh, 226552 — Rahul Bojja, 001079 — Dilraj Kaur, 003696 — Siddhartha Shankar Panda, 135365 — Meenakshi Singh, 113224 — Yashasvi Yadav, 016354 — K. V. Sreejesh, 001440 — Mohd. Ghulam Ali Ansari, 007436 — Rohit Garg, 121792 — Dinesh Pratap Singh, 016853 — Umesh Chander Datta, 040654 — Nidhi Sharma, 027357 — Swayam Prakash Pani, 039658 — K. M. Mallikarjuna Rao, 040078 — Ush Singh, 059210 — B. Vijaya roop Caur, 067552 — C — Anadi M Gupta, 219 — mar, 00087 066823 — S — Paramjit jan Kumar Naveen Gu Tyagi, 006 286610 — I — Aashna Kumar Ver Kumar Gar Sethi, 0992 293367 — 000431 — 052447 — Faisal Imar dava, 0113 000722 — J — Sai Ahll Aparajita C Sood, 0574 va, 033202 000799 — — Nitin B Ray, 03006 071938 — — Narasing Mishra, 06 Mohapatra Choudhary mar, 1161 006805 — 000506 — Gnanasun China, 00 ha, 1584 000258 — 016854 — Ritu Shukl 018119 — 216624 — I — Swati ji vastava, 0 090839 — Avinash K Preeti Josl Singh, 03 067882 — 040819 — 012523 — — Temjit Nitish Kar Hussan, 1 am, 000 040078

THE HINDU

26 MAY 2000

Delhi sets terms for Jaffna mission

Jay Raina
New Delhi, May 25

KSA 20 WS

INDIA HAS clearly told the Norwegian interlocutors trying to broker peace in Sri Lanka that in no case would its forces enter the Jaffna war zone for accomplishing the promised humanitarian evacuation mission.

In the course of discussions here over the last two days with Norwegian special emissary Eric Solheim, the Vajpayee Government demanded that the cease-fire, as and when it comes about, should be monitored by an independent authority, preferably the International Red Cross.

The other key Indian precondition for the proposed evacuation of 30,000-40,000 Sri Lankan troops is based on New Delhi's anxiety to avoid getting caught in the LTTE-Sri Lankan cross-fire.

It has been unambiguously conveyed to Solheim that the Indian ships or aircraft would conduct the evacuation only from the Jaffna port or the Palali air base where the trapped soldiers would have to reach on their own.

Highly placed sources told *The Hindustan Times* that the Indian plans for evacuation by sea and by air have been finalised to the last detail. The only stumbling

block in the way of a smooth operation appears to be the damaged Palali airstrip which, in its current state, isn't fit for aircraft landing.

Against this backdrop, the sources drove home the magnitude of the planned rescue mission — which might have to be confined to the sea route — saying that among those proposed to be evacuated were a large number of Tamil civilians who have incurred the Tigers' wrath for their pro-Chandrika Kumaratunga leanings.

The destination of all civilian-military evacuees would be a place of the Sri Lankan choice within the island nation. New Delhi has bluntly told the Norwegians that it is not willing to provide them shelter within India. If the Norwegian envoy's talks with his Indian hosts are any guide, the Tigers and the Kumaratunga regime were inclined to move towards a cease-fire pact, barring certain differences over its implementation. For one, the LTTE is willing to accord safe passage to the trapped soldiers only after they lay down arms.

On her part, the Sri Lankan President seems to be concerned about the political implications of such a deal with the Tigers. At least for the present, her focus is to buy time to sew up a face-saving formula to resolve the tangle.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 5 MAY 2000

Nothing will please hostile forces more than to see India sucked into Sri Lanka's civil war

Resisting the macho urge

BY BRAHMA CHELLANEY

26/5
HE VAJPAYEE government has done well to resist the interventionist impulse in the current Sri Lankan crisis. First, the crisis is only the latest chapter in an interminable ethnic conflict that has turned a self-advertised "island of paradise" into an island of bloodletting. The scale of violence in Sri Lanka since the 1983 anti-Tamil riots is truly astounding. Second, the civil war there is unlikely to end even with outside military intervention. Third, despite the present media fuss, India has no major interest at stake in the Sri Lankan war.

India's responsibility is to defend its vital interests, not to fight the dirty internal war of a neighbour, a mistake it made in 1987. Getting involved in a neighbour's civil war carries serious costs and no rewards, unless the objective is to install an acquiescent government that will serve the intervener's strategic interests. India's three-year intervention in Sri Lanka had no clear long-term goals and cost it dearly. India ended up with no friends in Sri Lanka, alienating both the Sinhalese and Tamils. In contrast, Pakistan's intervention in Afghanistan has given it strategic depth, as it first reared and then helped install the Taliban in power.

