

# War fear grips Lanka as Tigers kill 11 soldiers

**Colombo, Dec. 27 (Reuters):** Fuelling fears of a return to civil war, suspected Tamil Tiger rebels today killed 11 soldiers in the island's far north in the second mine attack in less than a week, the military said. The blast followed a string of guerrilla ambushes on the military and the assassination of a pro-rebel member of Parliament at a Christmas mass that are straining a 2002 truce to breaking point. "It was a claymore attack,"

said military spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe, referring to the claymore fragmentation mine used in the assault near the northern town of Point Pedro. "Definitely the LTTE is behind this attack," he said. "No one else is capable of doing this kind of claymore mine attack in Jaffna except the LTTE."

Ten soldiers died in the blast, while another died from his injuries in hospital. Four others were injured.

In separate incidents, suspected members of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam shot dead one policeman and injured another in Batticaloa and soldiers found a hidden claymore mine.

On Friday, 13 sailors were killed in an ambush by suspected Tiger rebels using claymore mines and rocket-propelled grenades.

That prompted major aid donors Japan, the European Union and Norway to send a

delegation for emergency talks with the Tigers.

Two days later, Joseph Pararajasingam, a member of Parliament for the Tamil National Alliance — the rebels' proxies in Parliament — was assassinated at a Christmas mass in Batticaloa.

In another incident today, British demining organisers on the Halo Trust said armed men overpowered guards at their Jaffna compound and stole two four-wheel-drive ve-

hicles. Military sources said the men, who have not yet been identified, also stole 45 mine detectors, 45 uniforms, two laptops and seven sets of walkie-talkies.

"We are very concerned about the situation and urge both parties to show restraint," said Mats Lundstrom, spokesman for the Nordic Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission overseeing the truce.

Ceasefire monitors have stopped patrols in the north-

ern Jaffna peninsula because of the deteriorating security situation.

The Tigers threatened in November to resume their armed struggle to carve out a homeland for ethnic Tamils in the north and east unless they were given wide political powers in about 15 per cent of the country where they run a de facto state.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse, who is allied to hardline Marxists and Bud-

dhists who refuse any concessions for the rebels, has ruled out the idea of a Tamil homeland. Rajapakse headed to India today on his first state visit since winning the presidency in November. He is seeking greater Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's stalled peace process, but officials and analysts in India said he was unlikely to have much success.

Streets were deserted in the military-held Jaffna peninsula — which is hemmed

in by rebel lines. Shops and banks were closed on the orders of a suspected rebel front organisation and cash dispensing machines were empty. "I have a strong fear in my heart day and night and am very worried about my family," said 48-year-old Jaffna butcher Solomon Gerald.

"I fear war will start again at any moment but I won't go anywhere. I will stay here and face it like the rest," he said. "Where can we go?"

S. J. J. 12/12

# Rajapakse to oversee tsunami reconstruction

New scheme launched as nation remembers disaster victims

V.S. Sambandan *S. Lanka*

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse on Monday launched a new programme aimed at carrying forward the unfinished task of post-tsunami reconstruction.

Mr. Rajapakse led the nation from Peraliya in southern Sri Lanka where a passenger train was washed away a year ago and had symbolised the tragedy.

All over the country, a two-minute silence was observed as the nation remembered the victims of the tsunami. According to official figures some 35,000 persons were killed or went missing when the tsunami hit 13 districts along Sri Lanka's northern, eastern, southern and south-western coasts last year.

Monday was marked by a national holiday and flags flew at half-mast. Several ceremonies were held all over the country, including in rebel-held parts of northern and eastern Sri Lanka.

## Host of events

In addition to the official functions, NGOs — both domestic and international — and private enterprises organised several events to mark the anniversary of the region's worst recorded natural disaster.

Memorial pillars were being erected in several places along the eastern coast, special offerings were made at places of worship and people lit lamps on Monday evening to remember the tsunami victims.

Overwhelming international assistance has been promised to reconstruct the tsunami-devastated coastline. While the total cost of the rehabilitation and reconstruction effort is estimated at \$2.2 billion, Sri Lanka has received pledges worth \$2.8 billion. Of this, \$2.1 billion has translated into commitments.

Recalling the international assistance rendered after the tsunami, Mr. Rajapakse said: "I consider it both my duty and responsibility as head of state to offer my own thanks and that of



**HEALING TOUCH:** Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse presents an award of scholarship to a Tamil tsunami survivor in the southern coastal town of Thelwatte Peraliya on Monday. The girl lost both the parents in the December 26, 2004 tsunami. — PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

the entire people of Sri Lanka, to all those countries and their peoples, and those foreign children, for the great assistance they rendered us at our time of need."

India, Sri Lanka's closest neighbour, was the first country to send its relief assistance in the aftermath of the tsunami. When the disaster struck, Mr. Raja-

pakse, then Prime Minister, oversaw the initial steps to coordinate national and international efforts, including a request for Indian assistance, as the then President Chandrika Kumaratunga was abroad.

## Massive global help

There has been an overwhelming international pres-

ence in Sri Lanka's relief and reconstruction operations.

The newly-launched Jaya Lanka programme, Mr. Rajapakse said, would be carried out under his personal direction. It would aim at carrying forward "with new and greater energy the task of building the homes and other properties destroyed by the tsunami."

# Lanka pro-rebel MP gunned down

**P K Balachandiran**  
Colombo, December 25

*Leader shot during midnight Mass in Batticaloa church*

JOSEPH PARARAJASINGHAM (71), MP and one of the senior-most leaders of the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance (TNA) was shot dead inside a church during the midnight Christmas mass in Batticaloa.

Reports said that unidentified assailants threw a grenade and opened fire on the congregation at St Mary's church at about 1.10 am. Pararajasingham was killed on the spot and five others, including his wife Sugunam Pararajasingham, who had rushed to her husband, were seriously injured.

The Sri Lankan government and the LTTE are blaming each other for the assassination.

The Sri Lankan Army said in a press release that Pararajasingham was "brutally

gunned down by the LTTE's pistol men." The government's Information Department said in its press release that it was clear that the assassination had been carried out to "serve a specific agenda, in that it could create the environment to further escalate the cycle of violence in the north and east perpetrated by the LTTE."

The government described the assassination of a Member of Parliament as an "assault on the very heart of democracy."

The LTTE, in its statement, blamed the Sri Lankan military intelligence and the paramilitary working with it, including the Karuna group and the Eelam Peoples' Democratic Party (EPDP) for the "appalling and vicious" murder.

The EPDP is part of the government of Sri Lanka. "Pararajasingham prayed for peace and freedom for his people and had just received communion from the bishop when the Sri Lankan military intelligence unit and the paramilitary shot him and escaped."

"This well-planned murder proves that the long hand of the chauvinistic forces such as the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) is working through the Sri Lankan military intelligence wing," the LTTE said.

Pararajasingham, a prominent figure in Batticaloa district, had staunchly stood by the mainstream LTTE led by V Prabhakaran when the latter's Batticaloa-based military commander, Karuna, broke away and formed a rival

faction in March 2004.

Pararajasingham disapproved of Karuna's bid to promote "eastern regionalism" on the grounds that it would weaken the unity of the Tamils of the east and the north and jeopardise the Tamils' struggle for autonomy in Sri Lanka. He was perhaps the only leading Tamil politician in the Batticaloa-Amparai area to have openly defied Karuna at the height of the latter's power as a breakaway Tiger leader in March-April 2004.

Political murders have become common in eastern Sri Lanka, with bodies often dumped with their hands tied behind their heads on the main road into Batticaloa. In Jaffna, some churches cancelled Christmas services as residents feared violence.

## LTTE denies role in recent violence

The LTTE has said that it is not responsible for the recent wave of violence in north Sri Lanka. It claimed that its cadres were not even present in the areas where the incidents took place, according to a report put out by the outfit's Peace Secretariat on Saturday. The LTTE could not be asked to control the violence in these government-controlled areas, because it was not in touch with the people there, said S P Tamilselvan, the rebel outfit's political leader.

HTC, Colombo

# Rajapakse determined to start talks soon

## Post-tsunami reconstruction tied up with durable peace, says Foreign Minister

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mangala Samaraweera, on Saturday said the prospects of successful completion of post-tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation was "tied up to durable peace."

Reiterating Colombo's commitment to find a lasting peaceful solution to the decades-long separatist conflict, Mr. Samaraweera said the Government was "determined to start talks as early as possible," with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The President, Mahinda Rajapakse, was committed to finding a solution through negotiations which would lead to peace and dignity for all, the Minister said. He was speaking at a function to launch the joint report of the Sri Lankan Government and its development partners titled "Post Tsunami Recovery and Reconstruction - progress, challenges and way forward."

The report listed the prevention of deaths due to tsunami-related diseases and the progress in transitional housing as among the critical areas in which progress had been made.

Over 54,000 of the targeted 60,000 shelters had been completed by November. The Gov-

ernment has projected that it would take about three-five years to complete rehabilitation and reconstruction and fully restore the services and livelihoods.

P.B. Jayasundara, Treasury Secretary, said the Government would introduce a new programme, Jaya Lanka, to coordinate all development and rehabilitation activities. The present multiplicity of bodies involved in reconstruction, rehabilitation, and other development programmes, would be brought under the new scheme, he said. These would include the initiatives that are on in the conflict-affected areas for the past few years. The progress on permanent housing, however, has been tardy with about 20,000 of the estimated 98,000 houses reconstructed. Availability of land, the controversy over the proposed buffer zone and raw material and labour constraints are among the reasons for the slow progress.

Yet another unresolved issue is the actual death toll. There have been conflicting figures ranging from 17,000 to 35,000. On earlier occasions, officials had attributed the varying figures to double counting of those missing and dead.



**A YEAR AFTER:** Women and children of Peraliya in Southern Sri Lanka at a tree planting campaign ahead of the 1st anniversary of the tsunami.

- PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

THE HINDU



# Lanka peace talks in jeopardy

S. Haukland  
25/12  
4-8

From Tamil of India

COLOMBO, Dec. 24. — Diplomats backing Sri Lanka's peace bid today headed for talks with Tamil Tigers in rebel-held territory to stem growing violence that threatens to derail the country's fragile ceasefire. "This is a cowardly attack. It is disgusting," Mr Hargrup Haukland said adding that the ceasefire was in "jeopardy".

A day after suspected Tamil Tiger rebels blew up a bus killing 15 sailors, representatives from the quartet that includes the USA, EU, Japan and Norway travelled to Kilinochchi, north of the capital to hold discussions with the Tamil Tiger political wing chief SP Thamilselvan.

Diplomats said the co-chairs had a strong message for the Tigers to fall in line or face the risk of being banned across the European Union member states. The EU had already warned the Tigers that they risk such an eventuality after the group was held responsible for the 12 August assassination of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar.

PM Mr Ratnasiri Wickrememanayake told diplomats from yesterday that the international community must take measures to prevent the Tigers from stepping up violence.

The Scandinavian truce monitoring mission chief, Hargrup Haukland, said there were unidentified elements in the island's

north-east who didn't want peace. Yesterday's attack against the navy was the worst against government forces since truce went into effect from 23 February, 2002.

Envoys from Asia and Europe met with Tamil Tiger rebels' top political leader today, expressing concern that growing violence was threatening to shatter the country's ceasefire, officials and the rebels said. "The delegation briefed Mr. Thamilselvan on the ... concern over the escalating violence and the necessity to start talks on effective implementation of the cease-fire agreement since it is felt that the (truce) is running into grave risk," the rebels said on their Web site.

23 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

S. H. M. K.  
9.3

# Tiger sea strike

22/12

**Colombo, Dec. 22** (Reuters): Tamil Tiger rebels today attacked two Sri Lankan naval craft off the island's north-west coast, opening fire and capturing three sailors in the most violent incident at sea since a 2002 truce, the navy said.

Sea Tigers hid among a fishing fleet and opened fire on two approaching naval dinghies, capturing three sailors who jumped into the water, naval spokesman Commodore Jayantha Perera said.

"They have come as fishermen and attacked the navy craft," he said. "We have also attacked and we have captured six LTTE cadres."

One sailor was wounded and in critical condition, another spokesman said. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—who control a seventh of Sri Lanka in the north and east and demand an independent Tamil homeland—were unavailable.

The incident took place just off the northwestern district of Mannar, close to a

string of islands linking Sri Lanka to India, the navy said. A search operation was under way on land and sea to find the captured sailors, it added.

"It's very worrisome," said Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council, a non-partisan peace advisory group.

"This is another step on the path to a return to war. The risk of a return to war is now greater."

Mounting attacks on troops in government-held

areas have been straining the ceasefire to its limit, and many increasingly fear a return to the two-decade war between the government and the rebels in which more than 64,000 people have been killed.

Earlier this month, 14 soldiers were killed in claymore mine attacks on the northern Jaffna peninsula—a government enclave hemmed in by rebel lines—in the biggest breaches of the ceasefire to date.

23 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

# Rajapakse orders probe into violence in northern Jaffna

Concern that it was due to "changed military leadership"

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has ordered the defence authorities to submit a report on Monday's violence in Jaffna, in which at least seven civilians and three soldiers were injured, the state-run *Daily News* said on Tuesday.

Mr. Rajapakse, who is also the Defence Minister, called for the report amidst concern among a section of the northern residents that the violence was a result of the "changed military leadership."

## "End harassment"

Violence broke out in Jaffna on Monday when the Army stopped near the Jaffna University a group of protesters demanding "the end of harassment of students by the security forces." The tension coincided with efforts by the Government to restart the stalled peace talks with the LTTE.

In a change from its earlier posi-



*Mahinda Rajapakse*

tion, Colombo last week offered to consider an Asian venue to hold talks to discuss the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. The LTTE rejected the offer and stuck to its initial demand that the parleys be held in an European country, preferably Norway.

A report on TamilNet on Monday quoted an MP from the LTTE-backed Tamil National Alliance as saying that the "Government must

stop all atrocities on Tamil civilians" before the peace talks could resume.

Though Jaffna is under Government control, the LTTE has a significant hold over the peninsula. The latest troubles started with the killing of two LTTE supporters "by an unidentified gunman" two weeks ago. Following this, a suspected LTTE front organisation set off claymore attacks, in which at least 15 soldiers were killed.

During the subsequent lull in violence, a suspected LTTE front organisation, calling itself the Roaring Tamil Force, on December 15 warned of renewed attacks against the Army unless its demands were met. One of its demands was that "all military attacks that affect the education of Tamil students be stopped immediately."

Another immediate reason cited for the latest tension was the recovery of the body of a 21-year-old woman from a well near a Navy camp in Jaffna on Sunday.

21 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

# Lanka army opens fire in Tamil belt

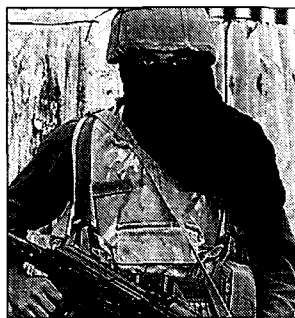
**Jaffna, Dec. 19** (Reuters): Sri Lankan troops and protesters clashed in the minority Tamil-dominated Jaffna peninsula today, with one person shot and wounded and each side accusing the other of trying to provoke further violence.

The army said it had fired into the air after protesters incited by Tamil Tiger rebels hurled stones at checkpoints. Protesters said troops attacked a peaceful demonstration against army brutality and beat up lecturers and students.

"They shot at us," University of Jaffna management student Senthil Ratneswaran said in an overcrowded local hospital, a suspected bullet fragment still in his back. "Some fell onto the road to save themselves and they were kicked. They are trying to... instigate the LTTE to move towards war."

Hospital staff said it was the worst incident of its kind since a 2002 ceasefire halted two decades of conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). One had been confirmed shot and wounded and 14 others were injured.

The injured included senior university staff who said they had been beaten with



**A soldier stands guard on a Jaffna street.** (Reuters)

sticks and rifle butts. The army said it had no details on anyone being shot, but that if troops had fired into the crowd, casualties would have been much higher.

Earlier this month, a claymore fragmentation mine attack blamed on the rebels killed 14 soldiers in Jaffna, a city cut off from the rest of Sri Lanka by the de facto state the rebels control and which the Tigers want the army out of.

On streets bearing the scars of past bombs and shells, soldiers stood with assault rifles and sticks, some obscuring their faces with black ban-

dannas. The army said the student demonstration had been aimed at provoking an army over-reaction.

"It is obviously incited by the LTTE," army spokesman Brigadier Nalim Witharanage said. "There are people behind the scenes who are trying to provoke the army."

The rebels on Saturday rejected an offer from Japan to host peace talks with the government, saying they wanted only to go to peace broker Norway. Diplomats said a meeting of the European Union, Japan, the US and Norway in Brussels today was likely to result in a "strong statement" against the Tigers.

Diplomats say the international community does not believe repeated rebel denials that they have been involved in recent attacks, including the assassination of the foreign minister in August, and is also angry at a November presidential election boycott.

Over 1,000 people marched through Colombo, demanding the EU follow Britain and the US and officially list the Tigers as a terrorist outfit.

20 DEC 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

# WAR OR PEACE

The only way to prevent war between the armed forces and LTTE is to prevail on the new President to give up his idea of a unitary form of government and work for a confederal

**I**N his annual Heroes' Day address on 27 November, the LTTE supremo, Velupillai Pirapaharan, virtually served an ultimatum on the new President, Mahinda Rajapakse, that if his government did not come forward with a "reasonable solution" by the end of this month, his organisation would intensify the struggle for a separate Tamil Eelam in the New Year. It was the LTTE's call to the Tamils in the north-east to boycott the election that enabled Rajapakse to become the President, albeit by the narrowest margin. Although Rajapakse said his government was giving the highest priority to the peace process, his options to find a solution within the unitary form of government are limited.

His commitment to protect the unitary form of government in vogue since independence, given in writing to the Left-wing Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the conservative Jathika Hela Urumaya of the Buddhist clergy, ensured the support of the majority Sinhala community to Rajapakse. The LTTE's minimum demand is acceptance of the Internal Self Governing Authority (ISGA) proposals submitted by it two years ago as the starting point for resuming negotiations. The Sri Lanka government and the LTTE have taken up firm positions on two parallel lines. Parallel lines never meet.

The Japanese government's offer to host direct talks between Colombo and the LTTE is welcome because neither side wanted the talks to be held in each other's territory. Norway's compromise proposal of holding the talks in the international airport near Colombo was rejected by the LTTE as the venue was under the effective control of the Sri Lankan government. What was envisaged, according to Yasushi Akashi, Tokyo's visiting special representative, was "review of the operational aspects" of the ceasefire agreement, in force since 2002, and not a review of the agreement as such. Akashi did not meet the LTTE leadership in Kilinochchi in deference to the wishes of the Rajapakse government which was engaged in a comprehensive review of the entire situation. The JVP

*The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai*

*S. Lanka*  
and the JHU, electoral allies of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party of Rajapakse, want a review of the ceasefire agreement. Rajapakse, while wanting Norway to continue as facilitator between his government and the LTTE, wants Oslo to give up its role as monitor of the ceasefire agreement. The present Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission consists of representatives from the Nordic countries chaired by Norway. Rajapakse told Akashi that he would welcome monitors



from Japan and South Asian countries.

Elected on a hardline nationalist platform and having won the majority of Sinhala votes, Rajapakse had rejected the concept of a Tamil homeland and the notions of power-sharing federalism, agreed upon by the previous government and the LTTE in the Oslo round of peace talks in 2002. He had also rejected the idea of sharing tsunami-related aid pledged by international donors with the LTTE. Liberal aid has been pledged by the international community as an inducement to both sides to resume peace talks. The Post Tsunami Operational Management Structure (PTOMS), a joint mechanism the former President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, had entered into with the LTTE, was abrogated by Rajapakse saying only the "Jaya Lanka" reconstruction programme run by Colombo will handle tsunami funds. Regretting the stand taken by Rajapakse, Kumaratunga claimed in an interview: "I am saying this from the very bottom of my heart, I feel it deeply in every fibre of my body, that every single person who opposed PTOMS will, very soon be known by Sri Lanka as the biggest traitor this country has ever known. This was the beginning of the solution, quite definitely."

More important is Rajapakse's

refusal to countenance an interim administration. Given his well known hardline position, no one expected him to concede this demand of the LTTE. While ruling out short-term and long-term solutions enunciated by the LTTE, Rajapakse has not put forward an alternative agenda for any meaningful dialogue except to say "the political solution to a lasting peace should be based on a consensus reached through discussion among all parties linked to the

**While ruling out short-term and long-term solutions enunciated by the LTTE, Rajapakse has not put forward an alternative agenda for any meaningful dialogue**

problem and it should receive the approval of the majority of the people of the country".

Pirapaharan said in his Heroes' Day speech that a critical evaluation of Rajapakse's policy statement revealed that he had failed to grasp the fundamentals. However, the LTTE considered Rajapakse a realist committed to pragmatic politics and wanted to find out how he was going to handle the peace process and whether he would offer justice to the Tamil people. Pirapaharan's idea of a reasonable solution is based on the recognition of the Sri Lankan Tamils as a nation, and of this nation's right to self-determination. This is a question of Colombo's sovereignty over the Tamils living in the North-east. The Sri Lanka government surrendered its sovereignty over 70 per cent of the north-east under the control of the LTTE while signing the Memorandum of Understanding on the ceasefire with the militant group on 23 February 2003.

Article 1.4 of the MoU says: "Where forward defence localities have been established, the Sri Lankan armed forces and the LTTE's fighting formations shall hold their ground positions". This gave the LTTE the space and legitimacy to continue to build its parallel state structure within the lines of control. The LTTE cele-

brated the legitimacy thus gained by hoisting Eelam flags, declaring a national flower different from Colombo's, establishing the Eelam police force and courts of law and even setting up customs posts at the Omantha and Muhamalai checkpoints to project an image of a separate de facto state.