No intervention normally takes place in the world without the interveners seeking to advance their commercial or strategic objectives. With its vast mineral wealth, sub-Saharan Africa has been a happy hunting ground for covert and overt foreign interveners, whose efforts to exploit its rich resources have only fuelled intra-state wars. For major players, even intervention in the guise of peacekeeping can help advance national interests.

India, in contrast, has intervened for altruistic reasons, the classic case being the Maldives. What national interest was advanced in November 1988 when India swiftly crushed an attempted coup by Sri Lankan Tamil mercenaries against autocratic Maldivian President Abdul Gayoom? Gayoom can hardly be described as a friend of India.

That intervention took place when India already was knee-deep in the Sri Lankan ethnic mess. Through the July 1987 Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene accord, India directly embroiled itself in the brutish communal conflict of a state that gave refuelling facilities to Pakistani military aircraft in 1971 when

New Delhi imposed a ban on overflights between West and East Pakistan.

There was no way India could have come out a winner from Sri Lanka, even if the Tamil Tigers had cooperated. The Tigers and President Premadasa, however, ensured that India came out utterly humiliated from its intervention, losing — for an indescribable cause — nearly three times the troops it did more recently in Kargil. Moreover, the IPKF operation, by relieving Colombo of its security burden in the north and east, came handy to Sri Lanka to wipe out every suspected JVP member in the south, pogrom style.

Today, India's altruistic spirit extends to peacekeeping operations, even when the mission is questionable. Take the case of Sierra Leone, where the key issue is the control of diamonds and the players, besides the government and rebels, include South Africa's De Beers giant, Western gemstone firms and the central diamond-clearing house in Antwerp, Belgium. The UN Security Council mandated that the rebels be cleared of the diamond-producing area, and India agreed to lead the blue beret force in Sierra Leone. Some developing nations (Bangladesh is a prime example) send their troops to any peacekeeping operation to allow them to earn the much higher UN salary. That blurs the line between mercenaries and peacekeepers. India has to guard against that.

National interest, not altruism, should guide India's involvement in another state's internal affairs. The Vajpayee government is doing the right thing by looking at the Sri Lankan issue strictly through the prism of national interest. It has shied away from getting directly involved, offering to evacuate the trapped 30,000 Sri Lankan soldiers if Colombo, unable to fight on despite its troops outnumbering the rebels by six to one, was forced to seek a ceasefire. In any case, with the Indian Army involved in major counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir and the northeast, Pakistan stepping up its mischief along the Line of Control

and China tying down large numbers of Indian troops along the Himalayas, India today has no spare troops to mount an IPKF-style intervention.

Of course, nothing will please Pakistan and China more than to see India get drawn into Sri Lanka's unending civil war. That will only facilitate their efforts to undermine India's security. In such a situation, other foreign interests will also find it easier to exert pressure on a stressed India, including on Kashmir and talks with Islamabad.

India is able to seriously focus only on one major issue at a time. When India was immersed in Sri Lanka between 1987 and 1990, Pakistan took advantage to sow the seeds of a bloody insurgency in Kashmir. Since Kargil, New Delhi has paid obeisance to China, as it has had to focus on the continued mischief-making of Pakistan, whose ability to spring another military surprise on India is real.

The last thing India should seek to do at this stage is to step back into Sri Lanka's ethnic quagmire when a wounded general, styling himself as Pakistan's chief executive, is looking for an opportunity to avenge Kargil. If Vajpayee is caught napping a second time, history will treat him harshly. Whenever India has been seeking to seriously deal with the Pakistan problem, be it in 1970-71, 1983-84 or 2000, Sri Lanka flares up, beseeching Indian involvement.

Past interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives — endorsed by the US — did India little good. In the Maldivian case, Ronald Reagan, in the closing weeks of his presidency, called Rajiv Gandhi and suggested India rescue Gayoom. Rajiv Gandhi, who had displayed his macho proclivity through Operation Brasstacks and Operation Checkerboard, did not ask Reagan why the US, with a naval taskforce on hand, did not wish to itself intervene in Male.

The net result of those interventions — the two big military exercises and an unavoidable showdown with Nepal — in that period was that India acquired a false image as a hegemon or bully in a

region where its sheer size spurs regional concerns. That damage to India's standing in turn spurred another policy excess a decade later — to live down that image, New Delhi forswore reciprocity in dealings with its smaller neighbour (the so-called Gujral Doctrine).

Rajiv Gandhi, although a strong leader on national security, had not thought through on the broader ramifications of some of his actions or anchored them in a larger strategic plan. Operation Checkerboard, for example, was followed by the PM personally paying his respects in Beijing and acting in ways that contradicted the objectives of his mother's forward-deployment China policy. Of course, every Indian PM has been guilty of such flip-flops, the present incumbent included as he has shown on Pakistan.