With increasing skirmishes between the Sri Lankan armed forces, paramilitaries and the LTTE, the situation is heading towards a resumption of war. Rajapakse is relying heavily on the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene which took away Sri Lanka's sovereign right to freely enter into military or intelligence relationships with any external power other than India. Article 2.16 of the agreement says: "The governments of India and Sri Lanka will co-operate in ensuring the physical security and safety of all communities inhabiting the Northern and Eastern provinces". Ven. Ellawala Medananda Thero, leader of the JHU, has urged Rajapakse to place the country on war alert.

Lt.-Gen. Sarath Fonseka, newly appointed Commander of the Sri Lankan Army, recently visited the Palaly military base in Jaffna and key forward defence lines. Also present at Palaly were the Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Daya Sandagiri, Commander of the Navy, Vice-Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, Commander of the Air Force, Air Marshal G.D. Perera, Defence Secretary, Gotabaya Rajapakse, the President's brother, and Lalith Weerathunga, President's Secretary. Two Indian naval ships, INS Sukanya and INS Kirpan, have just completed a joint exercise in Sri Lankan waters in the presence of Vice-Admiral Suresh Mehta, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command.

A week earlier, Lt.-Gen. B.S. Thakar of the Indian Army visited Sri Lanka. India has much to fear from a recurrence of warfare between the Sri Lanka armed forces and the LTTE. The only way to prevent that is to prevail on Rajapakse to give up his idea of preserving the unitary form of government and restructure the island nation's polity towards a confederal arrangement with all representative Tamil groups in Sri Lanka.

# LTTE rejects peace talks offer

JOE ARIYARATNAM  
KILINOCCHI, DECEMBER 17

Sri Lanka Tamil Tiger rebels on Saturday rejected a government offer to hold talks in Asia aimed at averting a return to civil war, insisting any meeting should be hosted by peace broker Norway.

New President Mahinda Rajapakse has offered to meet the rebels for immediate talks in any Asian country, but not in Europe. He has also angered the Tigers by rejecting their demand for an ethnic Tamil homeland outright.

SP Thamilselvan, head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) political wing, accused the government of trying to freeze the group out of Europe and of trying to convince the European Union to list it as a banned terrorist organisation. "The first round of



talks should be held in Norway," Thamilselvan told reporters here.

"By living (in Europe), our people have established a certain place and status in those countries," he added, accusing the government of seeking to "sever our relationship with the international community and sideline us." The government, which announced its Asia talks offer on Friday after rowing

**The government is trying to freeze us (LTTE) out of Europe and trying to convince EU to ban LTTE as a terrorist group**

back on its predecessors' refusal to hold talks outside Sri Lanka, was not immediately available for comment.

The Tigers have threatened to resume their two-decade struggle next year unless Colombo comes up with a viable power-sharing blueprint, saying this is its last chance to avert a return to a war in which more than 64,000 people have died.

But both LTTE and the government are poles apart, each bickering at the other through the media, and a surge in violence that has sparked fears of a return to war is likely to continue, analysts say.

Nordic truce monitors on Saturday blamed the Tigers for shooting at a military helicopter on Wednesday in the first attack on an aircraft since the ceasefire was signed in 2002 — a charge the rebels reject.

"The LTTE is urged to do all in its power to avoid similar incidents in future as such incidents can lead to serious consequences jeopardising the ceasefire," Hagrup Haukland, head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission which oversees the truce, said in a statement.

The truce is at its lowest ebb after two claymore mine attacks killed 14 soldiers earlier this month. *Reuters*

INDIAN EXPRESS

# Colombo move a ploy to isolate us: LTTE

## Rejects offer of talks in any Asian country

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Saturday termed the Sri Lankan Government's proposal to hold talks in an Asian country as a "ploy" to "internationally isolate" it.

LTTE's political wing leader S.P. Tamilselvan told journalists in rebel-held Kilinochchi that the group stood by its position that preliminary talks to discuss the implementation of the ceasefire agreement should be held in Europe, preferably Oslo.

The rejection came a day after the Government announced change in its stand that the talks should be held only in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Tamilselvan said Colombo's proposal was unacceptable and that the LTTE viewed it as part of the Government's "conspiracy" which included "influ-

encing European nations to ban the Tigers." The rejection came just ahead of a meeting of the international co-chairs of the peace process in Brussels next week. The E.U., the U.S., Norway and Japan are the four co-chairs of the efforts.

After the assassination of Foreign Affairs Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in August, the E.U. said its member-states would no longer receive LTTE delegations and warned the rebels that it was "actively considering" listing them as a "terrorist organisation."

The E.U. also wanted the Tigers to take "immediate public steps" to demonstrate their commitment to the peace process and "willingness to change."

While there is broad agreement between the Government and the LTTE on the need for talks on the ceasefire, the dead-

lock is over the choice of the venue.

The Government this week said it was "flexible" and was willing to hold the negotiations in any Asian venue. Subsequently, Japan had offered to host the talks.

But the deadlock continues due to the LTTE's rejection of the proposal.

Talks remain suspended since April 2003, when the LTTE unilaterally snapped talks, citing "excessive internationalisation" and the then Government's "tardy implementation" of promises made during the six rounds of negotiations between September 2002 and March 2003.

The highlight of the six rounds was an agreement reached by the Government and the LTTE in Oslo to "explore federals models," to find a solution within a "united Sri Lanka."

*Handwritten notes:*  
H2-12  
S. Lanka  
18/12

# Tokyo's offer reflects Colombo's stand

S. Akashi  
HD-19  
12/12

## Sri Lanka willing to hold talks outside the country

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Japan on Sunday offered to host direct talks between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to "review the operation" of the ceasefire agreement (CFA).

The offer by Tokyo's visiting special representative Yasushi Akashi follows a change in Colombo's position that the talks should be held inside Sri Lanka.

"The Government told me that it is willing to have negotiations outside the country, preferably in Asia," Mr. Akashi told a press conference. "Japan is ready to host such direct negotiations, provided the two parties are agreeable to it and also with the facilitators and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) participating as appropriate." "What is envisaged is review of the operational aspects, not the review of the agreement as such."

Colombo's call for a review ran into a deadlock as the LTTE insisted that the talks be held either in rebel-held territory or

abroad. The LTTE rejected Norway's proposal to hold the talks at the international airport near Colombo.

Mr. Akashi, who announced Colombo's flexibility after meeting President Mahinda Rajapakse last week, said the new Government was giving "the highest priority" to the peace process and that was formulating a "comprehensive approach" to end the conflict, not merely an aggregation of the transitional approaches.

In a departure from his routine as Tokyo's special representative, Mr. Akashi did not meet the LTTE during his visit. "I have decided to comply with the wishes of the Government which is engaged in a very comprehensive review of the situation of peace."

Asked about media reports that India could join Norway, Japan, the E.U. and the U.S. as a co-chair for the efforts to back the peace process, Mr. Akashi said: "I don't think that question arises," as the current co-chairs had hosted the aid support conference in 2003.

IGT ORFSCAN

12 DEC 2005



# Rajapakse for separating roles of facilitator and monitor

S. Lanka  
11/12

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President, Mahinda Rajapakse on Friday said that the facilitator for the peace process and the monitor for the ceasefire agreement "cannot be from the same country."

The President's view on separating the twin roles currently played by Norway was reported in the state-run *Daily News*.

"There should be two entities to facilitate the peace process and to monitor the ceasefire," between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the newspaper quoted Mr. Rajapakse as telling the visiting Japanese Special Envoy, Yasushi Akashi.

The role played by facilitator, Norway, and the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM), which is a team comprising Nordic representatives and headed by a Norwegian, was one of the key issues raised by Mr. Rajapakse's election allies — the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU). The two

## Rajapakse said he would welcome monitors from Japan and South Asia

11/12

parties want a review of the ceasefire agreement, which was facilitated by Norway.

During his meeting, Mr. Rajapakse also told Mr. Akashi that he would welcome monitors from Japan, South Asia and other Scandinavian countries, the newspaper said.

On December 7, Mr. Rajapakse invited Oslo to continue its role as facilitator in the peace process.

The Norwegian Government has said that it would hold consultations with Sri Lankan political parties.

Its envoy, Hans Brattskar, met the LTTE's political wing leader, on Friday.

A Norwegian statement, however, said Mr. Brattskar went in his own capacity "and not as a representative of the facilitator of the peace process." The Norwegian

Government, which is a facilitator since the late 1990s, "will not be carrying messages between the two until consultations on the future Norwegian role has taken place," the embassy said.

## Indian naval ships' visit

Meanwhile, two Indian naval ships INS Sukanya and INS Kirpan, sailed into Colombo on Saturday as part of a global goodwill visit by the Indian Navy.

The ships have visited Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Oman, and Vietnam and other countries, the Indian High Commission said.

Vice-Admiral, Suresh Mehta, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command will also pay a courtesy visit to Sri Lanka as part of the goodwill visit of the ships.

For the offshore patrol vessel, INS Sukanya, Saturday's visit was significant as it was the first foreign ship to have reached Trincomalee for tsunami-relief operations after the December 2004 devastation.

11 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

# Sri Lankan military leaders allay fears of imminent war

Army commander says forces prepared for any eventuality

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan military leaders on Friday allayed fears of an imminent war with but said they were prepared for any threat.

In a joint press conference, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Daya Sandagiri, described the recent attacks in north-east Sri Lanka as those aimed at provoking the armed forces. "We have acted with restraint. We will not break the ceasefire agreement," he said.

The Commander of the Army, Sarath Fonseka, the Air Force Chief, Donald Perera and the Inspector General of Police, Chandra Fernando were the other service chiefs who participated in the press conference.

"It is basically a terrorist act," Admiral Sandagiri said, referring to the claymore attacks in Jaffna over the last week. He declined to describe them as acts of

war. "It is an offensive act, not an act of war."

The CDS, a former Naval chief, said there was "no sizeable change" in the strength of the Sea Tigers. The overall balance of military forces, he said, remained in favour of the security forces. "There is no doubt about it; we have the supreme position," he said.

Asked if he saw the northern strikes leading to war between the Government and the LTTE, Admiral Sandagiri said: "I don't anticipate that situation. Terrorism does not mean leading to war."

The Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Fonseka said the Government forces were prepared for both conventional and unconventional warfare, depending on the situation. He saw the possibility of an unconventional war in the east, and a conventional one in the north.

The Air Force Chief, Air Mar-

shall Perera said the LTTE's air capability was about two or three small aircraft. Their strike capability, he said, was restricted to something "similar to a car fitted with a bomb."

## Tsunami relief

Meanwhile, a year after their homes were shattered by the December 2004 tsunami, a group of residents in Sri Lanka's southern Galle district broke into celebrations.

The elation by the beneficiaries of a housing scheme promoted by the ruling ally, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna is also the story of the political and economic issues involved in post-tsunami reconstruction.

"We now have some hope," said Saman Wickreme de Silva, a beneficiary of the scheme about 80 km south of Colombo. Sayani Kusumalatha, who lost her father and an 8-year old son in the tsunami, has now moved into her new house with her husband and two surviving children. Her face radiates with happiness as she walks into her sparkling new house.

THE HINDU

# Norway bankrolled LTTE: report

## Newspaper says money was given at the request of the Sri Lankan Government

Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI:** A Norwegian newspaper has disclosed that the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs bankrolled the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) between 2002 and 2004, and continues to finance the group banned as a terrorist organisation in India, the United States and Britain.

The report also quotes the Norwegian Foreign Ministry as saying that it gave this money to the LTTE at the request of the Sri Lankan Government.

Norway has been the facilitator of a peace process between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE since 2000. The process has been stuck since April 2003 when the Tigers refused to participate in peace talks citing unmet promises by the Sri Lankan Government.

The *Ny Tid* (*New Times*) said in a report on November 26 that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

gave 17.5 million Norwegian Kroner to the LTTE between 2002 (the year it arranged a ceasefire in Sri Lanka) and 2004. The newspaper said the financial support to the LTTE is continuing and would reach an estimated 25 million Kroner or \$375,000 by the end of this year.

The report — a translated copy of which was circulated by the Sri Lanka Democracy Forum, an organisation of expatriate Sri Lankans — quoted a spokesman of the MFA saying that Norway's support to the LTTE was given at the behest of the Sri Lankan Government.

"The Sri Lankan authorities requested the funding of the LTTE peace secretariat after the signing of the CFA (ceasefire agreement), and all the funds for the LTTE peace secretariat have been given with the consent of the Government of Sri Lanka," the spokesman said in an email to the newspaper.

The MFA said the money it gave the LTTE was for "the establishment and development of the peace secretariat, travels by the LTTE political leadership related to the peace process, civil capacity building and the gathering of expertise related to the peace process and information work about the peace process."

It said all the financial support to the LTTE was "accounted for and audited according to existing Norwegian regulations on development aid."

day before the leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, made his "Martyrs' Day" speech, in which he asked President Mahinda Rajapakse to offer the Tamils a "reasonable solution" by next year or else the LTTE would "intensify" its struggle for "liberation."

He also said the LTTE participated in the peace process due to pressure from the international community and that it used it to build legitimacy as the sole representative of the Tamils and win international sympathy for its cause.

Despite the peace process, India, the U.S. and Britain refused to take the LTTE off their terror list. Earlier this year, following the assassination of the former Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, the European Union placed a travel ban on the LTTE, saying its member nations would not receive LTTE delegations any more.

- Report says funds have been provided since 2002
- Financial support to reach \$375,000 by the year end

# LTTE warns Colombo of war again

## Associated Press

COLOMBO, Dec. 5. — A group allied with Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels threatened today to force the military and "traitors" from the country's Tamil-dominated northeast if violence continues against the ethnic group there.

The statement from the Trincomalee Tamil Peoples Consortium followed a weekend of violence during which a Muslim mob beat two Tamil men to death in the northeastern city of Trincomalee.

"The day when paramil-

itaries and traitors must run away from our land is not very far," the group said in its statement, carried on the rebels' official Web site.

"When the anger of the Tamil people at these lowly acts bursts out, we warn that the traitors will be forced to run with the Sri Lankan military from our land."

Violence flared on Saturday in Trincomalee, about 230 kilometres northeast of Colombo, when two Tamil men assaulted a Muslim resident, seriously injuring

him. Rumours circulated that he had died, prompting a mob of Muslims to attack and kill two Tamil men. Yesterday, the bodies of three Muslim men were found, apparently killed by the rebels in revenge attacks, according to local police sources.

Sri Lanka's government today accused Tamil Tiger rebels of provoking security forces with a spate of attacks that left nine soldiers and three civilians dead over the weekend.

"It is obvious that through these violent acts the LTTE (Liberation

Tigers of Tamil Eelam) is trying all possible means to provoke troops and create a volatile situation in Jaffna," the government said in a statement. Most of Sri Lanka's Tamil people are Hindu. Trincomalee falls mainly under government control, although the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam control pockets of territory in the largely Tamil area.

In its statement the rebel group said Saturday's violence reflected a "continuing shadow war carried out by the Sri Lankan military and paramilitaries that

work with them," but that rebel supporters would not be cowed.

"They must be assuming that we can be frightened by making us think that if we work with the LTTE we will be punished with death," it said.

Military spokesman Brig. Nalin Witharanage said that, "at a time when there is optimism about negotiations commencing, this statement is unusual."

However, to maintain the law and order situation, every possible action will be taken by the security forces," he said, but

declined to elaborate.

Meanwhile, rebel political leader C Ilamparuthi planned to meet today with Maj. Gen. Sunil Tennakoon, the military's top general in northern Jaffna Peninsula, to discuss "the deteriorating situation" there, according to the pro-rebel Web site, TamilNet.

The meeting, which will also be attended by monitors overseeing the ceasefire, comes after the military blamed the Tamil Tigers for attacks that killed seven soldiers on Sunday — the most seri-

ous violence since the two sides signed the truce three years ago.

Late last month, rebel leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran warned that the rebels will step up their struggle for an independent Tamil homeland next year if grievances with the government are not resolved.

The Tigers began fighting in 1983, claiming discrimination by Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese. About 65,000 people died in the conflict before a cease-fire was signed in 2002. Subsequent peace talks collapsed a year later.

SRI LANKA ■ 6 soldiers killed in claymore fragmentation mine, LTTE suspected

# Sri Lanka truce takes a hit as rebels ambush military vehicle

SIMON GARDNER

COLOMBO, DECEMBER 4

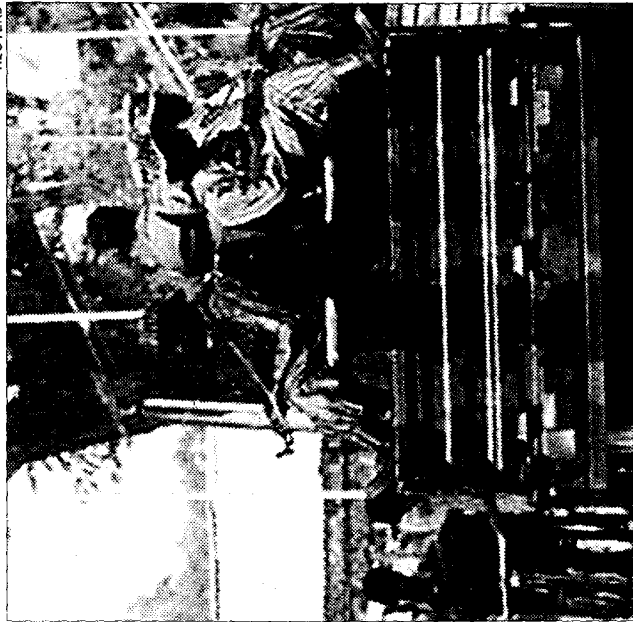
SIX soldiers were killed in a claymore fragmentation mine attack by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels in Sri Lanka's war-torn north on Sunday, the military said.

The attack, 7 km of Jaffna, follows a series of attacks near rebel-held areas in the island's north and east over the weekend that injured over a dozen people and killed a further six.

Protesters burned barricades in Jaffna on Friday to decry the killing of two rebel supporters that residents blame on the Army, and officials suspect Sunday's attack was tit-for-tat.

Brigadier Nalin Wütharan-

REUTERS



Tigers at Heroes Day Parade at Killinochchi on November 27

age, the military spokesman said that the attack bore the hallmarks of LTTE who had last month threatened to resume their armed struggle in 2006 unless given political power over the island's north and east, where they run a de facto state.

He added, "We have had a spate of incidents in the last 48 hours. This may be as retaliation for the two LTTE supporters killed."

Troops were patrolling the eastern port town of Trincomalee after two Tamil men were killed and three abducted Muslim farmers were found slain on Saturday in what officials said were flaring tensions between ethnic Tamils and Muslims.

Dozens of Muslims sought

refuge in churches and temples, officials said, but the streets of Trincomalee remained calm on Sunday.

Nordic truce monitors appealed to all sides to halt the attacks. More than 220 police, military, rebel cadres and civilians have now been killed since the truce was agreed.

"We're appealing to all community leaders, the LTTE and the government to use their influence to calm down the situation," said Helen Olafsdottir, spokeswoman for the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

Last month rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran issued an ultimatum to new President Rajapakse to devolve power to the Tamils and create a separate homeland.

05 DEC 2005

# Tigers are playing a double game

By Jai Taraporevala/TNN

He has been underscored by the warning issued by Velupillai Prabhakaran that unless President Mahinda Rajapakse comes up with acceptable proposals to solve the ethnic dispute by December 31, the LTTE will intensify its campaign to establish self-government in Tamil areas. The Tigers will pursue a twin-track approach of expressing a willingness to resume talks and preparing for the contingency of a breakdown in the 2002 ceasefire accord.

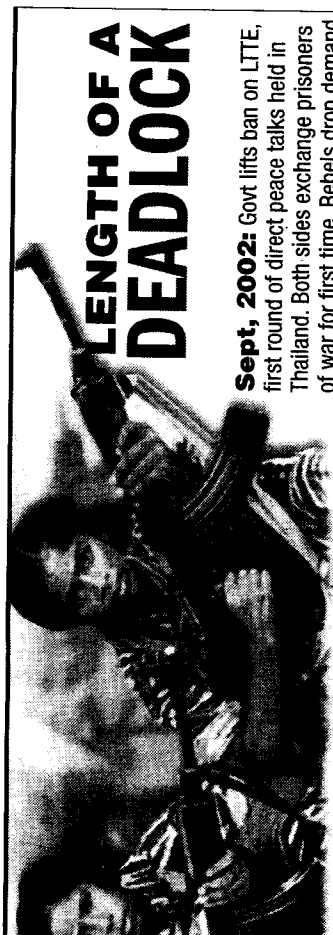
As a result, the ceasefire is likely to increasingly come under strain, especially in eastern Sri Lanka. After all, the eastern districts of Amparai, Batticaloa and Trincomalee have a mixed ethnic population of Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese, and their merger with the northern region remains a long-term objective for the Tigers. Besides, the eastern areas were badly hit by the tsunami last year. The LTTE remains pigued about the unwillingness of the government to establish a joint mechanism for the disbursement of the \$3 billion in tsunami aid relief following the supreme court's decision to strike down certain aspects of the P-TOMS agreement.

The Tigers are also suspicious of the government's efforts to project rebel leader, Colonel Karuna, as an alternative power centre in the east and its alleged failure to provide adequate security to LTTE officials travelling in government held areas.

By leaving open the door for talks on the basis of the agreements reached with previous governments, the LTTE is seeking to make itself less vulnerable to international criticism in the event of a collapse in the peace process.

By stressing its core demand for a settlement based on federal principles, the LTTE is reinforcing its bargaining leverage in any future discussions with the government.

At the same time, the Tigers will hold out the threat of unilaterally establishing self-government for the Tamils and the veiled warning of resuming the armed struggle unless the current impasse is soon broken. This is a means of stepping up the pressure on Rajapakse to move away from his insistence on renegotiating the ceasefire agreement and upholding the unitary character of the Sri Lankan state. However, given Ra-



## LENGTH OF A DEADLOCK

**Sept, 2002:** Govt lifts ban on LTTE, first round of direct peace talks held in Thailand. Both sides exchange prisoners of war for first time. Rebels drop demand for separate state.

**March-May 2002:** De-commissioning of weapons begins; passenger flights to Jaffna resume.

**Feb, 2002:** Govt and LTTE sign Norwegian-brokered ceasefire, laying groundwork for direct peace talks.

**Dec, 2001:** Wickramasinghe comes to power.

**Oct, 2001:** Kumaratunga dissolves parliament, announces new elections.

**Dec, 1999:** Kumaratunga survives LTTE suicide bomb attack, loses one eye, spurring a sympathy vote that helped her win again.

**Jan, 1998:** Sri Lanka outlaws the LTTE after suicide attack on country's holiest Buddhist shrine, the Temple of the Tooth.

**April, 1995:** Truce ends when rebels blow up two navy vessels.

**Jan, 1995:** President Kumaratunga's gov't and rebels agree to stop fighting and talk.

**Nov 27, 2005:** LTTE supremo Prabhakaran sets Dec 31 deadline for the gov't to come up with a reasonable settlement

**Nov, 2005:** Mahinda Rajapakse wins presidential elections. Many Tamils boycott poll.

**Aug, 2005:** Sri Lanka's Supreme Court rules Kumaratunga's term must end in 2005, paving way for a November 17 election.

**Aug, 2005:** Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar assassinated by suspected LTTE rebel snipers.

**April, 2004:** Chandrika Kumaratunga's coalition wins polls.

**Feb, 2004:** Kumaratunga dissolves House, calls snap election.

**April, 2003:** Tigers pull out after six rounds of talks, saying not enough done for Tamil areas.

**Feb, 2003:** Peace talks get under way in Berlin.

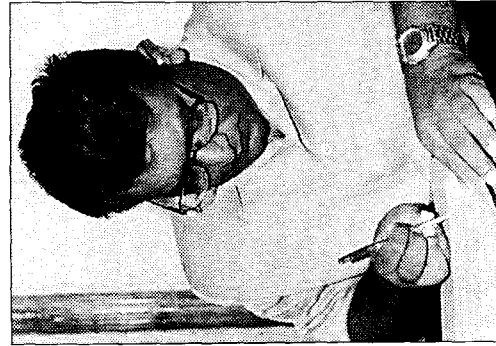
**Dec, 2002:** Tigers give up demand for separate state and to work for devolution of power.

## NEWS ANALYSIS

hit by the tsunami last year. The LTTE remains pigued about the unwillingness of the government to establish a joint mechanism for the disbursement of the \$3 billion in tsunami aid relief following the supreme court's decision to strike down certain aspects of the P-TOMS agreement.

The Tigers are also suspicious of the government's efforts to project rebel leader, Colonel Karuna, as an alternative power centre in the east and its alleged failure to provide adequate security to LTTE officials travelling in government held areas.

# LTTE bomb ticks on Rajapaksa



Velupillai Prabhakaran

**AGENCE France-Presse**  
Colombo, November 27

LTTE LEADER Velupillai Prabhakaran on Sunday issued a December 31 deadline for the new government in Sri Lanka to come up with a reasonable political settlement or risk the rebels setting up a separate state.

The Tamil Tiger supreme, in his much-awaited annual policy statement, said the government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa should put forward a "reasonable political framework" before the end of this year. "This is our urgent and final appeal. If the new government rejects our urgent appeal, we will, next year... establish self-government in our homeland."

Prabhakaran said his LTTE which has lost 17,000 fighters in a bitter separatist campaign since 1972, had lost patience, hope and reached the brink of utter frustration. He was speaking at a ceremony honouring LTTE cadre who died while battling government forces. "The peace process has miserably failed to address the urgent humanitarian needs of hundreds of thousands of Tamil refugees displaced by war and the tsunami, giving rise to disillusionment. They are not prepared to be tolerant any longer. The new government should come forward soon with a reasonable political framework to satisfy the political aspirations of our people. He made no direct offer of

peace talks in response to a call by President Rajapaksa in his first address to parliament on Friday. However, Prabhakaran did say that they were willing to wait for Rajapaksa's next move before talking decisive action "next year."

"This new government is extending its hand of friendship towards us and is calling our organisation for peace talks," he said. "It claims that it is going to adopt a new approach towards the peace process," he said.

"Having carefully examined his policy statement in depth, we have come to a conclusion that President Rajapaksa has not grasped the fundamentals, the basic concepts underlying the Tamil national question."



Mahinda Rajapaksa

THE SUNDAY TIMES 28 NOV 2005

PIRABHAKARAN SETS 31 DEC. DEADLINE

# LTTE chief warns of separate State

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, Nov. 27. — Sri Lanka's top Tamil Tiger leader, Velupillai Pirabhakaran today issued an ultimatum to the new Sri Lankan Government to come up with a "reasonable" political settlement by 31 December or risk the rebels setting up a separate state.

Meanwhile, Tamil Tiger guerrillas armed with rocket launchers and sub-machine guns patrolled military positions in eastern Sri Lanka today, hours before their leader was expected to outline a harder stance against the government.

"This is our urgent and final appeal," he said. "If the new government rejects our appeal, we will, next year...establish self-government in our homeland." He said that the island's new President Mr Mahinda Rajapakse had "failed to grasp the fundamentals behind the decades-long war waged by the (LTTE). Our people have lost patience, and reached the

brink of utter frustration," Pirabhakaran said.

"They are not prepared to be tolerant any longer. The new government should come forward soon with a reasonable political framework that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people. If the new government rejects our urgent appeal, we will, next year intensify our



struggle for self-determination."

Pirabhakaran's statement comes two days after President Mr Rajapakse in his own policy address said that he refused to recognise the LTTE's concept of a traditional homeland for the Tamils in the island's north and east and ruled out a federal solution to

share power with Tamils.

Although he said he was willing to re-start stalled peace negotiations to end the conflict that has claimed over 60,000 lives, Mr Rajapakse wanted to widen the list of negotiators to include other representatives of the minority community. The President also insisted that he would review the Norwegian-brokered truce to make it more stringent and rule out rebel infringements such as abductions and the recruitment of child soldiers.

He said there was a vast difference between the position of President Mr Rajapakse and the Tamil demands for autonomy.

## No threat: Norway

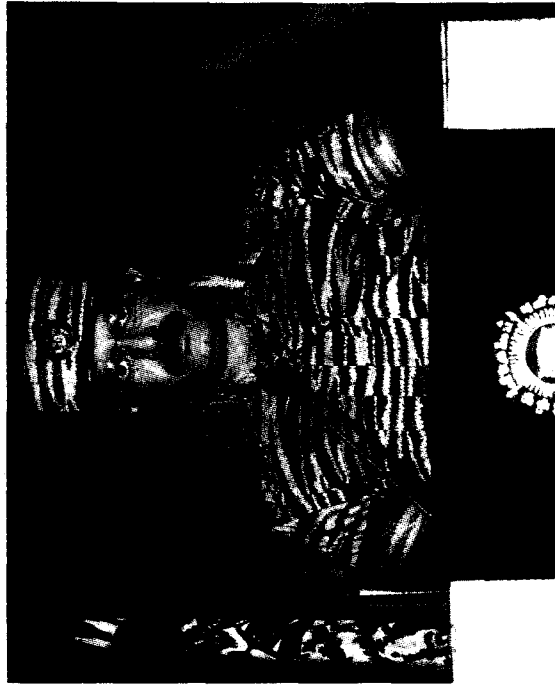
The chief of the Norwegian-led cease-fire monitoring group, Mr Hagarup Haukland said today he saw no threat to the truce between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger rebels ahead of Pirabhakaran's speech adds a AP report.

THE STATESMAN



# LTTE seeks "reasonable political framework" by next year

To wait and observe President Rajapakse's approach; warns of intensifying struggle if appeal is rejected



In his Heroes' Day speech on Sunday from an undisclosed location in Northern Sri Lanka, LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran said Sri Lanka's new President, Mahinda Rajapakse, "has not grasped the fundamentals ... [off] the Tamil national question." - PHOTO: LTTE HANDOUT

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) leader V. Prabhakaran on Sunday made an "urgent and final appeal" to the new Sri Lankan Government to "come forward soon with a reasonable political framework that will satisfy the political aspirations of the Tamil people" by "next year."

If this "urgent appeal" was rejected, his group would "intensify" its "struggle for self-determination" and "national liberation" to "establish self-government in our homeland."

In his "Heroes' Day" speech, Mr. Prabhakaran said the LTTE would "wait and observe" the new President Mahinda Rajapakse's approach to the peace process "for some time." This was because "President Rajapakse is considered a realist, committed to pragmatic politics."

The President, he said, "has not grasped the fundamentals,

the basic concepts underlying the Tamil national question." On Mr. Rajapakse's new peace policy, he said, "The distance between him and us is vast."

## Sinhala-Buddhist regime

He characterised the new Government as "essentially a Sinhala-Buddhist regime," in which the "national minorities are not represented," and the new government "has been elected by the Sinhala majority specifically with their voting power."

It may be recalled that the LTTE expressed its "disinterest" in the November 17 presidential poll. This was followed by a "boycott" call by its front organisations, resulting in a low turnout from the Tamil majority northern and eastern voters.

Mr. Prabhakaran said the recent presidential poll and the change in governance "effected by the Tamil boycott have created a wide rift, politically, between the Tamil and Sinhala nations."

The "Heroes' Day" speech, delivered annually from an undisclosed location in rebel-held northern Sri Lanka, was released to the press by the LTTE.

The speech was preceded by a build-up in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern districts in the past few days, with sections of the media announcing the LTTE's "national symbols of Tamil Eelam." For the past few months, the LTTE's front organisations have been organising "Tamil Resurgence" events in the northern and eastern districts.

In last year's speech, Mr. Prabhakaran said the rebels had reached the "borderlines of patience and expectations," and asked the Government to resume unconditional talks based on its proposal for an Interim Self-Governing Authority.

"If the Government rejects our appeal, adopts delaying tactics perpetuating the suffering of our people, we have no alternative to advance the freedom struggle of our nation," he said in 2004.

THE HINDU 28 NOV 2004

Handwritten notes: 28/11, 28/11, 28/11

# President Rajapakse's quest for peace

The President's ability to deliver on a new peace process will largely depend on how he handles the two political extremes: the southern hardliners and the LTTE.

V.S. Sambandan

**S**RI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse's Statement of Government Policy made before Parliament on November 25 is a reiteration of the key points in his election manifesto, *Mahinda Chinthana* (Mahinda's Vision).

The new President's policy pronouncements indicate his plans to change the critical concepts on vital Sri Lankan issues: conflict resolution and socio-economic management. They represent continuity with his manifesto's promises of adopting a tough negotiating position to solve the separatist conflict and pursuing populist measures to change the island-nation's socio-economic landscape.

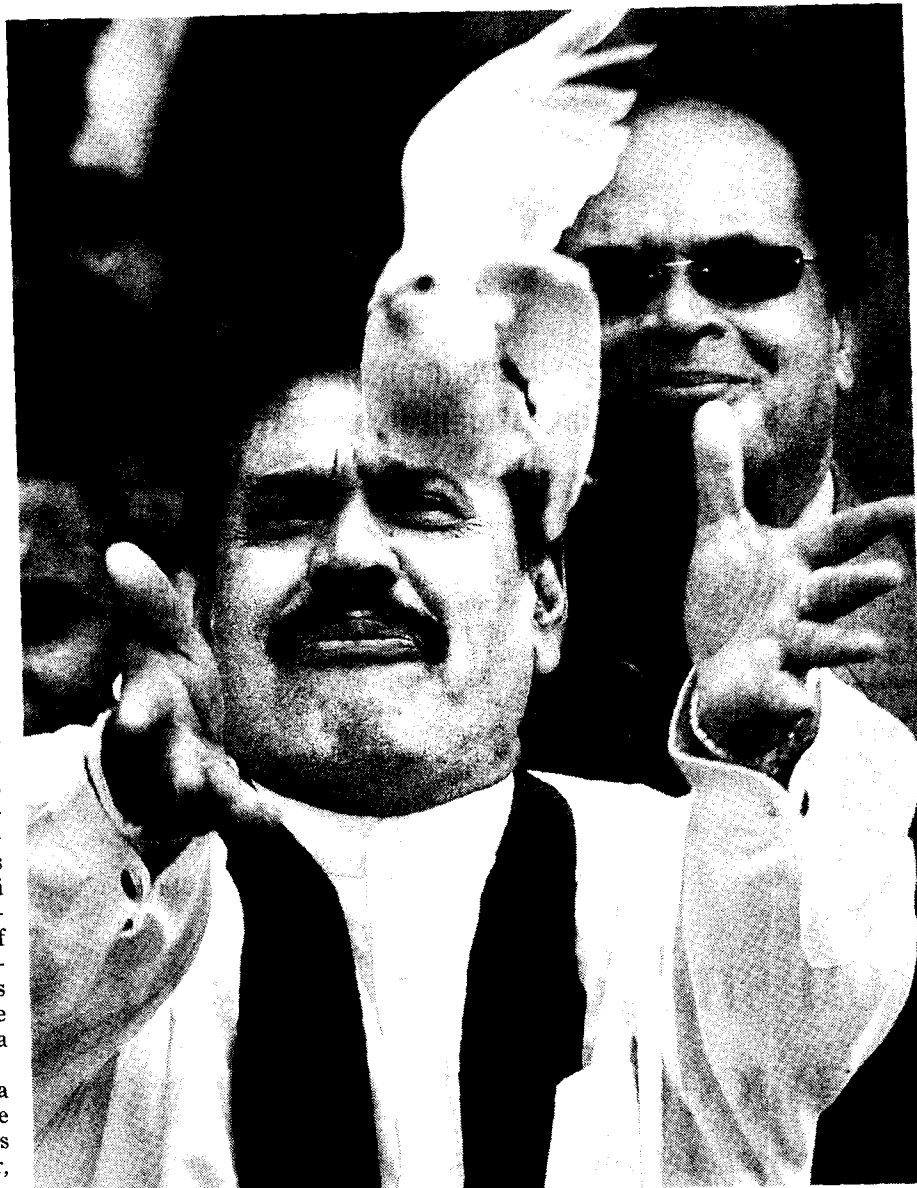
Mr. Rajapakse's prescription for conflict-resolution reiterates the strong unitary bias he had spelt out in his manifesto. It is one thing to characterise the President's approach to peace as hardline majoritarianism. It is another to read it against the socio-political backdrop of contemporary Sri Lanka and the deeper issues that afflict the island-nation's polity.

In its own way, the policy statement reflects a contemporary Sri Lanka that is still a nation in the making. To a large extent, the co-existential angst of the main ethnicities — Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and the Plantation Tamils — relates to the lack of a grassroots-led freedom movement. Added to this is the elitist origin of the independent Sri Lankan state. These, coupled with the competitive Sinhala and Tamil elitist politics of the formative decades of independent Ceylon/Sri Lanka resulted in the two ethnicities choosing to stridently assert their respective nationalities, rather than work towards a pan-Sri Lankan identity.

Unsaid in Mr. Rajapakse's quest for a "New Sri Lanka," hence, is the challenge he throws at the elitist politics and constructs from the past. This challenge, however, should be no cause to justify the entrenchment of majoritarian politics — a risk the President should explicitly avoid if he is to successfully create his New Sri Lanka.

As a grassroots political leader, Mr. Rajapakse would do well to avoid the politically convenient planks of the past that led to the political ingraining of the Sinhala majoritarian line by the early Sri Lankan political leaders. A more viable option is to veer to the more recent legacy of the outgoing President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, and of his main Presidential opponent, Ranil Wickremesinghe, who had largely agreed on the need for a non-unitary state.

On the face of it, Mr. Rajapakse's home-grown vision for a "New Sri Lanka" accords equal emphasis for all ethnicities. The key issue, however, is the gap that exists between the minimum talking points set by Mr. Rajapakse as the Sri Lankan President, and those intractably held on to by the state's prime adversary: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and its leader,



**CAN PEACE TAKE WING?** Mahinda Rajapakse marks his assumption of office as Sri Lanka's new President on November 19, 2005. — PHOTO: AP

V. Prabakaran. At the very broadest level, Mr. Rajapakse's approach to conflict-resolution is one of accommodating majorities and minorities within a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka. This contrasts with the LTTE's assertion in 1988 after the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord that "the problem of the people of Tamil Eelam is national problem," which was "concerned with the fundamental political rights of a national self-determination of that people."

Therein is the basic difference. As the LTTE had refused to budge from its entrenched positions in the face of higher offers, there is little reason to hope for an imminent resumption of talks. His most difficult task would be to resume negotiations with the LTTE, or, at the least, avoid a setting that could be internationally portrayed

by the Tigers as a "justification to resume armed struggle."

The Policy Statement represents a set of ideals for what Mr. Rajapakse sees as the "New Sri Lanka." These envisage, among others, safeguarding the "unitary nature of the state" and "people's national identity" with "maximum devolution of power within an undivided sovereign democratic republic."

Two guiding concepts for conflict resolution listed by the new President are: "consensus" and "majority-approval." Mr. Rajapakse's manifesto broadly sequenced his approach as working for a southern consensus in about three months and along the line moving towards commencement of direct talks with the LTTE.

The highlight of his prescription for resuming peace talks is to convert the bipartisan talks between Colombo and the LTTE into one that is inclusive, comprising all stakeholders. This is one more concept from the past that Mr. Rajapakse questions: that of the LTTE being the "sole representative" of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Here also lies yet another hurdle for the President to resume talks as the LTTE's intransigence on the issue of separation is matched by its undiluted insistence on it being the "sole representative" of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The other hurdle that Mr. Rajapakse will be confronted with is when he attempts to translate his idea of "maximum devolution" within a "unitary nature of the state" into an acceptable solution.

As is evident, the most that the present Sri Lankan unitary state has offered was the India-mediated Provincial Councils system under the 13th Amendment. The determination given by the Sri Lankan Supreme Court on the 13th Amendment — including the dissenting views — is a reminder of the legal positions on the conflict resolution issues that Mr. Rajapakse seeks to re-open: devolution within a unitary state and the concept of traditional homelands, to list just two.

In his rejection of the concepts of traditional homelands and self-determination of the Tamils, Mr. Rajapakse has attempted to re-define the parameters of conflict resolution as they were set out by the LTTE and other Tamil parties at the Thimpu talks in 1985.

While this could enable him to carve a southern consensus, it further pushes back any reasonable hope of resuming the stalled negotiations with the LTTE.

His intention to appoint a commission to "re-demarcate" the divisions, districts, and provinces to reflect, among others, current "political requirements" for democratic grassroots participation in development is another potentially sensitive issue requiring further elucidation.

The President's pronouncement on the role played by the international community also indicates re-visiting of the debate whether an external player should be restricted to "facilitation" or broaden into "mediation." The role Mr. Rajapakse has in mind for the current facilitator, Norway, and the manner in which he would like to "organise and strengthen" the "facilitation and mediation" extended by the U.N., friendly neighbours such as India, and the international community require further amplification.

The initial months of Mr. Rajapakse's tenure, when he moves towards reaching a southern consensus, are likely witness the re-opening of old debates.

The President's ability to deliver on his promise of a new peace process will largely depend on how he puts forward and negotiates the core issues of the conflict with two critical political extremes: the southern hardline dissidents and the LTTE.

# LANKA | Yes to talks, no to separate homeland, says President Rajapakse to take a second look at truce with Tigers

PETER APPS

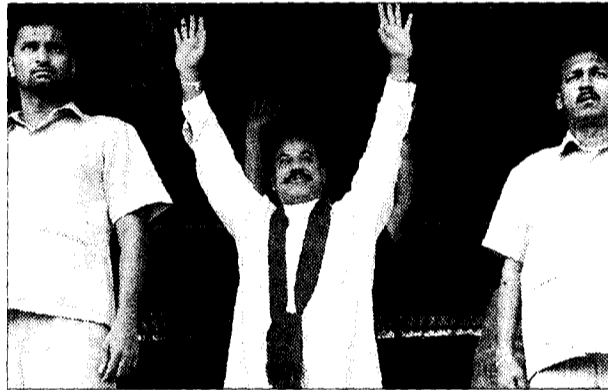
COLOMBO, NOVEMBER 25

SRI LANKA'S new president, Mahinda Rajapakse, said on Friday that he would amend a ceasefire with rebels to halt "terrorist acts", saying he did not believe minority Tamils should have their own separate homeland.

A 2002 ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has come under mounting strain in recent months, with grenades frequently thrown at army posts.

"We are ready to start direct talks with the LTTE," Rajapakse said as he reopened parliament. "This ... will be an open and transparent process. ... We will review the present ceasefire agreement to include these aspects."

Rajapakse, who is allied to



Uneasy truce: (left) LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran; (right) President Mahinda Rajapakse

hardline Marxists and Buddhists who hate the Tigers, told parliament he opposed the LTTE's demand for a separate state. "In place of the homeland concept for one ethnic group and the self-determination concept used to promote separatism ... the solution will ensure that this country is the homeland of Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burghers—and

also that they can live in any place in the country," Rajapakse said.

He also said a previous tsunami aid sharing deal with the Tigers—currently halted by a Supreme Court order—would be scrapped and a new administration mechanism introduced.

Diplomats, markets and aid workers concerned that work

with tsunami-hit communities on the east coast might be hit by worsening violence will all be closely watching Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's annual Heroes' Day address on Sunday. Analysts say he might threaten a return to war and possibly set an ultimatum for government forces to pull back from ground they now hold. —Reuters

LANKA PRESIDENT CALLS FOR FRESH CEASEFIRE DEAL WITH LTTE REBELS

# Rajapakse seeks India's help

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, Nov. 25. — Seeking India's help to strengthen the peace process, Sri Lanka's new President Mr Mahinda Rajapakse today said he wanted a new truce arrangement with the Tamil Tiger rebels and transparency in the Norwegian-brokered cease fire.

"I will have an open and transparent peace process which will honour human rights and will not permit the recruitment of children," the President said making his first policy statement in Parliament after his election last week. He made it clear that he would not brook terrorism in the peace process that he would soon initiate.