Today, despite the earlier disastrous intervention, all kinds of bogeys are being raised to again suck India into Sri Lanka's civil war. One bogey is that if India doesn't intervene, a hostile power like Pakistan might. If Pakistan is foolish to overstretch itself from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka, India can whack it real hard. Another bogey is that Tamil Eelam is bad for India's unity, as if Eelam is within sight or de jure possible. Having created Bangladesh in 1971, India can hardly pass judgement on Eelam. Eelam, however, remains a far cry, although Sri Lanka's de facto partition has been and will likely remain a reality of little consequence to India.

India has to keep its priorities right: Its focus has to be on its duplicitous foes, not on a tiny island that treats its Tamils as outcasts and rarely sides with New Delhi. Sri Lanka's militant Buddhist clergy, now seeking Indian assistance, took the lead in opposing the IPKF and will again turn against India if it intervenes. President Chandrika Kumaratunga needs to hang on to Jaffna because parliamentary elections are due by October and her own political survival is at stake. But having failed to deliver on her promises to devolve power, she can only stew in her own soup.

The last thing India needs is another macho intervention, with a follow-up correction in the form of a regurgitated Gujral Doctrine. Fortunately, the Vajpayee government understands that well.



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 MAY 2000

India not for brokering ceasefire

By Our Special Correspondent
NEW DELHI, MAY 30. India has conveyed to Sri Lanka that it would not take kindly to any atrocities against southern Tamils, according to an authoritative source in the Vajpayee Government. Nor is India "in the game of brokering a ceasefire between Colombo and the LTTE".

According to the source New Delhi would like to keep away from any kind temptation or suggestion to arrange for a ceasefire in Sri Lanka. "A pit full of most venomous snakes" is how a very senior official described the concerned parties in the Sri Lankan

conflict. As far as New Delhi is concerned "devolution" of powers, as envisaged in Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's 1995 package, is "central" to India's approach in resolving the Sri Lankan crisis. The Indian advice to Ms. Kumaratunga is to garner for her 1995 proposal as large a political consensus as possible. In this context, the Sri Lankan President's reported offer to make the LTTE boss, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, "chief minister" of Jaffna is termed a "non-starter".

New Delhi's latest assessment of the fighting is that the Sri Lankan forces are performing a little more confidently and competently

than a few weeks ago. According to information available to the Indian side, the Sri Lankan army is "standing up" to the LTTE.

According to the Foreign Office, the parameters of the Indian approach remain unchanged. As spelled out by the authoritative source, these parameters are: support for Colombo in its effort to preserve unity and integrity of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka has to manage its own affairs, and Colombo must address itself to the management of Tamil sentiments and aspirations. Given these parameters, the conclusion is "national interest does not warrant the death of a single Indian soldier."

THE HINDU

31 MAY 2000

India sticks to its guns on Sri Lankan crisis

By Seema Guha
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: India does not expect President Chandrika Kumaratunga's beleaguered government to fall in line with the LTTE's demand that Sri Lankan security forces lay down arms and leave Jaffna peninsula or face a bloodbath. "No government can agree to such terms, the political fallout could be vastly damaging," a senior Indian official said.

The LTTE has set a deadline of Friday for the surrender of government troops in the embattled peninsula.

India realises that the situation there is changing from day to day, but believes the time for agreeing to a humiliating withdrawal has not yet come. The President, at least for now, seems steadfast. The initial panic after the fall of Elephant Pass has faded. Despite some reversals, the army has not been forced back in all areas. And, significantly, the Tigers have not yet been able to take over Jaffna.

Asked why India, now leading a worldwide crusade against terrorism, has not done more to help the

Sri Lankan government, faced with a dangerous threat from an organised terrorist group, officials both in the MEA and the PMO said the situation in the island nation was too complex for a simple black-and-white solution.

For one, India had in 1987 intervened militarily but got caught in the contradictions within the system. One section of the Lankan government was busy helping the LTTE to fight the Indian army. Cabinet members, including a former prime minister who later became the Lankan president, were involved in ferrying arms to the Tigers. India wanted to avoid a repeat of that.

But officials emphasised that there was no contradiction in getting a terrorist group and the Sri Lankan government to talk. "India is certainly not going to side with the LTTE," an official said. "We want to ensure that Sri Lanka remains one country. We believe this can be done when the rights of the Tamil minorities are adequately safeguarded," he said. "New Delhi doesn't want an independent Tamil nation so near its borders, a country capable of spreading terrorism."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 MAY 2000

9. S. Sanku
HD-14

Sri Lankan Buddhist monks call for Indian intervention

75

By V.S.Sambandan

COLOMBO, May 1. With the LTTE continuing with its advances in the northern Jaffna Peninsula, there has been a call from hardline Buddhist monks for an Indian involvement in the crisis, including military assistance.