Mr Rajapakse said: "The cease fire agreement will be restructured so that acts of terrorism will not be allowed." Calling on all friendly countries to help push truce with LTTE, he said "the facilitation and mediation extended by the United Nations and other such organisations that support peace in Sri Lanka, all friendly countries, the international community, India and other regional states will



GUARD OF HONOUR: Sri Lanka's newly elected President Mr Mahinda Rajapakse is escorted to the national parliament for his first policy statement to be made, in Colombo on Friday. — AFP

Mr Rajapakse said the peace process between the previous government and the LTTE was at a stalemate because other involved parties had been kept out. He stressed that the final solution to the island's simmering ethnic conflict would lie within a "unitary" state.

His position is in direct contrast to that of his own Sri Lanka Freedom Party led by his predecessor, Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga, and is likely to disturb the LTTE which has said it will give up separatism in exchange for a federal sharing of power. "Our agenda is to be open and transparent and it will include important elements such as renouncing separatism and demilitarisation. Talking will not be easy but that is the path we choose," Mr Rajapakse told a full house of legislators.

Mr Rajapakse beat Leader of the Opposition Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe to win last week's Presidential poll with the support of two nationalist parties, the Marxist JVP, or People's Liberation Front and the Buddhist monks' party of JHU, the National Heritage Party, which want Norway out of the peace process and are against federalism.

**'I will have an open and transparent peace process which will honour human rights and will not permit the recruitment of children. And the agreement will be restructured so that acts of terrorism will not be allowed' — Mr Mahinda Rajapakse**

be properly organised and utilised to strengthen the peace process." Mr Rajapakse made no reference to Norway which helped bring the rebels to the negotiating table and brokered the Scandinavian-monitored cease fire. The President said he was ready to open talks with the rebels but not ready to recognise the island's north and east as the traditional homeland of Tamils, Muslims, Malays and Burghers. They have the right to live anywhere in the island," he added.

# Sri Lankan Cabinet sworn in

HO-14 24/11  
**Rajapakse retains the crucial portfolios of Finance and Defence**

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse on Wednesday appointed a 25-member Cabinet of Ministers. Besides, 29 Deputy Ministers and 23 non-Cabinet Ministers were sworn in at a ceremony in the Presidential Secretariat.

Mr. Rajapakse retained the crucial portfolios of Finance, Defence, Religious Affairs and Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (Triple-R).

The key change in the Cabinet was the appointment of Mangala Samaraweera as the Foreign Affairs Minister in place of Anura Bandaranaike, brother of outgoing President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

Mr. Samaraweera (49) was Mr. Rajapakse's chief campaign manager and a frontbencher of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). He is a second-generation political leader from the southern Matara district. He was a former Media Minister and Cabinet spokesperson.

Mr. Bandaranaike became the Foreign Affairs Minister after the assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar. He retains the Ports and Aviation portfolio.

Though Mr. Rajapakse's main electoral allies — the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) — did not join Cabinet, their leaders were present at the swearing in.

Mr. Rajapakse's Tamil ally K.N. Douglas Devananda, leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), was elevated as Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare. He earlier held the Hindu Affairs and other portfolios.

Mr. Bandaranaike was initially



**EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES:** Anura Bandaranaike (left) with President Mahinda Rajapakse after taking oath as Minister of Tourism in Colombo on Wednesday. — PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

named as the SLFP's prime ministerial choice. He did not campaign for Mr. Rajapakse citing his opposition to his alliances with the JVP and JHU. He was the second Minister to be sworn, immediately after Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremmanayake.

Mr. Rajapakse retained the Defence portfolio in accordance with a Supreme Court judgement that the position was "inalienable" from the presidency.

## Change from past

In a change from the past, Mr. Rajapakse did not name specific

Ministers for the main religions — Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.

Instead, he retained the Ministry of Religious Affairs and named a Deputy to assist him. He has also done away with the practice of appointing Ministers for specific regions.

Later in the evening, non-Cabinet Minister Sripathi Suriyaarachchi, resigned his post of Minister for Skills and Employment Promotion. He said he did not want to "waste public money" by taking what he said an "unknown ministry."

# Rajapakse keeps finance, defence

23/11 95-9 G. Keenken  
SIMON GARDNER

COLOMBO, NOVEMBER 22

SRI LANKA'S new president, Mahinda Rajapakse, will keep the finance and defence portfolios for himself when he unveils his cabinet later on Tuesday, his media secretary has said.

Rajapakse, the island's former prime minister, has previously held the labour, fisheries and highways portfolios in cabinet, but has never held the post of Finance Minister.

"It is only two posts (he is keeping). One is defence, the other one is finance," said media secretary Chandrapala Liyanage.

However a swearing-in ceremony to appoint Rajapakse's new cabinet was delayed until Wednesday after heavy rains caused flooding that displaced around 20,000 people across the country and he focused on emergency relief measures.

Sri Lanka's bourse plunged nearly 15 per cent between Friday and Monday following Rajapakse's election victory, as markets worried that the is-

land's peace process with the Tamil Tigers would remain stalled and Marxist allies could force the government's hand on economic policy.

But the bourse bounced back, firming nearly 3 per cent on Tuesday. Traders said news Rajapakse would keep the finance ministry had not unduly worried the market.

"There was probably little choice in the selection of the



Finance Minister because the best probably would have been the incumbent, and maybe the president wanted someone who is aligned with him," said Dushyanth Wi-

jayasinghe, head of research at Asia Securities in Colombo.

Former Finance Minister Sarath Amunugama was closely allied to former President Chandrika Kumaratunga and issued a budget just days ahead of last week's election.

Rajapakse said he will draw up a new budget based on his manifesto, which pledged subsidies on goods from milk powder to fertilisers for the rural poor and ruled out privatisation of key state assets. —Reuters

# Ratnasiri Wickremanayake appointed Sri Lankan Premier

New leader holds Sinhala hardline position and hawkish views on the ethnic problem

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, Sri Lanka's Minister for Interior and Buddha Sasana and Deputy Defence Minister in the outgoing Cabinet, was appointed as the new Prime Minister by the President, Mahinda Rajapakse on Monday.

Mr. Wickremanayake (73) succeeds Mr. Rajapakse who resigned from the Premier's position to meet a Constitutional requirement immediately after he was sworn in as President on Saturday. The other Cabinet Ministers have not yet been named.

## JVP non-committal

Mr. Rajapakse's ruling ally, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), has not yet taken a decision on joining the Government. "We will decide later," Vijitha Herath, JVP politburo member told *The Hindu*.

Unlike in India, the Sri Lankan Cabinet is headed by the Executive President, who is both the Head of State and Government and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The role of the Prime Minister is largely nominal, as the President is the head of the executive and determines portfolio allocation and the size of the Cabinet.

Mr. Wickremanayake is a former Prime Minister (August 2000-December 2000)



**OLD ORDER CHANGETH:** Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse (left) swearing in Ratnasiri Wickremanayake as Prime Minister in Colombo on Monday.

— PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

ceded the late Sirimavo Bandaranaike after she resigned from the position at the age of 84. He is a senior vice-president of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

The new Prime Minister entered politics in 1960 elected from Horana in southern Sri Lanka, representing the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna. In 1970 he was appointed as the Deputy Minister for Justice. The President Mahinda Rajapakse is also from Horana.

taken at the last-minute, as his name did not figure in political circles until Sunday night.

Before the election, the SLFP had named Anura Bandaranaike, the brother of the outgoing President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, as its choice for the position of the Prime Minister if Mr. Rajapakse was elected President.

However, Mr. Bandaranaike did not actively campaign for Mr. Rajapakse citing disagreement over the latter's poll-pact with the JVP and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU). According to party sources, this weighed against Mr. Bandaranaike being named Prime Minister.

After Mr. Rajapakse's victory, several other names were doing the rounds, including that of D.M. Jayaratne, the general secretary of the People's Alliance.

## Parliament address

The newly-elected President, Mr. Rajapakse is scheduled to address the 225-member Parliament on November 25 during which he would outline his Government's policy, political sources said.

A notification proroguing the Parliament is expected later tonight.

This is to enable Mr. Rajapakse make his Statement of Government Policy in the House at the commencement of Parliamentary session when it reconvenes on Friday.



# Challenges before President Rajapakse

V.S. Sambandan

**A** POLARISED Sri Lankan electorate has spoken. On November 18, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse won the Presidency with a mandate that simultaneously reiterates and challenges a number of stereotypes. Even the Tamil "boycott" in the North-East, is a critical non-mandate of sorts that the new President has to factor in as he commences charting the roadmap for what he describes as a "new Sri Lanka."

First things first: the starting point for the winner is to interpret his mandate. This verdict, almost a political photo-finish, is somewhat tricky to interpret. It represents the best possible under the circumstances. The multi-ethnic electorate has neither resoundingly endorsed the call for entrenching a majoritarian state nor has it given a resigned nod for peace at any cost.

Mr. Rajapakse's victory with the narrowest margin in the history of elections for an Executive President makes it clear there is no overwhelming support for majoritarianism of the variety advocated by the President's allies, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU).

The message from the north-eastern Tamil "boycott," evidently on the *diktat* of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), is clear. From the Tigers' point of view, the conflict is one best fought along clearly demarcated lines of majority and minority nationalisms.

The third element of the mandate is the overwhelming endorsement for Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe in electoral divisions where the minorities — Sri Lankan Tamils, Muslims, and Plantation Tamils — were in large numbers. Equally important is that the majority Sinhala community remains near-equally divided between the unitarist Mr. Rajapakse and the federalist Mr. Wickremesinghe. This is a critical

*S. Lanka*  
Mahinda Rajapakse, in his self-defined role of architect of a "new Sri Lanka," has to balance several contradictions. These arise from the polarised mandate and his political allies.

marker for the new President.

A political leader with vast experience in the dynamics of mass-mobilisation, Mr. Rajapakse is now in a setting appropriate for his transformation into a statesman. Central to his successful tenure at the helm of the Sri Lankan state will be how effectively and painlessly he balances the strong calls by his allies for entrenching a majoritarian state with the equally vocal demand for power-sharing by the minorities. At a glance, the mandate can be interpreted as a politically-convenient consent for a strong Sinhala-nationalist line, which includes an anti-West, particularly anti-Norway, rhetoric. A statesman's perspective would factor in the 48.43 per cent opinion that runs entirely to the contrary.

The direction the Sri Lankan state moves in will depend almost entirely on how true the new President stays to his commitment given to the nation at his inaugural. "From now on Mahinda Rajapakse as President will not be a leader that belongs exclusively to any single party or group. I will not discriminate on party, colour and racial or religious grounds."

Central to Mr. Rajapakse's success in his self-defined role of architect of a "new Sri Lanka" is how he balances the several contradictions that arise from the polarised mandate and his political allies. Needless to say, his poll-pact with the JVP and the JHU vastly enabled him to dent pocketboroughs of Mr. Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP).

The dynamics of ethnic reconciliation and the President's commitment at his inaugural, however, necessitate a seamless recalibration that balances his vision for Sri Lanka and the agenda of his political allies. Among the several ways out could be a well-timed Parliamentary poll. This, though, could be an expensive exercise for a poll-weary nation and, more importantly, a political risk for the ruling party given the small lead secured in the Presidential election.

The opening move for Mr. Rajapakse would be to ensure the early commencement of the proposed inclusive talks with "all those who have a stake in the solution of the national question." On several counts, Mr. Rajapakse has the necessary ingredients for his "new Sri Lanka" already set out by the political leadership of the past 11 years — his predecessor Chandrika Kumaratunga and Mr. Wickremesinghe. For, despite political differences, Ms. Kumaratunga and Mr. Wickremesinghe had made the Sinhala majority aware of the need for political power-sharing. The objections are largely from the extremes of Sinhala polity based on the fear that federalism equals secession.

The polarised electorate, with the unitarists narrowly nudging out the federalists, is another factor Mr. Rajapakse would consider during his proposed consensus talks. More so given the need to present an acceptable southern position that will enable him to re-start talks with the Tigers.

Another challenge for Mr. Rajapakse is to re-define the existing conflict-resolution parameters — the role of the facilitator, Norway, the ceasefire agreement and its monitoring mechanism.

The new President's "appeal to India and other friendly Asian neighbours as well as the international community," to help Sri Lanka reach "an honourable peace," could be a sign of things to come. However, the Rajapakse Presidency is still in its infancy and it is too early for it to elaborate on so sensitive and emotional an issue.

Critical to his impending negotiations with the LTTE would be how Mr. Rajapakse handles his electoral allies and foes as well as the tact with which he crafts a 'southern consensus' that cannot be portrayed internationally by the Tigers as one that "falls short of Tamil aspirations." The November 27 "Heroes Day" speech by the LTTE leader is one to be watched for parameters to be set by the Tigers for their engagement with Sri Lanka's new President.

With regard to conflict resolution, Mr. Rajapakse's mandate is one best described in his own phrase — "for an honourable peace."

## Economic issues

Silencing the guns of war, however, is meaningless unless bayonets melt into ploughs. Hence, it is equally important for Mr. Rajapakse to ensure economic development flows to the under-developed regions across the country. Massive development of the strife-torn districts of the North-East, which lag behind by decades, is the crying need of the hour.

Outside the North-East, the poll result clearly indicates the preference for Mr. Rajapakse in the under-developed regions and among sections that have little say in economic dynamics. The overwhelming endorsement of Mr. Rajapakse in rural pockets has more to do with the basic realities of economic hardship than intangible constructs such as the structure of a state — be it unitary or federal. The election of Mr. Rajapakse to the highest political office also implies the continuity of a left-of-centre political and economic thinking, but tempered by the times.

It is such a well-calibrated interpretation of mandate that the new President will have to take to the drawing board when he charts out his project for a "new Sri Lanka."

Creating the Sri Lanka of President Rajapakse's aspirations necessarily requires the discarding of several existing moulds: majority apprehensions over political power-sharing, mutual distrust between the ethnic groups, festering wounds of ethnic discord, skewed economic development, and, above all, the bitter bipartisan politics of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the UNP.

The "new Sri Lanka" could be built on several positive island-wide constructs: the mutually-felt need for honourable ethnic co-existence, vast social similarities and, above all, the overarching attribute of a *joie de vivre* that is so essentially Sri Lankan. Now is indeed the time to accentuate the similarities and submerge differences among the Sri Lankan peoples.

President Rajapakse has certain distinct advantages compared to his predecessors. These include the longest spell of peace between the state and rebel armies, an evolving economy, and a mindset that is amenable to change. He also faces the challenge of an entrenched rebel group, holding territory and staking claim to a *de facto* state.

In a nation that is still undergoing a painful socio-economic and political churning process, President Rajapakse made his decisive political ascent after challenging foes across the political spectrum. Now that he is vested with vast constitutional authority, backed by the inherent qualities of a mass-leader, the Sri Lankan nation looks forward to him making good on the twin promises he made at his inaugural: ushering in an honourable peace, and emerging as an inclusive, non-discriminatory leader of a new Sri Lanka.

THE HINDU

21 NOV 2005



# I am willing to hold direct talks with LTTE, says Rajapakse

S. Lanka  
11/12  
27/11

President to usher in a "new Sri Lanka"; seeks international help

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's new President, Mahinda Rajapakse, on Saturday said he was willing to "engage in direct talks" with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and adopt an inclusive approach to find an "honourable solution" to the decades long separatist crisis.

He also promised to usher in a "new Sri Lanka," in which he was "not the master, but the trustee of the country."

Mr. Rajapakse was sworn in as the President by Chief Justice Sarath N. Silva, at 1.20 p.m. here on Saturday. Speaker W.J. M. Lokubandara, Cabinet Ministers, and leaders from political parties allied to Mr. Rajapakse attended the ceremony.

After the swearing-in, Mr. Rajapakse set a dove free into the skies, symbolising his desire for peace. "War is not my method. I will initiate a new round of talks with all those who have a stake in the solution to the national question," he said.

In his first speech as President, Mr. Rajapakse emphasised the importance of achieving an honourable peace and appealed to "India and other friendly Asian neighbours as well as to the international community" to "assist" Sri Lanka "in reaching an honourable peace." The inaugural speech also gave broad indications of the imminent changes in his approach to conflict resolution.

On peace talks with the LTTE, he said he would take steps to accommodate "due representation of the interests of both the north and the south in the talks." The current "bi-lateral approach to peace" (between Colombo



**DONNING THE MANTLE:** Sri Lanka's fifth executive President Mahinda Rajapakse taking the oath in the presence of Chief Justice Sarath N. Silva in Colombo on Saturday. - PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

and the LTTE) would be replaced with "a multi-party approach." He said his Government would "revise and update the existing ceasefire to overcome its defects."

## Special institution

Mr. Rajapakse also said he would set up a "special institution" under his supervision to rebuild tsunami-devastated areas, including those in the Tamil-majority north and east, parts of which are under LTTE control.

For growth and development,

Mr. Rajapakse said he would steer "a macro-economic policy that ensures social justice while opening ample opportunities for the development of the individual with the objective of building a new economy that could take Sri Lanka to a strong position in the world economy."

Mr. Rajapakse — whose main allies included the Jathika Hela Urumaya, a party comprising Buddhist monks — also dispelled apprehensions of religious minorities. "There will be no state interference in religious affairs. The state has enough work."

The current facilitator, Norway, India, Japan and the European Union were among the first countries to congratulate the new President.

In his letter to Mr. Rajapakse, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed confidence that the two countries would "continue to work together in the spirit of co-operation and good neighbourliness that characterises our bilateral relations to promote good relations and understanding."

Norwegian Minister for International Co-operation Erik Sol-

heim said Oslo "looks forward to continuing our close co-operation with the new President and the Government of Sri Lanka in a wide range of areas, including support for efforts to achieve lasting peace that inspires confidence in all Sri Lankans."

The Japanese Government "strongly hopes" that the peace process "will be invigorated with a view to achieving a negotiated settlement to the conflict."

The E.U. said it would "continue to support the people of Sri Lanka and their new President."

# Lanka President balances talks, truce with LTTE

PETER APPS  
COLOMBO | NOVEMBER 19

NEW SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapakse was sworn in on Saturday. He said that he would talk to Tamil Tiger rebels but that he wanted to review a three-year-old ceasefire agreement and that militant killings must stop. "I would like to reiterate my desire to engage in direct talks with the LTTE," he said. "I want to achieve an honourable peace."

"The government is ready to review the ceasefire agreement," he said, adding that, "This process can start as soon as the relevant parties are ready. Human rights violations, such as child abduction and murder, that are happening despite the ceasefire must come to an end."

According to a rebel transcript on Saturday, V Balakumaran, a senior Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger rebel said that the election of hardline Mahinda Rajapakse as the island's new President had paved the way for a final rebel victory. "Mahinda Rajapakse's victory at the presidential election has provided the opportunity for Tamil Eelam National Leader V Prabhakaran's victory," Balakumaran told the Tigers' radio station on Friday.

Balakumaran said the election bought back memo-



Rajapakse waves after the swearing-in ceremony in Colombo on Saturday

ries of the 1956 election victory of Sri Lanka Freedom Party leader S W R D Bandaranaike, or "Banda", whom they blame for kick-starting ethnic Sinhalese violence against them that led to eventual war. "It is because of 1956 the seeds of the Tamil freedom struggle were sown," he said. "It is true that Banda is the creator of Prabhakaran. Similarly Mahinda's victory is going to pave the way for Prabhakaran's victory. Banda started it. Mahinda Banda is going to end it." — Reuters

# Curtains on another dynasty

AGENCE France-Presse  
Colombo, November 19

SRI LANKA'S President Chandrika Kumaratunga relinquished office on Saturday, ending 11 turbulent years in power and bringing down the curtain on the Bandaranaike dynasty. She came to power in 1994 promising to abolish the all-powerful presidency but in the end fought and lost a legal battle to cling to the office for a further year.

During her time in power, the convent-educated Kumaratunga presided over a tortuous peace process with the rebel Tamil Tigers whose three-decade campaign for a homeland has cost more than 60,000 lives.

In addition, during the final year of her rule, she has had to grapple with the political, economic and human consequences of the tsunami last December that killed 31,000 people along Sri Lanka's palm-fringed coasts.

The daughter of two prime ministers — her mother Sirima Bandaranaike was the world's first woman prime minister — Kumaratunga grew up living and breathing politics. She once told an interviewer that running the country was like a "family business".

But the "family business" has been marked by tragedy. Her prime minister father, Solomon Bandaranaike, was killed by a Buddhist monk in Sep-



**Chandrika Kumaratunga**  
*Sri Lankan President from 1994-2005*

tember 1959 while she was widowed with two children after a Marxist gunman assassinated her actor-turned-politician husband, Vijaya Kumaratunga, in February 1988.

She escaped an assassination bid in December 1999 during a presidential election rally here. She lost her right eye, but went on to win the presidency for a second and final term that ended on Saturday. "We have suffered enough as a result of politics," she said after winning the presidency in 1994. "I don't want to pass it down to another

generation."

She pledged to abolish the presidency within six months and revert the country to a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy that her parents had supported.

But that promise soon fell by the way side as Kumaratunga settled in to use extensive powers to out manoeuvre her political opponents, but failed to tame the Tiger rebels.

In 1994, Sri Lanka's minority Tamils had hoped she could end the separatist war. But after failing to talk peace with the LTTE, she unleashed a "war for peace" policy and in 1995 waged a massive military offensive against the rebels. The rebels blamed her for causing massive damage to Tamil-dominated areas and called her the "mother of destruction".

Dubbed by loyalists, however, as Sri Lanka's "daughter of destiny," Kumaratunga was criticised during her career for her political somersaults. She also promised to halt privatisation but presided over the biggest sale of state assets, including telecommunications, the port and a host of other utilities.