The call, coming in the immediate wake of the Elephant Pass debacle of April 22, is to be seen in the backdrop of the Opposition by the Buddhist clergy to a Norwegian initiative as well as the Indian ban on the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). While opposing the Norwegian initiative Buddhist hardliners had said that if there were any country to intervene in Sri Lanka, it would have to be India.

The calls by the leaders of the Buddhist clergy is in direct contrast to their stand taken during the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) in 1987 under the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and comes at a time when Sri Lanka has been pushing the line for the past few years that the island's ethnic conflict was essentially "internal" in nature. The Buddhist hardliners have already opposed a Norwegian effort to initiate direct talks with the Tigers.

Political observers here see the Buddhist hardline clergy call as

one "to fight somebody else's war". Recalling the 1987 experience, observers feel the call "should not be taken seriously" and that it would turn out to be seeking a "marriage of convenience."

However, political analysts also see a situation in which the "Sri Lankan state is going to be considerably weakened" if the Tigers were to maintain their advances into Jaffna.

At another level calls for military assistance or intervention, would also have to be seen in the consistent stand taken by the Sri Lankan Government, especially since the last days of the IPKF, that the conflict was essentially "internal" in nature. In addition, Left radical groups such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JNP) have been maintaining that "interventions" of any nature into Sri Lanka's internal issues would be opposed.

The present mood among those who have followed the conflict at close proximity since the early 1980s is that there should be a "cessation of hostilities" before matters get out of hand. Even on that score, doubts exist as to whether the Government could offer a ceasefire from what could be considered a "position of weakness." Politically too, there are little options left, especially

with the ruling People's Alliance (PA) and the Opposition United National Party (UNP) blaming each other for the military reversal. With Parliamentary elections scheduled for August, the Sri Lankan politico-military setting is set for serious months ahead as the LTTE war machinery keeps advancing towards Jaffna.

Army concedes loss

The Sri Lankan Defence Ministry today conceded the loss of Pallai - a key town ahead of Jaffna to the LTTE. A Defence Ministry statement said the troops deployed at Pallai were withdrawn with "heavy casualties" following an LTTE advance in the area.

Swamy's call to Colombo

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, MAY 1. The Janata Party president, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, today suggested that the Sri Lankan Parliament pass a resolution merging the island State with India as a way out of the ethnic crisis.

Reacting to the Buddhist monk, Gunawansa's remark that he would welcome back the Indian Army to Sri Lanka, he said: "If Sri Lanka urges India for despatching the IPKF, I demand that India, as

a pre-condition, ask Sri Lanka to agree to at least a confederation with India with free borders."

The Buddhist clergy should recognise that the Island State had become non-viable because of its "untenable adherence to the concept of a unitary State," he said in a statement.

He said Sri Lanka, connected to India by a common history, scriptures, religion and mythology, could easily blend with the Indian composite culture.

Tamil refugees arrive

Our Ramanathapuram Staff Reporter writes:

Fortythree Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, including 20 women and nine children from Thalaimannar in Sri Lanka arrived at Arichalmunai near Rameswaram this evening.

Fearing arrest, the agent, who helped the refugees reach the Indian waters, reportedly dropped them at Moontram Theedai two days back. However, they were rescued by the local fishermen.

The Dhanuskodi police were conducting inquiry with a middle-aged man, who sustained bullet injuries in his eyes.

Later, the refugees were shifted to the Mandapam camp. The police have registered a case.

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2000

MPs caution against military involvement in Sri Lanka

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 4. The dominant opinion in the Rajya Sabha was that the Government should not get bogged down militarily in the conflict between the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE and repeat the "mistake" committed by the Congress(I) Government in 1987 under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi.

Members from major parties put across their views on the evolving Sri Lankan situation while seeking clarifications from the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, on his earlier statement on the situation in the island nation.

While appreciating the Indian stand to work for a peaceful solution within the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee of the Congress(I), wanted an assurance from the Minister that the Government would take the political parties into confidence before

taking any new initiative on the situation.

Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu (BJP) said the Sri Lankan developments were a matter of serious concern and the Government should be guided by the past experience and sense of tragedy. Even on the promised humanitarian assistance, he wanted the Government to proceed only after discussions with all concerned.

"Every step vis-a-vis the situation in Sri Lanka is fraught with its ramifications. We have our own problems. We are for a united Sri Lanka. At the same time our interests, sentiments and people in south India are kept in mind.

The Government should take the Opposition and political parties into confidence on the evolving situation", he said.

Mr. Ramachandra Pillai (CPI-M) said any move by India would have implications and any attitude of India should facilitate the process of finding a peaceful solution. He wanted to know the na-

ture of request made by Sri Lanka to meet the situation.

Mr. Swaraj Kaushal (Haryana Vikas Party) said India had a bad experience in the deployment of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka and should not repeat it.

Mr. P. N. Siva (DMK) talked of how India "burnt" its fingers in the past. On the promised humanitarian assistance, he wanted to know whether the assistance would be for the soldiers or the people.

He also wanted to know the Sri Lankan Government's response to the plight of fishermen abducted from India.

He said if the Government was thinking of sending food supplies to the stranded in the peninsula, it would have to factor in the possibility of an attack on its aircraft. "Will you send the armed forces if the aircraft is attacked," he asked and urged the Government to desist from any direct or indirect humanitarian assistance.

MAY 2000

India supports our struggle, says LTTE

P K Balachandran
Colombo, November 26

THE LEADER of the LTTE's political wing, S P Thamichelvam, has said that India supports the freedom struggle of the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

"India, by virtue of its position in South Asia, we believe, extends its moral support to the freedom struggle of the Tamil people to ensure peace with dignity," he said in an interview to *The Sunday Times*.

Asked to comment on the flip flop nature of India's responses to the changing situation in Sri Lanka in the recent past, the LTTE's political leader came out with a cautious response.

He said that India would want meaningful talks to take place in the absence of military coercion. "India, notwithstanding any country that promotes peace, will prefer a situation wherein meaningful negotiations sans military coercion would lead to a peaceful settlement of this problem," Mr. Thamichelvam said. Answering a question on India's support to the constitutional reform package pro-

posed by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, a package already rejected by the LTTE as being too little too late, Mr. Thamichelvam avoided dragging in India.

Mr. Thamichelvam's reply indicated that the LTTE could revise its opinion on the package in course of time. "Whether Chandrika's political reforms are genuinely intended to resolve this conflict or they are as usual a step in political duplicity, has to be judged in course of time," the LTTE leader said. However, later in the interview, Mr. Thamichelvam described the package as only containing "cosmetic amendments to the various constitutions of the previous chauvinistic regimes". He also said that what was offered was "far below" their aspirations.

It is clear that the LTTE wants to befriend India as part of its bid to keep an increasingly hostile world placated. The role played by its Tamil Nadu representative, Mr P Nedumaran, in securing the release of actor Rajkumar from the clutches of Veerappan and the pro-LTTE cohorts, indicates the LTTE's anxiety to keep India in good humour.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 NOV 2000

Chandrika calls up Vajpayee

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 4. The Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, had a telephonic conversation with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today. This is her first call to Mr. Vajpayee since the recent elections in her country.

Ms. Kumaratunga enquired about the Prime Minister's health and the nature of recovery since his knee operation.

Mr. Vajpayee on his part offered his condolences to the President on the death of her mother, Sirimavo Bandaranaike.



The two leaders discussed various issues, including bilateral ties. In response to a question, it was

stated by Mr. H. K. Dua, press adviser to the Prime Minister, that Mr. Vajpayee appreciated the steps taken by Colombo to restore calm in the wake of the recent violence on the island. He also stressed the need to ensure that the India-Sri Lanka trade agreement achieved its full potential.

The Prime Minister and the Sri Lankan President exchanged views on the rise in international prices of oil and the impact on the economy of the two countries.

Mr. Vajpayee invited Ms. Kumaratunga to visit India. She has accepted the invitation and is expected to come within the next eight weeks.

THE HINDU

5 NOV 2001

India, Sri Lanka finalize norms for monitoring import quotas

HT-15
2/24

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 21

INDIA AND Sri Lanka have finalized the procedures for the effective monitoring of tea and garment import quotas under the Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The agreement on the procedures as finalized at meetings held earlier this week was signed here on Wednesday night by Rathi Vinay Jha, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce and A. Andrew De Silva, secretary, ministry of plantation industries, Sri Lanka, in the presence of India's commerce secretary P.P. Prabhu. The Indian delegation at the delib-

erations was led by Jha and the Sri Lankan delegation by De Silva.

For tea, the nodal agencies will be the Tea Boards of both the countries and for garments, the nodal agencies will be the textile committee in Bombay and the textiles division of the ministry of industrial development, Colombo.

To facilitate effective monitoring of the quotas, both the governments decided that for tea, exports would be through the air and sea ports in Calcutta and Cochin, whereas for garments, it will be Bombay and Madras.

India and Sri Lanka signed the Free Trade Agreement on Dec 28, 1998 and further discussions were

held between India and Sri Lanka in Feb 2000 in New Delhi. The FTA provides duty-free market access to both countries on a preferential basis in a phased manner.

India also agreed to permit limited quantities of imports of tea and garments from Sri Lanka — tea quota of 15 million kg per annum and garment quota of 8 million pieces.

The free trade agreement is expected to boost the bilateral trade between India and Sri Lanka and also consolidate the close economic and commercial ties between the two countries through increased trade and increased trade and investments.