Many loyalists believe she will now lose her grip on the family's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) as Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse takes over the country as well as the party.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2005

# President Mahinda Rajapakse



The election of Mahinda Rajapakse as Sri Lanka's seventh President heralds a new chapter in the country's troubled history. The paradoxical factors behind his hard-worked victory offer a hint about how the plot may unfold. This was the closest contest since Sri Lanka adopted the presidential form of government in 1978 — Mr. Rajapakse polled 50.29 per cent of the votes, barely two percentage points more than United National Party leader Ranil Wickremesinghe. A veteran politician of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, hailed as the 'Lion of the South' for his popularity among the majority Sinhalese of southern Sri Lanka, Mr. Rajapakse started with an arithmetic and political advantage over his rival by forging an alliance with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. During the campaign, he leant heavily on its unique combination of radical politics and rural Sinhala appeal. But, in the final analysis, it was the non-participation of a large section of voters, ensured by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, that made the winning difference. To a large extent, Tamil voters in the North-East obeyed its thinly veiled order to boycott the elections. In Jaffna district, for instance, just 8525 of 701,938 registered voters (not all of them actually live there) turned out compared with 305,259 in the 2004 parliamentary election. This cost Mr. Wickremesinghe heavy — where Tamil and Muslim voters were able to exercise their franchise, including in the North-East, they voted overwhelmingly for him.

But what might have been is an academic issue now. What is not is the challenge the LTTE has thrown at President-elect Rajapakse. The LTTE, it is quite clear, sees its interest in helping usher in an era of hardline Sinhala politics, which will help it justify the pursuit of Eelam and enable it to regain a measure of international sympathy for its project of dividing Sri Lanka. The LTTE has hatched this cynical game plan exploiting the stand of the newly elected President, and his close ally, the JVP, against the 2002 ceasefire (as a "short-sighted" move that did not take the nation into confidence), and their more general pronouncements against federalism as a lasting solution to the conflict. Mr. Rajapakse starts out with extremely weak support among the country's minorities and the LTTE hopes to exploit this too. The first task before President Rajapakse must be to reach out to the Tamil and Muslim minorities, and to Mr. Wickremesinghe's voters, and assure them that he intends to work towards a just solution that will meet their aspirations within a united Sri Lanka. In his manifesto, he promised to adopt a "fresh approach" to the stalemated peace process with the LTTE based on the premises of "undivided country, a national consensus, and an honourable peace." Given the nature of his mandate, the margin of his victory, and the complexity of the national question, the road from here on will not be easy. But then, no Sri Lankan presidency has been a bed of roses.

THE HINDU

# Rajapakse elected President

19/11 Sri Lanka HD-1

## Defeats Wickremesinghe by a margin of 1.8-lakh votes, calls it a victory for peace

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse was on Friday declared elected as the island-nation's fifth Executive President.

Mr. Rajapakse of the United People's Freedom Alliance, who is to be sworn in on Saturday, told journalists that "this is a victory for peace and I stand by that."

Mr. Rajapakse was elected to the highest political office on his 60th birthday. He defeated Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party in the poll held on Thursday. The election was closely fought with Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe each winning 11 of the 22 electoral districts.

In an election which had a 73.74 per cent turnout from the 13,327,160 registered voters, Mr. Rajapakse polled 4,887,152 votes winning over Mr. Wickremesinghe (4,706,366 votes), with a lead of 1,80,786 votes.

Mr. Rajapakse secured 50.29 per cent of the valid votes cast, crossing the legally required 50 per cent mark by a margin of 28,632 votes. Mr. Wickremesinghe polled 48.43 per cent.

### UNP request rejected

Citing the "extremely narrow margin," the UNP had requested Commissioner of Elections Dayananda Dissanayake to exercise his "statutory power for a re-poll." The request, however, was turned down and Mr. Dissanayake declared Mr. Rajapakse elected shortly after 1.30 p.m.

The UNP, in a statement said, "no candidate has a mandate" as "hundreds and thousands of voters" who were prevented from exercising their franchise in the north, east and south exceeded the victory margin secured by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Rajapakse established an early lead. In most electoral divi-

sions the contest was close. For instance, Mr. Rajapakse won the Beruwala electoral division on the south-western coast by just 12 votes.

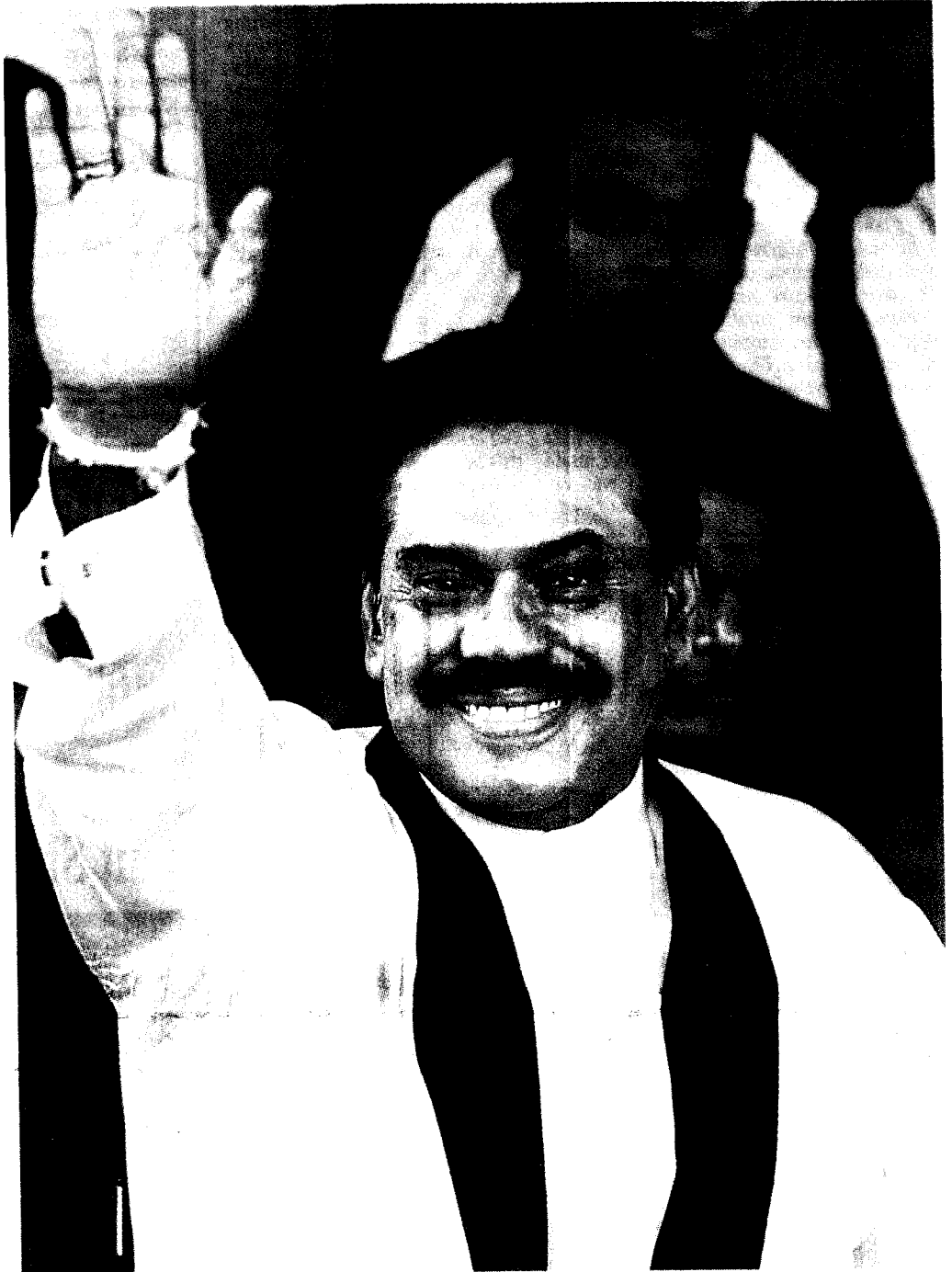
Mr. Rajapakse's victory was largely a result of a polarised Sinhalese electorate and the "boycott" by Tamil voters in the northern and eastern districts. While Mr. Rajapakse scored well in Sinhalese majority districts, Mr. Wickremesinghe's successes were from districts that had a mix of the three main communities — Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils — or those in which the minority Tamils and Muslims were strong.

The President-elect's jubilant supporters set off firecrackers and welcomed a beaming Mr. Rajapakse as he arrived at the office of the Commissioner of Elections for the result to be declared.

### "Setback to peace process"

At a press conference after the results were announced, Mr. Wickremesinghe — a former Prime Minister who signed the 2002 ceasefire agreement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) — described the verdict as "a setback to the peace process." The election result reflected "a very polarised society, without a clear mandate." The country, he said, was divided into "those who voted for me, for Mahinda, and those who could not vote."

Referring to his campaign, in which he had "always sought a Sri Lankan mandate," Mr. Wickremesinghe said, "Unfortunately, there is no Sri Lankan mandate. It is a divided mandate." On the course ahead for Sri Lanka, he said "a lot of questions arise" and the nation is "headed for a period of uncertainty."



Editorial on Page 10  
More reports on Page 14

**A BIRTHDAY GIFT:** Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, who has won the Presidential election in the island-nation, waves as he comes out of the office of the Election Commission in Colombo. Mr. Rajapakse turned 60 on Friday. — PHOTO: AP

THE HINDU



## জন্মদিনে জয়, প্রেসিডেন্ট হচ্ছেন সমাজতন্ত্রী মহেন্দ্র

কলম্বো, ১৮ নভেম্বর (সংবাদ সংস্থা)— শ্রীলঙ্কার প্রধানমন্ত্রী মহেন্দ্র রাজপক্ষকে আজ তাঁর ৬০ বছরের জন্মদিনে অসাধারণ উপহার দিলেন এই দ্বীপবাসীরা। শ্রীলঙ্কার প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনে সমাজতন্ত্রী 'ব' জ প ক্ষ' কে ই নির্বাচিত করলেন

তাঁরা। হাড্ডাহাড্ড লড়াইয়ে রাজপক্ষ হারিয়েছেন দক্ষিণপন্থী জোটের প্রার্থী রনিল বিক্রমসিংহকে। 'পান পাতা' চিহ্ন নিয়ে ইউনাইটেড পিপলস ফ্রন্ডম অ্যালায়েন্সের প্রার্থী রাজপক্ষ পেয়েছেন ৪৮ লক্ষ ৮০ হাজারের বেশি ভোট। 'হাতি' প্রতীক চিহ্নে ইউনাইটেড ন্যাশনাল পার্টি নেতৃত্বাধীন জোটের প্রার্থী বিক্রমসিংহ পেয়েছেন ৪৬ লক্ষ ৯০ হাজার ভোট। অন্যান্য ১১ প্রার্থী এঁদের ধারেকাছে আসেননি। রাজপক্ষকে সমর্থন করেছিল মার্কসবাদী দল 'জনতা বিমুক্তি পেরামুনা'। ফলাফল সরকারিভাবে ঘোষণা করে শ্রীলঙ্কার নির্বাচন কমিশনার দয়ানন্দ দিশানায়ক জানান, নির্বাচনী আইন অনুযায়ী প্রধানমন্ত্রী রাজপক্ষ দ্বীপরাষ্ট্রের প্রেসিডেন্ট পদাধিকারী। পর পর দুবার প্রেসিডেন্ট পদে থাকায় চন্দ্রিকা কুমারতুঙ্গার মেয়াদ শেষ হয়েছে। শ্রীলঙ্কার সংবিধান অনুযায়ী দু' সপ্তাহের মধ্যে মহেন্দ্র রাজপক্ষ প্রেসিডেন্ট পদে শপথ নেবেন। তখনই ক্ষমতা ছাড়বেন চন্দ্রিকা। চন্দ্রিকার ইউ পি এফ এ দলেরই নেতা রাজপক্ষ। তরুণ বয়সে কয়েকটি সিংহলি চলচ্চিত্রে অভিনয় করেছেন তিনি। আইনজীবীর পেশাতেও ছিলেন কিছুকাল। আজ ভোট ফলাফল ঘোষণার পরই বিরোধী প্রার্থী রনিল বিক্রমসিংহের দল ইউনাইটেড ন্যাশনাল পার্টি পুনর্নির্বাচনের দাবি তুলেছে। জঙ্গি তামিল সংগঠন

এল টি টি ই ভোট বয়কটের ডাক দেওয়ায় তামিল অধ্যুষিত উত্তর শ্রীলঙ্কায় গতকালের ভোটে গণবয়কটই ঘটে যায়। পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কাতেও ভোটের হার সামান্য। ওই যুক্তি দেখিয়েই আবার ভোটের দাবিতে রনিলের দল সরব। গতকাল ভোটের সময় হিংসা-হাঙ্গামাও ঘটেছে, বিশেষত পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কায়। পুলিশ জানিয়েছে গতকাল পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কায় বুধে ও অন্যত্র অন্তত ৭টি বোমা, গ্রেনেড আক্রমণ হয়েছে। দুই তামিল জঙ্গি ও এক সিংহলি ভোটার নিহত হয়েছেন। ১৭ জন আহত। আজও পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কা থেকে গণ্ডগোলের খবর পাওয়া গেছে। সেখানকার আমপাড়া জেলার আন্ধারাইপট্টু শহরে আজ সকালে একটি মসজিদে 'নামাজীদের ভিড়ের মধ্যে' বোমা ছোঁড়ে একদল দুষ্কৃতী। প্রবর্তনায় অন্তত ৪ জন মারা গেছেন, ২৫ জন আহত হয়েছেন বলে শ্রীলঙ্কা পুলিশ জানিয়েছে। ভোট ফলাফল থেকে দেখা যাচ্ছে বিরোধী প্রার্থী রনিল বিক্রমসিংহ কলম্বো, বার্ডিকালোয়া, ত্রিকোমালি শহরাঞ্চলে বেশি ভোট পেয়েছেন। কিন্তু তাঁকে গ্রামের ভোটে টেকা দিয়েছেন মহেন্দ্র রাজপক্ষ। পোলমারুয়া, গালে, মোমারাগালা, হামবানটোটা, মাতারার কৃষক, চা বাগান কর্মীরা ও মৎস্যজীবীরা ভোট দিয়েছেন রাজপক্ষকেই। মাত্র ২৪ বছর বয়সেই ১৯৭০ সালে হামবানটোটা অঞ্চল থেকে সাংসদ পদে নির্বাচিত হন রাজপক্ষ। দ্বীপরাষ্ট্রের সর্বকনিষ্ঠ সাংসদ। ওই অঞ্চল থেকেই তাঁর বাবা ডি এ রাজপক্ষ সাংসদ ছিলেন ১৯৪৭ থেকে ১৯৬৫ পর্যন্ত। ওই অঞ্চলে চাষী ও ধীবরদের কাছে 'ঘরের ছেলে' হিসেবেই বিবেচিত হন মহেন্দ্র রাজপক্ষ। রাজনৈতিক নীতি আদর্শে তিনি সমাজতন্ত্রী, বামপন্থীদের অতি ঘনিষ্ঠ। উত্তর ও পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কায় এল টি টি ই-র সঙ্গে শান্তি প্রয়াসে তিনি আগ্রহী। কিন্তু জঙ্গিরা হিংসার পথ নিলে কঠোর ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ারও পক্ষপাতী তিনি। ভারতের সঙ্গে সুসম্পর্ক রাখার ব্যাপারেও তিনি দৃঢ় বিশ্বাসী। এমনকি তিনি মনে করেন, তামিল জঙ্গি সমস্যা সমাধানে ইউরোপের কোনও দেশের বদলে ভারতের ভূমিকাই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হতে পারে। এক সময় রাজপক্ষ ছিলেন চলচ্চিত্র জগতে। বিয়ে করেছেন প্রাক্তন শ্রীলঙ্কা সুন্দরী শ্রীরানীকে। ওঁদের তিনটি ছেলে। তিন জনই স্কুলে পড়ে।

The New York Times

# International



NYTimes.com Go to a Section

SEARCH SPONSORED BY SEARCH



NYT Since 1981

Search

International Home

Africa

Americas

Asia Pacific

## Sri Lanka Votes, Torn by War and Tsunami

By SOMINI SENGUPTA

Published: November 18, 2005

*Sri Lanka*

E-Mail This

Printer-Friendly

Reprints

Save Article

*18/11/2005*

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Nov. 17 - Sri Lankans voted for a president on Thursday, in a race that came to represent a stark choice for a nation battered by more than two decades of war: which way lies peace and prosperity?



Saurabh Das/Associated Press  
A Tamil in Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka had indelible ink applied to his hand before voting for president.

The road maps voters were offered could not have been more different. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, 59, a veteran leftist who has joined hands with Sinhalese nationalists, proposes greater nationalization of the economy and rejects sharing power with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, an ethnic separatist movement that runs a quasi state in the north.

His chief opponent, Ranil Wickremesinghe, 56, is a former prime minister who is known as a free-market advocate and the architect of a peace deal with the Tamil guerrilla group.

[On Friday, Mr. Rajapakse claimed victory based on a partial count, Reuters reported.]

Official results are expected on Friday.

The Elections Department estimated the turnout to be as high as 75 percent among the 13.3 million voters, but there were no polling places inside guerrilla-held territory, and those in Jaffna, the largest town where the Tamils predominate, were deserted.

The Tamil Tigers did not call a formal boycott, but election monitors said the group's supporters had sought to dissuade fellow Tamils, who make up nearly 20 percent of the population, from voting. The Sinhalese make up more than 70 percent.

No matter who wins the presidential contest, there is already one casualty. The credibility of a cease-fire between the government and the rebels, brokered by Norway in 2002, has plummeted in recent months. Dissident Tamil politicians have fallen prey to assassins' bullets, and rival Tamil armed factions in the east are fighting one another in broad daylight.

The death toll in the conflict, which began in 1983, is more than 60,000. The Norwegian officials who monitor the cease-fire have documented nearly 200 killings in the first 10 months of this year, more than three times last year's number. Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was killed in August, and while they deny the charge, the Tamil Tigers have been accused in his death.

Peace talks stalled more than two years ago. Whatever hopes for reconciliation had been fostered by the tsunami last December, which killed more than 30,000 people in Sri Lanka, have since been crushed. Even a deal to share reconstruction funds fell apart earlier this year.

"My husband is a cynic," Padmini Nanayakkara, 74, said Thursday morning as she stepped out of a polling place here in the capital. "He'll tell you it doesn't make any difference."

As if on cue, her husband, Vesak, 85, piped in: "Nobody can do anything in this country. It's gone to the dogs."

Mrs. Nanayakkara picked up where she left off. "I think it's a critical election," she said. "If you go to war again, the country will be really destroyed."

Shaz Muhammad, 28, declared Thursday's vote to be the last chance for his country's politicians. "This is my last," he said. "I'm fed up with elections. It's a crucial one; I thought I better vote this time. It's peace or war this time." He said he had voted for Mr. Wickremesinghe.

A few minutes later, a supporter of Mr. Rajapakse walked out of the voting booth and dismissed such talk as fear-mongering. Y. G. Banda, 68, rejected Mr. Wickremesinghe as the representative of "an aristocratic party" and said he could not be trusted to bring a swift peace.

Victory may swing in large part on the Tamils and their ability to vote. But preliminary estimates from the Tamil belts of the north and east looked bleak. Where polling places were erected, on the outskirts of Tamil Tiger country, tires were burned on the roads in



what seemed to be an attempt to keep voters away.

"An almost total absence of participation in the polls and an atmosphere of violence and intimidation in much of the north and east have significantly affected these elections," said People's Action for Free and Fair Elections, an independent group that stationed poll monitors across the country. "It has compromised the democratic process and institutions."

There were grenade attacks on the eve of election day in Jaffna and the restive eastern town of Batticaloa. A deputy election commissioner, W. P. Sumanasiri, said late Thursday night that turnout among Jaffna's 702,000 voters was well below 1 percent.

The winner of the election will shape the direction of negotiations with the insurgents. "There is a constituency in the country, among the Sinhalese community in particular, that has concerns, fears, doubts about power-sharing," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Center for Policy Alternatives, a research and advocacy organization here. "What Rajapakse is doing is tapping into those fears."

But a vote for Mr. Rajapakse should not be read as a nod to war, some have said. "The Sinhalese are cautious and conservative," Nilan Fernando, the country representative for the Asia Foundation, argued. "They want a strong man as president," he said, but "they certainly don't want a resumption of war. They want peace talks to resume."

Mr. Rajapakse has promised voters he will revise the 2002 peace accord and rejected giving power to the Tamil rebels. Questions remain whether Mr. Rajapakse will soften his position if elected, to avoid a full-scale resumption of the civil war, and whether the Tigers would use a victory by him to justify intransigence of their own. A breakaway Tamil faction whose forces operate in the government-controlled east has blessed Mr. Rajapakse's bid.

"It has to be an honorable peace," Mr. Rajapakse said after casting his ballot, The Associated Press reported.

As for Mr. Wickremesinghe, his strengths are his promises to revitalize the economy and his role as a conciliator, but his greatest liability may be that many Sinhalese feel that he was too lenient with the Tigers while he was prime minister. Tamil voters are critical to his chances, so he would be hurt by a weak turnout among them.

**Next Article in International (14 of 15) >**

**Order an Online Edition of The NY Times & Read at Your Leisure**

# Boycott mars Sri Lanka election

P K Balachandran

Colombo, November 17

*Sri Lanka*  
*11-17-1978*

BOMB BLASTS and a call for boycott by the LTTE had led to low polling by North Eastern Tamils in the Sri Lankan presidential election on Thursday.

No official estimates of voting in the Tamil areas were available till evening, but indications were that only a fraction of the around 700,000 Tamil votes in that area was cast.

But outside the North East, in the Sinhala-majority areas, about 75 per cent of the electorate had voted by closing time, top Election Commission official Rasika Peiris said. Polling here was peaceful, he said. The majority Sinhala and the minority Muslims had been gung ho about the election, in contrast to the Tamils.

According to unofficial sources, polling was nil in areas directly controlled by the LTTE, both in the North and the East.

In Jaffna district in the North, only 1012 votes were cast, according to a district official. This was partly because there was sizeable support for the LTTE there and partly because of violence on Wednesday. A resident said that he had heard explosions and gunshots in the night.

The LTTE had called for a boycott of the election since none of the candidates had given any indication of solving the half-a-century-old Tamil question.

In other districts of the North, like Mannar and Vavuniya, where the LTTE's writ does not run the way it does in Jaffna, polling was much better, but fear of violence kept the bulk of the Tamil voters away, sources said. In the Eastern districts, the situation was better. According to local politicians, more Tamils came out to vote than expected. But in the LTTE-controlled areas, voting was nil.