Sri Lanka protests Vaiko's remarks

H0-1
29/4

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, APRIL 23. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Lakshman Kadirgamar, has lodged a "strong protest" with the Indian Government against remarks reportedly made by the MDMK leader, Mr. Vaiko, at an "LTTE-sponsored meeting at Geneva".

The Sunday Times today said that the Foreign Minister had lodged the protests with the Indian and Swiss Foreign Ministers "over a rabble-rousing speech" reportedly made by Mr. Vaiko, "suggesting that the LTTE should continue its campaign to kill the Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga".

It may be recalled that Ms. Kumaratunga escaped a suicide bomb attack, with injuries to her right eye, on December 18 in Colombo.

At the speech, reportedly made in Geneva, Mr. Vaiko was quoted as saying: "She needs to be lucky every time, but we need to be lucky only once."

Mr. Kadirgamar, in his letter said, "The statement appears to be not only a justification of the LTTE's attempt to kill my President, but also an

encouragement to continue with the LTTE strategy to eliminate her."

In his Geneva speech, Mr. Vaiko was also reported to have said, "It is necessary for the Tamil nation to have a single nation (sic), a single country and a single language," the newspaper reported.

It added that the MDMK leader, "who had been invited as the chief speaker at the rally had concluded his speech with the words, 'Long Live Tamil Eelam'".

Mr. Kadirgamar has told the Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, that Mr. Vaiko's comments are "jingoistic and preposterous" and charged him of "criminal conspiracy to murder the President of Sri Lanka", the newspaper reported.

Of his Swiss counterpart, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister requested that "appropriate action" be taken to "ensure that the LTTE and its front organisations do not abuse Swiss hospitality to carry out such hostile activities against the security and well-being of Sri Lanka and its head of state."

APR 24 1988

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APR 24 1988

Ranil Wickremesinghe to visit India in April

Colombo, March 16

SRI LANKA'S main Opposition United National Party (UNP) leader Ranil Wickremesinghe will visit India at the invitation of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance Government.

The Indian High Commission here and UNP sources confirmed the visit, which would take place sometime in the third week of April for which the itinerary is being worked.

Party sources said during the visit, the Opposition leader would call on President K R Narayanan, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and leaders of other parties. He will also interact with the business community and captains of industry.

Mr Wickremesinghe, who was the Prime Minister in 1993, will be accompanied a high-level party delegation.

Peace plan: President Chandrika Kumaratunga held a second round

of talks with the main Opposition leader today seeking common ground for a peace plan to negotiate with the Tamil rebels fighting for a separate homeland.

Kumaratunga is offering the Tamils self-rule — but not an independent state — in the North-East of this island nation. It was Kumaratunga's second meeting in a week with UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Her plan to amend the constitution devolving power to the provinces can only be passed with two-thirds support in Parliament, which requires the backing of Wickremesinghe's party.

Wickremesinghe earlier rejected the autonomy plan, saying it would split the country of 18 million, where more than three million are Tamils. But his party changed its position after Mrs Kumaratunga was re-elected in December. Differences remain about whether to accede to the Tamils' demand. More than 80 per cent of Sri Lankans are Sinhalese. (Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 MAR 2000

199-23 INDO-SRI LANKA FREE TRADE

AT LONG LAST, the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement, signed on December 28, 1998, has come into force from March 1. It has taken considerable time for trade officials in both countries to address the concerns of domestic producers and convince them that the bilateral agreement can be mutually beneficial. The two Governments had to intervene occasionally to ensure that the pact does not get derailed. With the Heads of Governments, the Foreign Ministers and the Trade Ministers taking keen interest in operationalising the bilateral agreement, some compromises have been worked out to reassure trade and industry on both sides of the Palk Straits. This pact paves the way for a phased reduction in tariffs to the zero duty level for free trade. India will complete this process in three years and Sri Lanka in eight. Despite the long and close links between the two neighbours, bilateral trade has certainly not reached its potential. Compared to India's burgeoning trade with some of the Southeast Asian countries, its bilateral trade with Sri Lanka was only just about \$ 560 millions last year. Colombo's complaint was that 90 per cent of this was exports from India and its exports stood at a mere \$ 47 millions. A free trade agreement was expected to spur Sri Lankan exports to India.

There were genuine areas of concern for Indian industry and trade in this arrangement. Tea and rubber for instance were major worries. Given the health of the plantations and their high cost of production, they were concerned that Sri Lankan producers could dump their tea and rubber here at cheaper prices. There was already a glut in the market and a decline in exports. It has taken some time to sort out such sensitive issues and arrive at a mutually acceptable compromise. At the end of these protracted negotiations, tea is

not on the negative list for India, but a quota regime has been worked out. Sri Lanka can export a maximum of 15 million kg of tea per annum. In the case of rubber, natural rubber will be on the negative list, but some of the finished products are not. This has been the nature of the solution evolved by officials and industry from both sides. The general expectation now is that bilateral trade must begin to grow substantially in the coming years, so that it can reach the \$ one billion mark in two or three years. Instead of seeing it as a limited, bilateral pact, the two Governments are convinced that it is a first step towards evolving a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) within the next few years.