One Batticaloa politician said that up to 30% of the Tamils in the government held areas would have voted. In Amparai district also, many Tamils had voted. But everywhere, the bulk of the community chose to stay at home, probably because of the violence. Three people were killed and three Sri Lanka Army personnel were injured in three cases of shooting and three grenade attacks in Batticaloa district on Wednesday. In Valaichenai in Batticalao district, an ex-Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) militant, S. Rajmohan, was killed. In Kalmunai, a 44-year-old Muslim businessman, Haji Ahmed Lebbe, was killed. In a place on the Batticaloa-Polonnaruwa border, a Sinhala Home Guard was killed and his colleague was injured in a grenade attack. In Irudayapuram, three army men and a policeman were injured in a grenade attack.

# Elections and a nation at the crossroads

V.S. Sambandan

**S**RI LANKA'S 13.32 million voters have a vital task to perform on November 17. The fifth Presidential election is about much more than determining whether Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse or Opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe will be at the helm of affairs in the conflict-scarred island-nation for the next six years. An entire nation is at the crossroads.

At stake are several vital components that define Sri Lanka as a nation-state. The most crucial issue is whether the outgoing President, Chandrika Kumaratunga's legacy of a quest for peace through devolution of power to the regions will survive. Ms. Kumaratunga, as the first Sri Lankan head of state to acknowledge that the Tamils had grievances that had to be met, changed the discourse of the ethnic conflict from the earlier majoritarian viewpoint. Through her constant and emphatic reiteration that Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious country, she made a dent in the majoritarian mindset and checked the destructive rhetoric of the past.

The essence of the Kumaratunga peace package was that Sri Lanka would have to metamorphose from a majoritarian unitary state to one that acknowledged the legitimate political grievances of the ethnic minorities. This, as the draft constitutions proposed by her made clear, would have to be through changing the unitary state to one that is a "Union of Regions."

In effect, President Kumaratunga changed not just the state's approach to conflict resolution, but also that of her Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which was a party that saw the introduction of majoritarian projects such as

Beyond the rhetoric, Sri Lanka's future depends on how the victor in today's presidential election interprets the mandate.

'Sinhala Only' and standardisation into the Sri Lankan state.

The reversal of Ms. Kumaratunga's federalist paradigm by the SLFP's Presidential candidate, Mr. Rajapakse — through his poll pacts with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) — in effect implies a possible re-entrenchment of the unitarists.

Coincidentally, in a curious turn, the onus of ushering in federalism now rests largely on Mr. Wickremesinghe and his United National Party (UNP) and its allies. To a large extent, it was the politics between the SLFP and the UNP that aborted the federalist project during Ms. Kumaratunga's 11 years as President. It could well be the time for politics of compulsion for the main two parties — the SLFP and the UNP — to close ranks if Ms. Kumaratunga's federalist project is to be carried forward. That both the main Presidential aspirants, Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe, have promised a consensual approach to the peace process provides the setting for the working of a bipartisan approach.

The November 17 election is also to be seen as a reality check on the popular acceptance of the concept of federalism. In a multi-ethnic democracy such as Sri Lanka, where the largest number of voters are Sinhalese, a literal interpretation of the term "majority" runs the risk of alienating substantial sections of the people, thereby re-entrenching a majoritarian viewpoint. A more

nuanced approach, which factors in the sensitivities of various ethnicities in the conflict resolution process, will be the first priority of the new President.

Sri Lanka's singular political evolution since the 1990s was the mainstreaming of the JVP, which had led two unsuccessful insurgencies against the state. The mainstreaming of the JVP is evident from its numerical rise in the 225 member-strong Parliament over the years. Critics of the JVP say that other than discarding its violent face, it remains unchanged. However, it is no mean task that the JVP, which once violently opposed Parliamentary democracy, is now vying for high stakes through elections. Herein is the next legacy of the Kumaratunga Presidency — ushering in the human face of the state. While the Premadasa-led UNP Government picked out the JVP and its supporters resulting in the elimination of its leadership, it was during Ms. Kumaratunga's governments that the mainstreaming of the JVP occurred. How much the JVP has changed is now an issue that is largely within the parameters of the democratic discourse.

The unfinished task of mainstreaming the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) remains. The tenor of Sri Lanka's leadership for the next six years will determine the manner in which this most serious challenge is addressed.

The developments since the signing of the February 2002 ceasefire agreement — the Oslo

communiqué in which the Government and the rebels agreed to explore federal models, the stalemate since the LTTE's unilateral pullout in 2003, the consequences of the revolt within the LTTE, the LTTE's proposals for an interim self-governing authority and President Kumaratunga's Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) — are significant markers that could help find a way out of the current deadlock.

From the conflict-resolution viewpoint, the Presidential election is also an electoral battle between entrenchment of the unitary, and by implication, a majoritarian state, and staying the course on power-sharing leading to federalism in whatever form, resulting in a wider, inclusive state.

There are several external examples to draw from to chart a non-unitarist statute for Sri Lanka. However, the more any proposed change is grounded on home-grown experience, the stronger are its chances for acceptance and success. Here again the promise of a consensual approach made by Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe provides some scope for optimism and the Kumaratunga draft constitution a basis for further elaboration.

Yet another issue relating to the peace process is the domestic reception to the role played by an external interlocutor. One attribute of Sri Lanka's conflict resolution experience has been a xenophobic streak when it comes to peace-making. This emanates from various groups with varying intensity — be it the fierce, militant opposition to the Indian involvement in the late 1980s or the relatively lower key but still shrill verbal campaigns against the current facilitators Norway. However, a clear trend has been the lowering of the Opposition to an external factor — yet another attribute of the Kumaratunga governments.

As the Prime Minister's main allies — the JVP and the JHU — have minced no words on what they think of the Norwegian facilitation process, the public mandate would also be a sign of things to come. At stake here is whether the path of relatively lowered resistance to an external player would continue or Sri Lanka would relapse into the late 1980s mould of stiff opposition to an "interventionist." Needless to say, there is also the need for discerning between the justifiable opposition to solutions presented through facilitation and any opposition just for the sake of itself.

The aggregation of these inter-linked issues is whether Sri Lanka would prefer to continue on the decade-long path of conflict resolution through reconciliation or would choose to revert to an entrenchment of the pre-1994 position of a majoritarian state. This is one of several moulds that are on test at the Presidential poll.

On the broad socio-economic front, the electoral battle is also seen as one waged between elites and non-elites. The voter Mr. Rajapakse has aimed his campaign at is essentially the common man. In addition to Mr. Rajapakse's left-of-centre political background and his personal approach, his roots lie outside Sri Lanka's traditional ruling mould. Barring the Premadasa presidency, Sri Lankan leaders came from an English-educated, patrician background. Mr. Rajapakse, hailing from the rural south, attempts to break this mould. The base of Mr. Rajapakse's main electoral ally, the JVP, is very much a factor in determining this outcome.

Though relatively lack-lustre, the Sri Lankan election campaign has now ended. It has, however, thrown up several issues that lie beyond the rhetoric. These include the unitary or not debate at one end of the spectrum and cost of living issues at the other end. It is now time for a polarised Sri Lanka to express itself.

More than anything else, it is the interpretation of the popular mandate by the victor — be he Mr. Rajapakse, backed mainly by the majoritarian parties, or Mr. Wickremesinghe, overwhelmingly backed by the minorities — that will determine the direction Sri Lanka moves in.

## CARTOONSCAPE



# Close contest seen as Sri Lanka goes to the polls

Special arrangements made for voters from areas held by LTTE

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka is all set for the fifth presidential election to be held on Thursday. Voting will be held in 10,486 polling stations, covering 22 electoral districts.

Thirteen candidates are in the electoral contest for the highest political office, but the main competition is between Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse (United Peoples' Freedom Alliance) and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe (United National Party). Political observers see a close contest, with the electoral pendulum swinging from one main candidate to the other over the past few weeks.

Special arrangements have been made to enable voters from areas held by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to exercise their franchise at cluster polling booths located in Government-controlled territories.

Commissioner of Elections Dayananda Dissanayake said on Monday he expected an 80 per cent turnout. However, turnout is not clear in the Tamil majority northern and eastern districts following the "disinterest" shown by the LTTE and a virtual boycott called by its front organisations.

"I am not an astrologer," said the Commissioner of Elections when asked about the impact of the LTTE's position. Sri Lanka has 13,327,160 voters, a majority of whom are Sinhalese. Colombo is the largest electoral district with 1.4 million voters, comprising 11.02 per cent of the electorate. Trincomalee, with 2.3 lakh voters (1.79 per cent) is the smallest electoral district.

Among the Tamil-majority northern and eastern districts, Jaffna has 7 lakh registered voters. However, according to the Commissioner of Elections, the actual number of voters residing in Jaffna is much less. At the last poll, there were 2.5 lakh voters from Jaffna,



**POLL SET:** Ballot boxes being transported from a centre to other polling stations in Colombo on Wednesday. - PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

he said. The Vanni district with 2.5 lakh voters, Batticaloa (3.2 lakhs), Amparai (3.96 lakhs) and Trincomalee are the other electoral districts in the north-east.

Early on Wednesday, police erected barricades near polling stations and counting centres as security was strengthened across the island.

The security forces are on standby. The campaign, which concluded on Monday, was by far the most peaceful in recent times.

The total cost of the elections is estimated to be around Rs. 930

million, which was spent for last year's Parliamentary poll also. "Each vote will cost Rs. 75 to cast," said the Commissioner of Elections.

The Sri Lankan President is elected through a preferential vote. Each voter can cast his vote either for just one candidate or mark his preferences for three candidates.

To win the poll, a candidate would have to cross 50 per cent of the valid votes cast.

Otherwise, a second count is held in which the second prefer-

ence votes marked in favour of the two leading candidates is taken into account. The process is repeated for a third count.

According to the Presidential Elections Act, in the event of a tie, the victor is determined by draw of lot. However, all previous elections have been declared elected after the first count.

Counting of votes is scheduled to start in 710 counting stations across the island after polls close on Thursday evening.

The final result is expected by Friday morning.

# RESURGENT BUDDHISM

## LTTE Holds The Key In Lanka Presidential Poll

By SAM RAJAPPA

**T**he Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, not a contestant in the 17 November presidential election in Sri Lanka, by deciding not to support either of the two leading candidates, Mahinda Rajapakse of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and Ranil Wickremasinghe of the United National Party, has indirectly thrown its weight behind the SLFP in the hope of furthering its cause for a separate Tamil Eelam. After a meeting with the political wing of the LTTE, R Sampanthan, leader of the Tamil National Alliance parliamentarians, said the Tamil people had lost all interest in the coming presidential election as their experience over the last five decades had taught them not to trust the leading Sinhala political parties or their leaders.

### Message

While neither the LTTE nor the TNA, benami parliamentary wing of the militant group, had advised the people not to vote, their message to the Tamil people in the north-east is clearly to boycott the election. The LTTE decision is bound to affect the fortunes of Wickremasinghe who was counting on the votes of the Tamil people. Rajapakse, early in his campaign, has sewed up alliances with the radical Janatha Vimukthi Perumana having its base in the rural Sinhala country and the Jathika Hela Urumaya, a party promoted by the Buddhist clergy.

The SLFP was started by SWRD Bandaranaike, father of the present President Chandrika Kumaratunga, on a Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinistic platform. His introduction of Sinhala only as the official language of the country and Buddhism as the state religion had alienated the Tamil community and sowed the seeds of separatism. Although Kumaratunga steered the party away from her father's line and went to the extent of offering a federal solution to solve the ethnic problem, Rajapakse chose to tread the path of SWRD in the hope of riding to power on the Sinhalese vote who constitute 75 per cent of the population.

*The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai*

Kumaratunga, leader of the SLFP and chairperson of the committee that drew up its election manifesto, kept away when it was released in Colombo. It was the first time in the half a century of the party's history that its leader was not present at the time of the release of its manifesto. Not only Kumaratunga, but also her brother and Foreign Minister, Anura Bandaranaike, and general secretary of

acceptance by all the parties mentioned. Our manifesto builds on the Oslo communiqué. The peace process is now approaching a stage where a common ground needs to be created between the UNP and the SLFP, the two largest political parties in Sri Lanka. It is vital that we do not allow the peace process to become the subject of political division. Instead, we should seek to build further upon the plat-



the party, Maithripala Sirisena, also stayed away from the function which was attended by functionaries of the JVP and the JHU. The manifesto said an ultimate solution to the ethnic crisis could only be based on a unitary state. Rajapakse criticised Wickremasinghe for weakening the Sri Lankan military forces by signing a ceasefire agreement with the LTTE.

### Manifesto

Wickremasinghe, in a letter enclosing a copy of the UNP election manifesto to President Kumaratunga wrote: "I have absolutely no doubt that despite our differences and disagreements, you believe, as I do, that the only way a just peace can be established is through a meaningful devolution of power. There has been unanimity between the UNP, SLFP, LTTE and the international community that devolution should be on the basis of a federal framework, which will enable the power sharing between the Centre and the Region.

The Oslo communiqué has spelt out such a framework for a united Sri Lanka, and found

form of consensus that has already been developed between the UNP and the SLFP. Future generations will not forgive us should we fail to seize this hour and the opportunities it offers".

The Oslo communiqué Wickremasinghe refers to speaks of a "federal" solution to the ethnic crisis Sri Lanka is facing. But the section "Defeat to Separatism" in the 44-page UNP manifesto only says: "We will bring about a permanent resolution to the ethnic problem through a political solution based on united Sri Lanka. A consensus reached between the UNP and the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance led by the SLFP on the ethnic problem, the agreement arrived at between the government and the LTTE and the Oslo and Tokyo declaration, which guarantees the unity, democratic character and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, have created the framework of a solution acceptable to all communities of the country". The word "federal", crucial to a political settlement, is conspicuous by its absence in the manifesto. It is not surprising the LTTE has come to the conclusion that it cannot

trust either of the parties and their presidential candidates and that it has lost all interest in the election which it described as "a futile exercise".

In an evenly placed race, the Tamil votes can tilt the balance in favour of the party backed by the community. In the 1994 election the LTTE supported Kumaratunga which helped her win with a comfortable margin. But in the 1999 election Wickremasinghe could not win in spite of the LTTE backing him. Kumaratunga was re-elected with a narrow margin, thanks to her consolidation of the Sinhalese vote. In both the campaigns, the LTTE had decided to liquidate the opposing candidates through terrorist tactics. In 1994 Gamini Dissanayake of the UNP was killed in a suicide attack by the LTTE. In 1999 Kumaratunga narrowly escaped with the loss of one eye in a similar attack.

### Truce

If the Tamils in the north-east consider the LTTE's declaration of no interest in the presidential election and abstain from voting on 17 November, it will greatly enhance the chances of Rajapakse who has been concentrating on the Sinhalese segment of the electorate as Kumaratunga had done in 1999. In the calculation of the LTTE, a hawkish president would put an end to the uneasy truce which has been in force since February 2002. It suits their secessionist cause better. The JVP and the JHU main supporters of the SLFP candidate, are totally opposed to any negotiation with the LTTE and want the unitary form of government safeguarded.

Wickremasinghe, on the other hand, would keep the negotiations going if elected without conceding any substantive devolution of power to the Tamil Region. As Prime Minister, he failed to take forward the peace process the Oslo declaration provided. Early in the campaign he has entered into alliances with the Muslim parties and the Tamils of recent origin, popularly known as Plantation Tamils. What he needs to pip Rajapakse to the post on 17 November is the votes of the Tamils in the north-east for which the LTTE holds the key.

# Campaign ends for Sri Lanka election

Conflict resolution and economic conditions are the two main issues in presidential poll

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Campaigning for Sri Lanka's fifth presidential election ended at midnight Monday with major rallies by the two main candidates, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The election will be held on Thursday and the final results are expected on Friday. The election is seen as one that is too close to call, with both candidates capturing the imagination of distinct segments of the 13.32-million electorate.

The approach to conflict resolution and economic conditions are the two main issues that influence the voters' mind. The unity of the nation is a key slogan, with both candidates emphasising that they would ensure that the country is not divided.

Mr. Rajapakse, with his accent on preserving the unitary state, has won over the minds of a majority of uncommitted voters in the Sinhala-majority districts. Mr. Wickremesinghe, who favours power-sharing, is preferred in the multi-ethnic electoral districts.

## Critical factors

The approach of the two candidates in their negotiations with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is seen as another critical factor. Voters favouring Mr. Rajapakse hold the view that he would take a strong position and "would not compromise security" when dealing with the LTTE. Mr. Wickremesinghe's supporters say his approach is "pragmatic and practical."

With both candidates promising to lower prices, focus also

turned on the economy and cost of living.

Mr. Rajapakse, who follows a left-of-centre path, is perceived as one who would move Sri Lanka away from "globalisation and economic dependence on the west."

Sinhalese small traders prefer him as Mr. Wickremesinghe "supports only the big businessman." The outcome would depend on how specific ethno-religious communities vote.

## Sinhalese divided

The majority Sinhalese comprise 74 per cent of the population, followed by Sri Lankan Tamils (12.6 per cent), Muslims (7.1 per cent), Indian Tamils (5.5 per cent), and others (0.8 per cent).

The non-Buddhist Sinhalese, who are mainly Catholics or other Christians, are about 5 per cent of the population.

The majority Sinhalese-Buddhists (69.3 per cent) are nearly equally divided between the two main parties, Mr. Rajapakse's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and Mr. Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP), making the role played by the other ethno-religious groups critical in winning the election.

In the south, the outcome would largely be determined by the mix of party loyalties and the voting preference of the ethno-religious groups.

The role played by the LTTE in influencing the Tamil voters' turnout in the north and east is another critical factor. A low turnout there may affect the prospects of Mr. Wickremesinghe.

According to media reports, the former LTTE regional military commander, V. Muralith-



**A KEEN CONTEST:** Sri Lankan presidential candidates Ranil Wickremesinghe (right) with Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse during the filing of nominations recently. - PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA

aran ("Col." Karuna) has promised to review the ceasefire be the next Constitutionally-powerful Executive President. The nature of the mandate er-sharing or entrench itself as a unitarist state.

At stake is not just who would vote for Mr. Rajapakse, as he had



# Plantation workers root for Ranil

Community seeks better life

V.S. Sambandan

**BANDARAWELA (SRI LANKA):** Behind every brew of the world-renowned Sri Lankan tea lies the sweat and toil of nearly a million plantation workers — a minority Indian-origin Tamil community that backs the former Prime Minister and Opposition leader, Ranil Wickremesinghe, in the November 17 presidential poll.

"Ranil should and will win. I have no doubt," said Gamini Nandasiri, a Sinhalese truck driver in the plantation districts, who speaks Tamil and counts several plantation Tamils as his friends and colleagues. "There must be someone who helps plantation Tamils. That is Ranil. It is from the leaves they pluck that Ceylon Tea is sent the world over. They need a better life. It will be good for all of us," he said.

The Plantation Tamils comprise about 5.5 per cent of Sri Lanka's 19 million population and total 7.5 lakhs of the 13.32 million voters.

Traditionally supporters of the United National Party (UNP), Mr. Wickremesinghe's alliances with two political parties representing the Estate Tamils — the Ceylon Workers' Congress and the Up-Country Peoples' Front — have ensured that he retains the block vote of this constituency.

The number of the plantation Tamil vote base defies easy count as the CWC has normally contested under the symbol of its major alliance partner.

## Pathetic conditions

The sylvan setting of a tea estate is in sharp and cruel contrast to the pathetic conditions of the workers. "We will surely vote. We will vote for the person who helps us," said a middle-aged plantation worker, her limpid brown eyes concealing the hardship of a long day at work. "The local UNP leader is a very good person. He has helped us a lot," she continued, her weathered, bare toes doodling on the damp plantation soil. "We have a lot of difficulties — improper housing, lack of proper roads."



Ranil Wickremesinghe

Successive governments have spoken about improving housing and infrastructure facilities for the plantation workers, but they continue to live on the margins.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, who is the other main contestant, has promised a lot — a plot of land to each plantation worker and free-hold rights to the land where their dwellings exist — to name a couple.

However, these have been blinded by the over-riding reality of Mr. Rajapakse's alliances with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) — both of which advocate Sinhala majoritarianism.

Mr. Rajapakse draws support from the traditional base of his Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Jagath Kumar, who runs a small road-side plant nursery in the Badulla district, is quite clear of his choice.

"Ranil favours only the big traders, not us," he said.

In the larger island-wide picture, the consolidation of the plantation sector's vote is significant for the Opposition leader. The question whether this would translate into victory would largely depend on how Mr. Wickremesinghe pushes forward his People's Agenda — as he has named his manifesto — against early indications of an impending Sinhala-Buddhist swing for Mr. Rajapakse.

# Games LTTE plays

S. G. G. G.  
#10  
11/11

**E**very election in Sri Lanka has a non-contesting candidate, you know who. The November 17 presidential contest between Mahinda Rajapakse of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the United National Party's Ranil Wickremesinghe will be no different. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam directs the political choice of Tamil voters in Northern Sri Lanka; it also influences Tamil voters, directly and indirectly, in other parts of the country. At times, the terrorist group will openly back a candidate or a political party. In 1994 it supported Chandrika Kumaratunga for President, and in 1999 Ranil Wickremesinghe. In both campaigns, it decided to liquidate the opposing candidate – and succeeded in its attempt in the case of Gamini Dissanayake, but failed narrowly in the case of President Kumaratunga, who lost an eye in the suicide attack. In parliamentary elections, the LTTE virtually determines the fate of candidates contesting in the North-East. In 2001, its cadres canvassed support for a spineless Tamil National Alliance. In 2004, it went a step further, killing and intimidating candidates opposing the TNA, and on voting day, broke all the rules to ensure its clients won. The tactics varied but the criterion for support remained the same: which candidate would better serve the long-term goal of establishing Eelam. This time, the LTTE has declared an absence of interest, claiming that neither candidate has the interests of Tamils at heart. Is this Morse for a Tamil boycott of the election?