SAFTA is facing a lot of problems, basically because of the persisting tensions between India and Pakistan. Since the 1999 summit of South Asian leaders was postponed in the wake of the military coup in Islamabad, it will take a while before the regional cooperation exercise can be revived. Without wasting time, the SAARC countries must work on bilateral agreements to promote regional free trade in preparation for globalisation. Since relations between India and Sri Lanka have remained positive over the years, cooperation must go beyond trade. Indian industry must look at investment opportunities there to tap the potential and skills in Sri Lanka. Joint ventures can offset the trade gap. Efforts at joint marketing in third countries must be encouraged and this is particularly relevant for specific areas such as tea and tourism. Promotion of tea cartels has been on the agenda for years, without any positive action from the producers. In the present dispensation, Governments can only be facilitators. It is the private sector which must seize the initiative and build on the congenial political climate which now prevails.

'UK to prioritise ties with India over China'

Washington, March 5

THERE IS a strong move in British government circles to prioritise relations with India over China, according to British Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Keith Vaz.

"As someone of Indian origin, I've always been concerned that to some extent, we seem to concentrate too much on other countries, and in the past there's been a lot of attention directed towards China," said Vaz, the first British minister of Indian origin, in an interview with IANS here.

But now, he said, the pendulum is swinging clearly towards New Delhi and, in this context, Foreign Minister Robin Cook would make his second trip to India in less than two years and so would Home Minister Jack Straw.

Vaz, who recently visited India, also said: "I took back with me, from both Home Minister Advani and from Prime Minister (Atal Behari Vajpayee) an invitation for the (British) Prime Minister (Tony Blair) to visit India and we are obviously keen for him to go because that will help catalyse U.K.-India relations to a new high."

He said there's no way Britain would reach out to Pakistan unless the military junta there returns it to democratic rule.

Vaz, on his first visit to Washington after becoming a minister, said it is imperative that civilian authority is restored if relations between London and Islamabad are to get back on track.

On the proposed visa-bond scheme that requires some visitors from the Indian sub-continent to provide a steep bond of 10,000 pounds to obtain a visa for Britain, Vaz said, "I want to make it clear, categorically, absolutely that it does not cost 10,000 pounds to get a visa to come to the U.K." He claimed that 84 per cent of the visas that were applied for in Mumbai were granted.

The Minister said the idea for a bond scheme first came from the British Asian community.

Mr Vaz explained that "at the last election, the Asian community had said to the Labour Party that in order to alleviate the problem of allegedly high incidence of refusal of visas of their relatives seeking to visit Britain, they were willing to put up a guarantee ensuring that the relative they were sponsoring for a visit would definitely return to India. (IANS)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 6 MAR 2000

Lanka navy sinks Indian boats

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLOMBO, March 14. — The Sri Lankan navy destroyed two Indian fishing trawlers bringing in arms and ammunition for Tamil Tiger rebels in the northern coast and killed some of those aboard, the defence ministry said today.

One navy officer was killed and three others injured by flying debris after one of the trawlers exploded when it was hit on Sunday.

The Indian High Commission

in Colombo, however, said it was not aware of the incident.

The trawlers were heading toward a small fishing village on the Mannar coast, about 312 kilometers northwest of Colombo.

“Naval troops fired a few warning shots and observed the trawlers increasing their speed and moving forward disregarding the naval order,” defence spokesman Maj. JDA Gunasekara said.

“When engaged by naval guns, one trawler laden with

explosives exploded with its occupants and subsequently the other trawler was also fired upon and destroyed.”

Four arrested: Four persons, including a former professor, have been held in connection with the bid on the defence minister's life last week, police said today.

The former professor was picked up after some suspects linked him to Tamil rebels. Police said his house was frequently used by the rebels while planning their attack.

THE STATESMAN
15 MAR 2000

Sri Lanka to back Indian stand on terrorism at U.N.

NEW DELHI, FEB. 26. Sri Lanka has agreed to back India's draft comprehensive convention against terrorism at the United Nations. This was conveyed by the visiting Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary, Mr. Lionel Fernando, during wide-ranging talks he held with his Indian counterpart, Mr. Lalit Mansingh. 108 2712

Both sides discussed steps for cooperation in countering terrorism bilaterally and at international fora, an External Affairs Ministry spokesperson told reporters here.

The Sri Lankan side briefed New Delhi on efforts to resolve the ethnic conflict in the island nation and the Norwegian initiative to facilitate direct negotiations between Colombo and the LTTE to find an amicable resolution.