Such a boycott in the North-East will greatly improve Mr. Rajapakse's chances of winning. The Prime Minister is on a strong footing among voters of the majority Sinhala-Buddhist community. His campaign has aimed at consolidating this with the help of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna – a party with a radical, rural Sinhala identity – and sections of the Buddhist clergy. While Mr. Wickremesinghe has his share of the majority vote, he is depending on minority support to give him an edge in a close race. He sewed up alliances early with parties representing Muslims and Indian Tamils. What he is desperately looking for are the Tamil votes of the North-East, where he is well regarded for crafting, as Prime Minister, the February 2002 ceasefire. At first sight, it seems strange that the LTTE would want to hurt the prospects of one who gave it so many concessions, including lifting the ban on it. A boycott would mean the LTTE has made up its mind that a President Rajapakse will suit its secessionist cause better than a President Wickremesinghe. It is making capital of the Prime Minister's anti-federal posture to paint the peace process as a futile quest for Tamil aspirations within a unitary trap. It is quite possible that the LTTE, under the garb of indifference, continues to support Mr. Wickremesinghe but does not want to make that obvious for fear of eroding his Sinhala vote base. There is surely more to the LTTE's professed neutrality in this contest than meets the eye.

11 NOV 2005



# In Sri Lanka, dynasty at the crossroads

Nirupama Subramanian

**W**HEN SOLOMON West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike, an Oxford-educated lawyer, began the Sri Lanka Freedom Party over half a century ago, he may not have thought he was setting the foundations for a modern-day political dynasty, the democratic world's first. He had stormed out of the United National Party when it became clear that he could never climb to its leadership. Within a few years, riding a wave of resurgent Buddhism and with sweeping promises to promote the interests of the religion and its adherents who form the majority in Sri Lanka, the SLFP was voted to power. That was in 1956.

A year from the 50th anniversary of that event, the Bandaranaiques have for the first time in the SLFP's history lost effective control of the party. With Sri Lanka's Constitution barring the President from seeking a third term, it was known that Chandrika Kumaratunga, the outgoing President and daughter of SWRD, would not be a contestant for the November 17 election. Her successor as the SLFP candidate, Mahinda Rajapakse, also belongs to a popular political family from Sri Lanka's deep south — his father was the trusted ally of SWRD, and, later, his wife Sirimavo. But unlike his father, the younger Rajapakse was not content with being the loyal factotum for ever, and made no secret of his ambition to take charge of the party some day.

With his nomination, he has come close to realising his ambition; victory will seal it. For Ms. Kumaratunga, it has not gone entirely according to script. Twenty-four years younger than President Junius R. Jayewardene at his retirement, she should have transited by now to Prime Minister of an SLFP government in a Westminster-style democracy. At least, that was the plan.

Elected first in 1994, President Kumaratunga's main programme was to change the Constitution in order to devolve power to the Tamil minority. Along with this, she wanted to bring in changes that would revert Sri Lanka to a parlia-

mentary democracy, in which the Prime Minister is the executive, as in India. President Kumaratunga could have contested parliamentary elections and, provided the SLFP won, followed up her presidency by becoming Prime Minister in the new set-up.

Her re-election as President in 1999 only made constitutional reform all the more important to her political career, because of the constitutional two-term limit on the office. But her efforts to bring in a new Constitution failed. At no point in her presidency could she muster a two-thirds majority vote in Parliament required for constitutional amendments. Even so, it remained her objective until as recently as this year, when she believed she could remain in office up to 2006, counting the allotted six years for each term.

Indeed, she may have continued as President until next year had she made use of an ambiguous provision in the Constitution and delayed being sworn in following her victory in the 1999 presidential election — held a full year ahead of time — to a date after the originally scheduled end of her first term in 2000 (the Constitution provides for this). That belated realisation seems to have been the main reason that President Kumaratunga got herself sworn in by the Chief Justice a second time at a private ceremony in 2000, attended only by them and a presidential aide. President Kumaratunga was depending on this second oath-taking to keep her in office until late next year. An extra year may have given her time to reopen the project of constitutional change. But with the Supreme Court decreeing the second "secret" ceremony invalid, there was little choice but to step down

and call the presidential election this year. With her own children too young to enter the political arena, Ms. Kumaratunga's only other immediate alternative to keep the party reins within the family was to nominate her brother Anura Bandaranaike. So why did she not do this? Perhaps it was a realistic assessment of Mr. Bandaranaike's chances. The youngest of the three children of SWRD and Sirimavo, a chagrined Mr. Bandaranaike left the SLFP in the early 1990s to join the UNP when his mother anointed Ms. Kumaratunga as party leader (Sunethra, the eldest of the siblings, has kept away from politics).

Ms. Kumaratunga had only then returned to the SLFP. She had left in the 1980s to form a separate party with her film star husband, Vijaya, shutting it down after his assassination in 1989. Her brother felt his loyalty to family and party had been overlooked. From then on he devoted his energies, from the UNP camp, to the political defeat of his sister and the SLFP. His return to the party families following his mother's death in 2000 was not received with the same warmth as Ms. Kumaratunga's. Perhaps the crucial difference was the absence of Sirimavo. She commanded the respect and loyalty of the party's old guard as well as its young bucks. As long as she was alive, she kept the various factions of the party in check. With Sirimavo gone, Mr. Bandaranaike's return to the SLFP lacked the stamp of authority that his sister's had, and he would find himself challenged repeatedly within the party. It is doubtful the SLFP would have thrown itself into a campaign for him in the way it has done for Mr. Rajapakse. It is even more doubtful if he would have had the support of the Janatha Vimukthi

Peramuna, the party of radical rural Sinhalese youth, which is virtually leading Mr. Rajapakse's campaign.

In this situation, Ms. Kumaratunga had little choice but to let the party take precedence over the family that founded and led it for over half a century. She did expect that both Mr. Rajapakse and the SLFP would continue to accept her political guidance, but this has not happened. The Rajapakse campaign has for all practical purposes sidelined Ms. Kumaratunga, even though she remains party leader. The SLFP candidate has declared he will appoint her brother Prime Minister if he wins, but the two fell out in the early stages of the campaign, and that promise is now in doubt.

Still, it may be too early to write off the Bandaranaiques, their present marginalisation notwithstanding. At a rare election meeting Ms. Kumaratunga addressed on behalf of her party's candidate, she announced that she would retire from politics after these elections. But she also seems to be exploring avenues to stay on in some capacity. For instance, she and Mr. Wickremesinghe held a meeting recently at which both reaffirmed their commitment to solving the country's problems. The UNP candidate has said that if elected, he intends to form a national government comprising all parties.

It is a delicious twist, very novel-like, that a Bandaranaike comeback to the centre-stage of SLFP politics, and to the politics of the country, could now depend on the victory of arch-enemy Wickremesinghe. During her two terms in office, President Kumaratunga made her dislike of the UNP leader quite public. The two were at daggers drawn during the period from December 2001 to December 2003 when President Kumaratunga had to cohabit with Mr. Wickremesinghe's UNP-led government. But it does not stop there.

## Old rivalry

The UNP candidate is from an important political family that has an old rivalry with the Bandaranaiques. Jayewardene, who clashed with SWRD back in the early 1950s, was an uncle. The UNP is not a dynastic party but has chosen most of its leaders from an extended clan to which Wickremesinghe belongs, and is snidely called the 'Uncle-Nephew-Party.' The family has still not forgotten the state takeover of its Lake House group of newspapers including the flagship *Ceylon Daily News* in the 1970s by the SLFP and Sirimavo-led coalition government of the time. For their part, the Bandaranaiques have not forgotten the disenfranchisement of Sirimavo by the UNP when it came to power in 1977.

If Mr. Wickremesinghe defeats Mr. Rajapakse in the coming contest, the SLFP may well voice a demand for a return to dynasty. After all, it was Sirimavo who built the SLFP in a way that even SWRD may have not planned after she was persuaded to run it following her husband's assassination in 1959. Later, their charismatic daughter led the party to one election victory after another in the period from 1994 until 2000.

But the choice of upfront roles for Ms. Kumaratunga would be severely limited. In a situation where party leadership is linked to electability to the highest office, any future responsibility for her is bound to be circumscribed by the constitutional bar on her contesting the presidential elections again. The parliamentary elections are still open to her. But that would be a highly unconventional course to take for a former President. Two Sri Lankan Presidents, Jayewardene and D.B. Wijetunge, chose retirement over returning to politics through entry-level positions. Of course, Ms. Kumaratunga could opt for a less upfront role, with or without her brother at the helm.

It used to be said in Sri Lanka, only half-jokingly, that the country was run by just 10 families. That has clearly changed, and the rise of the JVP has contributed to this more than anything else. The last year of Ms. Kumaratunga's term showed how much this party has occupied Sri Lanka's political stage. In fact, it is not just the Bandaranaiques whose continuance in politics is in question. Win or lose, the future of two other political families, those of Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe, also hangs by the results of Sri Lanka's presidential election.

THE HINDU

01 NOV 2005

# Sri Lanka: elections and the tsunami

V.S. Sambandan

**A**BOUT 90 km south of Colombo, a smashed passenger train stands abandoned on a track in the coastal village of Peraliya, symbolising all that is post-tsunami Sri Lanka. Across the island, slim hope clashes with absolute dejection among the survivors. For the victims, particularly the poor with no access to the levers of power, the past 10 months have been an unending and cruel cycle of hope and disappointment.

Largely reconciled to their anguish, the tsunami-affected voters are now a weak voice in a marginalised constituency. Among sections of the victims, despair over unmet expectations has translated into disgust over the November 17 presidential election.

Rather than emerging as a major, island-wide issue with the potential to sway the electoral outcome, the post-tsunami Government response now jostles for space with other local issues. Only along the battered coast is it still in focus.

Guesstimates place the number of tsunami-affected voters outside the northern and eastern districts at about one lakh — a fraction of the 13.32 million voters of Sri Lanka. The voters in this relatively small 'tsunami constituency' have largely kept to their known party preferences. Island-wide, the topics of discussion are division of the country, rising prices, and job prospects.

Though the two main contenders — Mahinda Rajapakse of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and Ranil Wickremesinghe of the United National Party (UNP) — have addressed tsunami-reconstruction in their manifestos, their promises are yet to emerge as factors that can decide the outcome of the elections. To a large extent this is but a reflection of the comparatively low priority given to development issues in Sri Lankan elections, historically fought on

## Tsunami relief has not emerged as a major, island-wide issue with the potential to sway the electorate. It now jostles for space with other local issues.

issues that evoke high emotion.

Moreover, each of the five tsunami-affected provinces has a major issue — emotional, political or ethnic — that overrides post-tsunami Government performance when it comes to electoral decision-making.

Historically, Sri Lankan Presidents have won or lost, depending on the positions they have taken on major issues. Unlike the promise of ending economic autarky made by J.R. Jayawardene in 1982, or the strong rhetoric of sovereign assertion by R. Premadasa (1988) and the promise of peace by Chandrika Kumaratunga (1994 and 1999), the tsunami is far removed from the majority of the Sri Lankan voters.

Among the undecided in the southern belt, for instance, shortcomings over the Government's post-tsunami performance, are offset by the "southern identity" of Prime Minister Rajapakse, who hails from one of the three southern districts. In the tsunami-affected areas of the eastern Muslim majority district, Amparai, the Prime Minister faces an anti-incumbency factor and the alliance between the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and the UNP. Even there, the tsunami is not the single-largest issue. Muslim concerns over their security in any solution to the decades-long separatist conflict override everything else. Given the decades of distrust between the Muslims and the Tamils, the electoral outcome here would depend on how much the SLMC-UNP combine convinces the voters

that Mr. Wickremesinghe's template for a solution would be the best bet for the Muslim-majority in Amparai.

In the other north-eastern districts of Jaffna, Trincomalee, and Batticaloa, the ethnic conflict clearly outweighs the concerns over tsunami reconstruction. The Tamils in these districts have voted according to the *diktat* — either vocal or subtle — of the LTTE. The studied silence of the Tigers on the Presidential candidates makes it difficult to predict their electoral prospects. An additional factor is the turnout of Tamil voters living in the LTTE-controlled areas (some of which were devastated by the tsunami) who would have to cross over to the Government-controlled territory to cast their vote. The turnout from the northern and eastern electoral districts would be a key factor to contend with.

In addition to these local factors, there is the statistical reality that the number of tsunami-affected village divisions is less than 10 per cent of the tsunami-affected electoral districts. The devastation, hence, is marginalised both in numbers and in geographic area. With most of the survivors retaining their pre-tsunami party loyalties, the impact of the post-tsunami governmental activity on the uncommitted voter remains unclear.

Some sections, for instance, among the survivors near the site of the train disaster, feel that voting is a futile exercise. The voices of discord range from assertions that they would not vote

at all or would make their votes invalid, to a sober afterthought that the candidate who helps them would win their vote.

Over the past 10 months little has changed for some of the survivors. Heightened expectations and broken promises are all they have. It is also obvious that not many are paying the same attention to the tsunami victims any more. Immediately after the tsunami, Peraliya — where the train with over 1,000 passengers was washed away — was the focus of all attention. Today it is a forgotten patch. The island-wide election for the highest political office has meant that the focus has shifted away from even what little relief effort was going on. The once self-contained and proud villagers have been reduced to penury.

There is a ray of hope in the form of a vibrant resilience. Those who have started rebuilding their lives do so with the substantial largesse from foreign donor organisations, local temple authorities or assistance from individuals. With the Government's role largely confined to providing cash and food relief or promising to meet long-term housing needs, there is also the realisation that nothing more can be expected in a hurry. The committed voters, therefore, continues to view the post-tsunami work through their respective party lens. Supporters of the UNP assert that it is an issue big enough to ruin the prospects of Prime Minister Rajapakse. For those who have decided to vote Rajapakse, the post-tsunami operations are not a big issue.

### Economic policies

In their own ways the manifestos of Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe reflect the larger economic thinking of the two leaders in their approaches to lead their countries out of the tsunami devastation.

The left-of-centre Mr. Rajapakse's main promises are a special administrative unit for each district and a temporary social security scheme to provide relief until normality is restored. Mr. Wickremesinghe, with his free-market orientation, sees a role for the Government more in coordinating the private and public sector operations that are in force, and taking steps to restore the devastated economy.

The one controversial issue in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami was a Government proposal to create a 100-metre buffer zone. However, this does not have the potential to emerge as a major factor to move the uncommitted voters in large numbers as the Government has already announced a rollback.

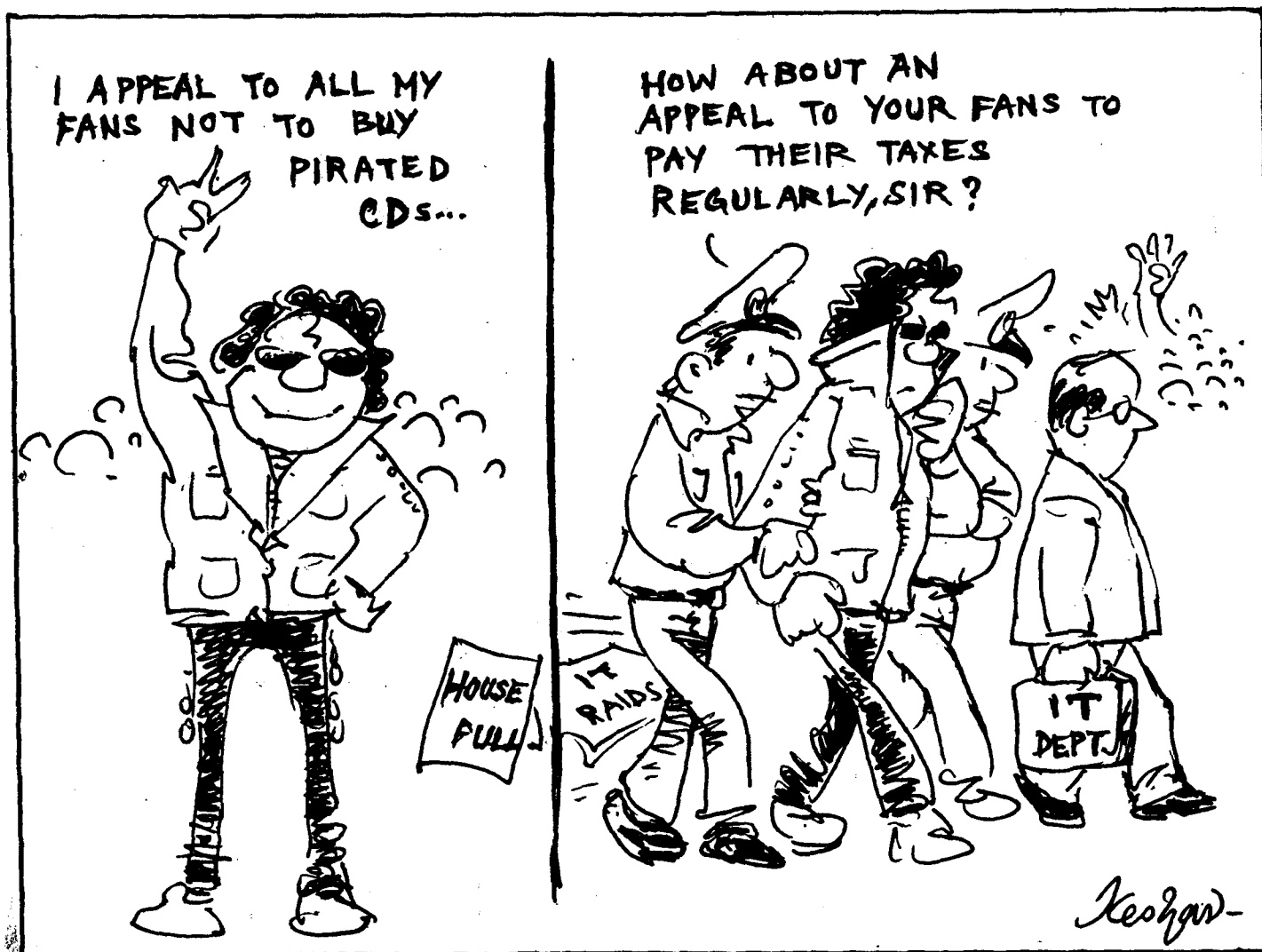
The choice before the undecided elector, hence, is between the Premier's tangible promises of handouts and a visible administrative structure and the Opposition Leader's longer-term path of economic sustenance and revival.

The distancing of the tsunami from the electoral decision-making process is also best understood against the backdrop of the splintered nature of the Sri Lankan polity. With every ethnic group divided along political lines, party considerations have always prevailed. One of Sri Lanka's major moments of truth was when the bitterly divided polity failed to come together as one in the immediate aftermath of the tsunami.

That the SLFP and the UNP share the loyalty of the Sinhala voters is a historical electoral reality. The consolidation of the Muslim vote under the SLMC has been seriously challenged since the demise of its founder, M.H.M. Ashraff, five years ago. The cracking of the LTTE's monolith last year in the form of the revolt by the former eastern military commander, V. Muralitharan ('Col.' Karuna), has caused an uncertainty in the east, which will be under test during the Presidential poll. This further relegates the tsunami as an election issue.

The edgy electorate remains as deeply divided in its political affiliations as it was before the tsunami hit the island. The Peraliya wreckage, a reminder of the December 26 tsunami, now has an election poster of a smiling Prime Minister pasted on a broken carriage.

### CARTOONSCAPE



# POLL IN SRI LANKA-II

## Parliamentary Election Essential And Inevitable

By PARMANAND

True, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court has ordained the presidential poll to be completed by the end of this year, and very soon dates would be announced. But the unicameral 225-member Sri Lankan parliament, too, has become an odd structure after the withdrawal of support to the incumbent government by the Leftist and Sinhala nationalist political party, the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna. In a house of 225, the JVP has 40 seats under its direct control and more than a dozen of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party MPs are closely allied to the JVP. The People's Alliance had, by roping in the JVP, established the United People's Freedom Alliance on the eve of the 2004 parliamentary polls.

This Alliance per se had succeeded in obtaining 105 seats, which, in itself was short of an absolute majority. Thanks to the electoral system based on proportional representation, ethnic-religious divisions and intra-Sinhalese politics, Sri Lankan voters are very prone to produce hung parliaments rendering policy-making and decision-making very difficult and complex.

### Absence of consensus

In any case, the Sri Lankan society, in general, has, for long, been showing the absence of consensus on various vital national issues, and election after election has failed to alter this reality. The Opposition led by Ranil Wickremesinghe has, for quite some time now, been harping on the theme that the existing Parliament cannot form a majority government. By any logic, another parliamentary poll would appear to be as essential and inevitable as the forthcoming presidential poll.

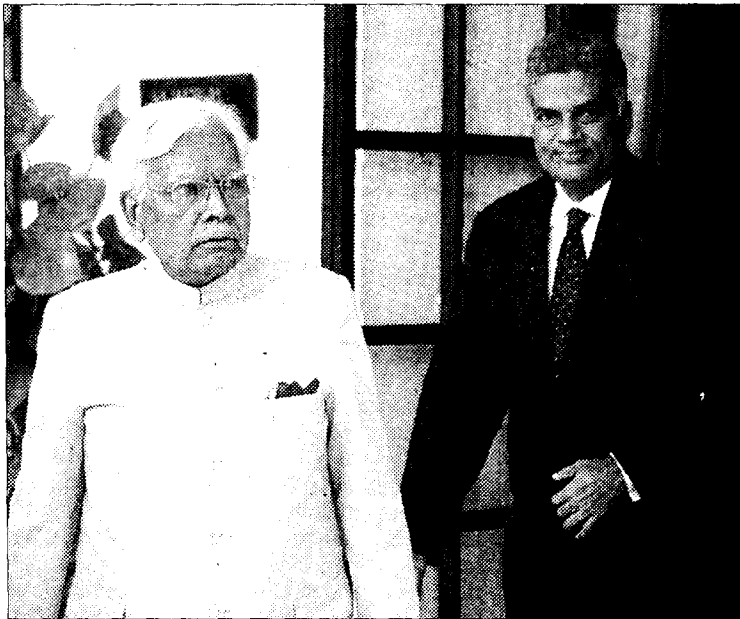
How free and fair would the elections in Sri Lanka be? The outgoing President has promised free and fair elections in the island. The UNPF leader Ranil Wickremesinghe has demanded such elections. Poll-rigging, though, has not been unheard of in Sri Lankan electoral politics in the past. Even international poll observers have pointed it out from time to time. It is altogether a different matter that the Sri Lankan parliamentary opposition — whosoever constitutes it — has not shown predilections for the legislature's boycott, like their counterparts

in Bangladesh. And to that extent it augurs well for the island.