Mr. Fernando said the Norwegian efforts were in the nature of facilitation and not mediation. India has stuck to the position that while it respected any country's right to deal with the internal situation the way it liked, New Delhi hoped that the "eventual solution to the ethnic problem would be comprehensive in its scope meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Sri Lankan society within the framework of the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka."

The two sides exchanged views on a whole spectrum of issues covering regional, global and bilateral concerns. They decided to have Foreign Office consultations regularly at least once a year or as frequently as required.

On the free trade agreement signed by the two countries, it was conveyed to Colombo that Indian side was ready to operationalise it on March 1.

They also discussed the possibility of increasing the existing airline seats between the two countries by 30 per cent, adding 1,180 to the existing 4,020 seats per week. — PTI

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2000

Indo-Lanka free trade from March

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Feb. 24. — With the inclusion of Sri Lankan tea and rubber in the negative list of India and sorting out of other hitches, the Indo-Lankan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will come into force from 1 March, said the Sri Lankan high commissioner to India, Mr Mangala Moonesinghe.

"With the FTA coming into operation, we think that we are moving towards a South Asia free trade area," Mr Moonesinghe said.

Besides, the Rs 40 million Indo-Lankan foundation, formed last November to create further bilateral relations, will convene a meeting in New Delhi on 3 and 4 March," Mr Moonesinghe said.

The foundation was created to create relations on the academic front. Education and cul-

ture, archeological studies, agriculture, technical training, development studies and women's development are the areas identified for promoting understanding and co-operation between the two countries.

Earlier, Sri Lanka had been demanding the inclusion of their rubber and tea among other export goods into the preferential duty types items (duty free).

The FTA was signed between India and Sri Lanka on 28 December, 1998.

While addressing a conference organised by the CII, Mr Moonesinghe, who had come along with a Lankan business delegation, said, "India is undoubtedly the regional power in this region and we need a strong regional grouping to beat the other regional groupings which are trying to overtake us."

THE STATESMAN

25 FEB 2000

Sri Lanka implements free trade pact with India

COLOMBO, FEB. 15. In a move aimed at providing considerable benefits to the country's economy, Sri Lanka has with immediate effect announced implementation of the much-talked Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement after including all agricultural products, fisheries and livestock products among the 1,200 items on its negative list.

But India is yet to announce the items on its negative list and also other items on which customs tariff will be removed. Indian High Commission officials said here today that the Government would announce all lists (negative and concessional duty lists) on February 29 during the course of

the Budget presentation.

The Sri Lankan President, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, who is also the Finance Minister, while presenting this year's Budget in Parliament on Monday, said the agreement would provide considerable benefits to the country's economy. The inflow of Indian raw materials on duty-free basis would assist Sri Lankan industries to reduce cost and increase profitability. Preferential access to Sri Lankan exports, including tea and garments in the Indian market, would enable Sri Lanka to attract foreign investments, increase economic activities and generate employment. — UNI

THE HINDU

16 FEB 2000

Indo-Lanka free trade talks in doldrums

By Charu Lata Joshi

The Times of India News Service

COLOMBO: Indian deputy minister for commerce Omar Abdullah's maiden visit to Sri Lanka ended on an inconclusive note on Thursday, with the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries failing to get the final nod.

Timed in tandem with the inauguration of the IndiaTech 2000—an engineering fair in Colombo where 87 Indian companies are exhibiting their wares and scouting for joint ventures—the minister's visit was also meant to iron out the differences in the agonisingly slow FTA negotiations.

The minister's line: "We're closer now to putting the final stamp of approval on the treaty," sounded familiar. For the past one year, the FTA, is bound to establish duty-free trade between the two neighbours, has been the subject of bureaucratic haggling and hair-splitting.

"They have put 49 per cent of India's total exports to Sri Lanka on a negative list—which means that they are not exempt from duty, so we don't stand to gain anything," said a senior Indian bureaucrat who accompanied the delegation.

Chairman of Sri Lanka's Board of Investment Thilan Wijesinghe, however, countered, "We have our own interests to guard. About 40 per cent of Sri Lanka's total exports to India, which include tea and garments, have been put on India's negative list."

The Sri Lankan side argues that better port handling infrastructure and cheaper shipping costs along with business-friendly policies and procedures in Sri Lanka would be incentive enough for Indian businessmen to enter the Sri Lankan market.

Given that, the economics of trading with Sri Lanka by accepting its set of demands don't quite suit the Indian exporter. Consider these figures: Only 11 per cent of India's exports would benefit from a 50 per cent duty concession, an area where India already has a 50 per cent market share. But no items in India's top 100 list of exports have been granted zero duty concession by the Sri Lankan negotiators.

And though Sri Lanka's minister for trade and food Kingsley Wickremaratne says, "We see a very bright future ahead for Indo-Sri Lankan trade," the future, in reality, appears rather distant.

THE TIMES OF INDIA
14 JAN 2000