For more than two decades, Sri Lankan politics has been marred by increasing violence. The contribution of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the militant organisation which has almost become a state within the state in the island's north-east, to this sphere has been most striking. But this did not happen in a vacuum. In 1982, the Sri Lankan government, under Pre-

Tamil United Liberation Front leader A Amirthalingam, are only some of the important political leaders who were done in by the Tamil Tigers for not toeing their line.

It is against this backdrop that India's southern neighbour, with whom the former has a free trade agreement, is now facing two significant nationwide elections and revival of peace talks. In the interim, there have been all indications of the LTTE



sident Junius Richard Jayewardene (1906-96), held a referendum asking the Sri Lankan voters whether the life of the parliament elected in 1977 could be extended for another six years.

While the referendum's results favoured the government's proposal, a large number of Sri Lankans remained unreconciled to it, and they saw in it a move to avoid the usual democratic exercise. It also became obvious that the Sri Lankan state was more interested in power-concentration and oblivious to power devolution and decentralisation. The LTTE succeeded in convincing a significant chunk of Sri Lankans that violence would be more effective than logic or even electoral politics to serve their interest.

### Important leaders

President Ranasinghe Premadasa (1924-93), presidential aspirants, Gamini Dissanayake (1942-94), Lalith Athulathmudali (1936-93), state defence minister Ranjan Wijeratne and

strengthening its position both administratively and militarily in the areas that it controls. News about their airstrip and aircraft has already disturbed many, including India. Needless to stress, the Tigers feel more emboldened in the post-Kadrigamar assassination phase. Not that they were scared earlier; indeed, they have been violating the ceasefire agreement with impunity for a long time now. Even the Norwegians have gone to the extent of saying that it is in its most serious crisis yet. The Norwegian-led monitoring mission had counted 107 political killings in the first half of this year and some 30 since.

Hearteningly, the incumbent government and the LTTE have shown their willingness to restart the talks that got suspended in March 2003. Needless to stress the Tigers feel more emboldened in the post-assassination phase. While the LTTE wants the peace talks to be held in Oslo, the capital of Norway, which as been playing a signifi-

cant role in establishing peace in the island, the Sri Lankan government under President Chandrika Kumaratunga wants the peace talks to be held inside the country itself. In the past, the Tigers had taken advantage of the outside island venues like Thailand, Oslo, Berlin and Japan.

And this time around, the Sri Lankan government feels that the Tigers would underline their freedom or autonomy agenda more emphatically. The government has indicated that the peace talks, for the time being at least, should veer around the maintenance of the ceasefire. The Tigers do not feel any such compulsion. Any dialogue between the two is bound to be much better than the existing state.

The tsunami of 26 December had devastated the north-eastern province of the island economically and 30,000 Sri Lankans had lost their lives. The Sri Lankan Supreme Court, though, in its verdict of 15 July nullified the 24 June government-LTTE agreement on reconstruction and rehabilitation in the tsunami-affected areas, creating more tension and uncertainty. The island's economy has palpably deteriorated — the inflation rate reaching the figure of 18.5 per cent.

### Keen watch

More than anyone else in the international community, India is watching the developments with care, caution and sympathy. External affairs minister K Natwar Singh, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee and foreign secretary Shyam Saran attended Kadrigamar's cremation on 15 August.

Natwar Singh had visited Sri Lanka officially between 6 and 11 June, discussing various bilateral, regional and global issues. In August, the new Sri Lankan foreign minister Anura Bandaranaike chose India as the first country to be visited. On the other hand, Ranil Wickremesinghe was in Delhi on 17 August to deliver the Eighth Dinesh Singh Memorial Lecture under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Indian Council for South Asian Cooperation. One wishes that the island moves towards peace, progress, prosperity and political stability amidst all complexities and uncertainties.

(Concluded)

# Don't mess with ceasefire: LTTE to Lanka PM

SIMON GARDNER

COLOMBO, OCTOBER 24

SRI LANKAN Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse's pledge to amend the terms of a truce with the Tamil Tigers if elected president next month could cause the agreement to collapse, the rebels warned on Monday.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) insist the government sticks to the terms of the existing 2002 ceasefire, but have vowed not to restart

their two-decade war for self-rule and observers expect the truce to hold. Stung by European Union sanctions after the August assassination of the island's foreign minister by suspected rebel snipers, the Tigers want the international community to put pressure on the government to share \$3 billion in tsunami aid before the stalled peace process can progress.

"According to the ceasefire agreement and the peace process, the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE are the only equal partners ... So nobody can change it. Nobody can touch it," S. Puleedevan, head of the rebels' Peace Secretariat, said in a telephone interview from the Tigers' Kilinochchi stronghold.

"Nobody can take unilateral

decisions ... that means that that's the end of the ceasefire agreement," he added.

Rajapakse has vowed in his manifesto to amend the ceasefire and monitoring mechanism "to ensure that acts of terrorism would not be permitted in any way". Forging election pacts with hardline Marxists and Buddhist monks who hate the Tigers, he has also ruled out wide devolution, rejects outright the rebels' central demand for a Tamil homeland and has promised to ditch a

tsunami aid-sharing plan that has run aground in the courts.

But while many say Sri Lanka's peace process stands a better chance under opposition leader, Ranil Wickremesinghe and his United National Party, which brokered the ceasefire and which has promised to de-

volve power to the rebels, the Tigers trust neither candidate.

"Experience (since the truce) clearly shows that we have lost hope with both sides," Puleedevan said. "Whatever they said in their manifestos is nothing to do with what they will implement. We have no choice at all with these two candidates (because neither) are going to deliver anything tangible to the Tamil people."

—Reuters



A Buddhist monk walks past a poster of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Reuters

# POLL IN SRI LANKA-I

## Political Complexity And Uncertainty

By PARMANAND

SF &  
29/10

The recent happenings in Sri Lanka, the most striking of which could be said to be the assassination of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar (73) on 12 August, very clearly point to the increasing political complexity and uncertainty there. It is also palpable that Kadirgamar's assassination did not take place in a vacuum and without any objective. On the other hand, as things are moving in the post-assassination phase, it would be foolhardy to be optimistic about the country's polity, political stability, social cohesiveness, economy and, above all, its unity.

### Colonial masters

Sri Lanka, known as Ceylon till 1972, has been a strikingly remarkable state in the whole of the Third World. It has the experience of being colonised for 443 years (between 1505 and 1948) and, interestingly, by three colonial masters: the Portuguese (1505-1638), the Dutch (1638-1796) and, finally, the British (1796-1948). On the other hand, Sri Lanka also achieved the distinction, thanks to its colonial masters' initiatives, of experiencing universal adult franchise as early as 1931 — indeed, only three years after the British had done so for their own people by enfranchising their women in 1928.

Quite remarkably, Sri Lanka has established the unchallengeable records of holding 18 na-

*The author is Hon. Director, South Asian Studies Foundation, New Delhi.*

tionwide polls based on universal adult franchise, competitive pluralism and huge participation since 1947 in the forms of 13 parliamentary and four presidential polls and one referendum. Unlike India, as also many colonised Afro-Asian states, Sri Lanka achieved independence on 4

1978, and growing alienation of the ethnic and religious minorities.

Sri Lanka is now moving fast in the direction of the fifth presidential poll under the existing 1978 constitution. Since the second presidential poll in December 1988, the island has



February 1948 without any freedom struggle, let alone any violence and ethno-religious conflicts.

### Ethnic war

All this could have been a matter of great pride for any functioning democracy. But intriguingly, the operating democracy in the island has seen 65,000 lives being lost in ethnic civil war since 1983, and unending concentration of powers of policy-making and decision-making in the executive-presidency since

witnessed large-scale violence not only affecting party activists and general people at the local level, but also in the assassination of presidential candidates. In 1999, President Chandrika Kumaratunga (60) had a very narrow escape but she lost complete visibility in one eye after facing a grenade attack on her.

In accordance with the 26 August historic and unanimous verdict of the Sri Lankan Supreme Court, the presidential poll has to be completed before 22

December, when President Kumaratunga completes her second and last six-year tenure. Though many had perceived that the Supreme Court — even in a divided verdict — would support the President's continuance in office till the end of 2006, which she had wanted on her own technical and constitutional grounds. But clearly, the People's Alliance of President Kumaratunga had prepared itself for an adverse verdict by announcing the candidature of the incumbent Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse for the presidency on 26 July.

### Durable reality

The United National People's Front, led by the United National Party, has declared two-time former Prime Minister and UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe (56) as its presidential candidate. Ranil's alliance had lost the last parliamentary poll of 2 April 2004, despite making peace a durable reality in the war-torn country during his prime ministership, and by holding six rounds of talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam between September 2002 and March 2003, spreading over 22 days. Not less significantly, the UNPF government under Ranil had also institutionalised the peace process by effecting a ceasefire agreement with the LTTE in February 2002. The ceasefire still continues — of course, with a large number of questionable developments.

*(To be concluded)*

24 OCT 2005



# A race to woo the undecided voter

Winning over the uncommitted Sinhalese is critical given Sri Lanka's ethnic mix.

V.S. Sambandan

29/10  
S. Sambandan  
10.11

**M**IDWAY INTO the Sri Lankan election campaign, the focus of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe is on wooing the uncommitted Sinhalese voter. As a poll-weary country weighs its choices, the personalities of the two main Presidential candidates, the perceptions surrounding them, and the precedents set by them are factors that can tilt the scales on November 17.

The waning of federalism from the conflict-resolution discourse, the electoral out-bidding by the two main candidates through promises of economic populism, and the potential of parties to stir passions do not augur well for a healthy debate on how the country should be run for the next six years.

Winning over the uncommitted Sinhalese voter is critical given the island's ethnic mix. In the divided polity, the majority Sinhalese (76.59 per cent) are split nearly equally in their loyalties between Mr. Rajapakse's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and Mr. Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP). A large majority of the Sri Lankan Tamils (10.96 per cent), Muslims (9.18 per cent), and Tamils of Indian origin (1.16 per cent) are disenchanted with Mr. Rajapakse's alliance partners. The candidates, hence, would have to go the extra mile to win the uncommitted Sinhalese voter to reach the required 50 per cent of the valid votes to win the election.

With no visible swing yet in favour of either candidate, the campaign currently lacks the lustre that should surround the most vital democratic exercise for any nation — directly electing a constitutionally powerful Executive President.

The reasons for poll-weariness are obvious. To start with, the November 17 exercise would be the sixth island-wide election in six years. The December 1999 Presidential poll and the Parliamentary polls held in 2000, 2001, and 2004 and the Provincial Council elections of 2004 saw every possible issue debated from every conceivable angle. The scepticism of the electorate about the promises made by the two major contestants is best understood against this backdrop.

## Economic conditions

Two factors seem set to dictate the electoral prospects — economic conditions and prospects of lasting peace. Of these, popular concerns over economic conditions have engaged the greater attention of the voters. It is not so much that peace is no longer on the agenda of the voter, but in terms of priority, it appears to have slid a notch below compelling economic issues.

That the manifestos of the two main can-



**THE CONTENDERS:** Ranil Wickremesinghe (left) and Mahinda Rajapakse. — PHOTOS: AFP AND REUTERS.

didates devote extensive space to economic issues makes it even more evident. This, however, does not mean that expectations of lasting peace and concerns over violence are not far behind. The concerns over a return to violence — the dominating theme of the Wickremesinghe campaign — have not yet struck a chord among the Sinhalese majority electorate, based on the assumption that “peace has arrived.”

The character of the alliances struck by Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe also engages the minds of the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils and Muslims. While the uncommitted minority vote has moved away from Mr. Rajapakse, he has not yet fully consolidated the non-partisan Sinhalese vote.

It is here that the electoral swing becomes critical.

With a nearly equally divided committed bloc of Sinhalese voters for the SLFP and the UNP, the key for past Presidential victors was their ability to win over minorities and sway the floating Sinhalese votes with a winnable election plank. For instance, the late Ranasinghe Premadasa's twin promises of “expelling the Indian interventionists” and

“talking peace to the Tigers,” and Chandrika Kumaratunga's peace package of “devolution and constitutional reforms.”

## Different personalities

In the absence of a swing, the November 2005 Presidential election is all about the three Ps — personality, perception, and precedent. On all three counts Mr. Rajapakse and Mr. Wickremesinghe are as different as chalk and cheese. The Prime Minister carefully maintains the image of a people's person. He dresses traditionally, with a flowing red sash around his neck, reflecting his left-of-centre political ideology, and portrays himself as *apey Mahinda* (Our Mahinda) of the majority Sinhalese.

Mr. Wickremesinghe is dressed in slacks, quite often wears a designer jacket, and also talks directly to small groups of the electorate along the campaign trail. He is seen as one who is “friendlier with the Tigers and wants to do business with them” — a negative when it comes to the uncommitted Sinhalese voter. Mr. Rajapakse comes across as one who plays the “nationalist” tune to consolidate the Sinhalese vote — a negative among the uncommitted minorities.

In terms of the precedents set by the two, Mr. Wickremesinghe is credited with “stopping the war” — a definite positive across the island — and signing the ceasefire agreement, a move that evokes strongly mixed emotions, particularly whenever the LTTE strikes in Colombo. Mr. Rajapakse, though a Minister for nearly nine years and the Prime Minister for over a year, has little to show on conflict-resolution and economic policy.

An even more significant precedent is that no President has won without the support of the ethnic minorities — at least significant sections of them. Even in 1999, when Ms. Kumaratunga lost most of the Sri Lankan Tamil vote, she had the support of the two other key minority parties — the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the Ceylon Workers' Congress — both of whom are now aligned with Mr. Wickremesinghe.

As the poll pendulum of an emotional electorate sways, the major determinant would be the manner in which the two extremes of Sri Lanka's polity — the LTTE and the JVP — assert their positions. Much of the undecided Sinhalese vote would be swung by incidents or pronouncements that trigger an emotional passion that is absent for now.

# Federalism issue touches a raw nerve in Sri Lanka

## Parties project Indian model to allay fears

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Eighty years after federalism was mooted as "the only solution" for Sri Lanka's problems by the late Sri Lankan leader S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the term continues to evoke strong and sharply opposed emotions within the island. A conspicuous absence in the ongoing Presidential election campaign is the advocacy of federalism as a solution to the decades-long separatist conflict.

### No option for leaders

However, "both leaders have no option but to go in for some form of federalism," a former Sri Lankan diplomat told *The Hindu*. He was referring to the two main contestants in the November 17 Presidential poll — Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, who promises to preserve Sri Lanka's "unitary structure" and Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, who favours power-sharing.

Over the decades, political parties have also found the federal concept a convenient one to raise and perpetuate the bogey of secession to win office.

"A federal state will mean we have to take passports to go to the north and east," a roadside seller of cane furniture in Sinhalese majority Gampaha district of Sri Lanka's Western Province, exclaimed, summing up a general fear. He supports power-sharing, but is vehemently opposed to "federalism," making it appear as lost a

cause as it has been over the decades since it was mooted by the late Bandaranaike in the 1920s.

"The Sinhalese leadership has never explained it to the masses clearly, the only exception being President Chandrika Kumaratunga. The Sinhala population could care less. It is only the opinion-makers who raise the issue and make the Sinhala people believe that federalism would harm them," D. Sithadthan, president of Peoples' Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), who was at the Thimpu talks in 1985, said.

Federalism, however, "is not a lost cause" for Ketheshwaran Loganathan, a former member of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), also a delegate to the 1985 Thimpu talks. "Those who criticise federalism are not aware of what it implies and hence there is a case for raising awareness on matters relating to federalism," he said.

### Division of power

Emphatic that the "content is more important than the phrase," Mr. Loganathan said: "It is a case of how it is presented. One can even use a system without the phrase [federalism] and still have a political structure of governance based on substantial division of power and autonomy." An example he cites is the overwhelming public acceptance of Ms. Kumaratunga's proposals, which "did not say 'federalism' but 'Union of Regions.'"

THE HINDU

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2005

## A bleak choice for Sri Lanka

**S**ince adopting a presidential form of government in 1978, Sri Lanka has voted in four rather unique presidential elections. There is a sense of *déjà vu* about the fifth in the series. The outgoing President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, who has served two rollercoaster terms, is barred by the Constitution from seeking a third. In 1988, President J. R. Jayewardene stood down at the end of two equally eventful terms. The United National Party, which he led, chose Ranasinghe Premadasa as its presidential candidate. The Prime Minister made no secret of his opposition to the President's approach to the country's principal challenge, the Tamil question; he had no time for the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987. President Jayewardene hardly figured in his Prime Minister's presidential campaign, which was focussed on disdain for the Accord and a vague promise of bringing peace by holding direct talks with Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. For the 2005 presidential contest, the candidate of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party is Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse. He has rejected the idea of federalism that President Kumaratunga has consistently advanced as the just and only viable solution to the Tamil question. He promises vaguely, as Premadasa did, to bring peace to the country through direct talks with the LTTE supremo. Now, as in 1988, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna is a crucial element in the picture. It has shaped Mr. Rajapakse's anti-federal agenda by committing him to unitariness as a condition of support, just as it drove Premadasa's campaign through its violent opposition to the Accord.

Premadasa won that election against Sirimavo Bandaranaike. The upcoming contest between Mr. Rajapakse and Ranil Wickremesinghe promises to be keen, even if the SLFP campaign appears to be in disarray at this juncture. Owing mainly to the conceptual differences between them, it is clear that President Kumaratunga, the SLFP's most charismatic leader, intends to keep away from Mr. Rajapakse's campaign as much as possible, and the party is yet to come up with a manifesto. But the JVP's backing is expected to help the Prime Minister polarise the vote on ethnic lines and consolidate support among the Sinhala-Buddhist majority. This evidently worries Mr. Wickremesinghe who has been successful in wooing political parties representing Muslims and the Indian Tamils, and is now reaching out to Mr. Prabhakaran in the hope that he will once again direct Tamils in the North-East to back him. While the LTTE puts on a pretence of disinterest in a 'Sinhala election' by way of emphasising its separatist ideology, it plays a role each time — rigging, intimidating, and killing — in furtherance of its goals. Aside from what the Tigers want, the main question is: how will this election outcome help in bringing enduring peace to Sri Lanka? Unfortunately, whoever wins there is not going to be a clear answer to this.

THE HINDU





Latest News - ColomboPage - Sri Lankan Internet Newspaper

## Sri Lankan Daily News and Reports -

[Daily Archive](#)

[ColomboPage](#)

[LankaPage](#)

### Sri Lankan Top News

**Sri Lanka:**

[Send this news to ..](#)

#### **\* President Rajapaksa favours devolving maximum power within a unitary state**

Friday, December 30, 2005, 13:17 GMT, ColomboPage News Desk, Sri Lanka.

Dec 30, Colombo: Visiting Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa reiterated that his government would give top priority to devolving maximum power within a unitary state as a peaceful solution to his country's long-lasting ethnic conflict.

The President made this statement at a banquet hosted in his honour by Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in New Delhi. He hailed the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries and said he hoped it would grow into a full-scale economic partnership beneficial to both countries.

Indian media quoting the Sri Lankan President said, "It is just a few weeks ago that I received the democratic mandate of the people of Sri Lanka to serve as the 5th President of our country. Since assuming office this is my first overseas visit. I am truly delighted that my first visit as President of Sri Lanka is to India, a country with which we share the strongest of links. The origins of the ties between our two nations date back to ancient times. These ties have withstood the test of time, so that even today, our two countries enjoy the strongest bonds of friendship and mutual respect.

"As we know, both India and Sri Lanka have democratic traditions that are more than half a century old. We can also be proud that we have sustained and nurtured democracy in its true spirit for several centuries. The existence of democratic concepts is also clear in our history. As the famous Indian Nobel Prize Winner Professor Amartya Sen has stated, the origins of Indian democracy could be traced to the influence of public reasoning in India. It is clear that we in Sri Lanka and India share the great traditions of democracy and religious beliefs which could perhaps be described as the bedrock on which our relationship is established.

"The international scenario of today is very different to that which prevailed over half a century ago," Mr. Rajapaksa continued. "Great advances have taken place in global communication and travel. This has resulted in the mobility of knowledge, capital and people. It has increasingly diminished the concept of national borders.

"We must maximise the positive opportunities that these advances provide. At the same time, we must overcome the less attractive side effects such as the growth of terrorism and the possible spread of global problems.

"These impending challenges will require individual national responses, and collective actions at the regional and international levels. Within our region, Sri Lanka looks forward to working with India and other South Asian Member States for the realization of the economic vision of the 13th SAARC Summit held in Dhaka. Such a realization will unleash the formidable collective growth potential of South Asia, and bring

immediate benefits to all of its peoples.”

Tomorrow's News Today

Gamini

Copyright © 2000, 2005 by LankaPage.com (LLC)

for Latest News: LankaPage.com

The news and other contents on ColomboPage are copyrighted property of LankaPage.com, LLC. Any unauthorized use of any information on ColomboPage may constitute a violation of copyright laws. You need written permission to reproduce, republish, post, transmit, broadcast or distribute, material from this site from LankaPage.com, LLC. However, news organizations or broadcasters in Sri Lanka may republish the news items in ColomboPage with proper acknowledgment to ColomboPage.

DISCLAIMER

# European Union and LTTE

After years of equivocation, the European Union has finally woken up to the terrorist character of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. That it took the brutal assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar for the EU to realise this is no consolation, but it could mean his death was not totally in vain. Through the decade Kadirgamar served Sri Lanka as Foreign Minister, he spearheaded a campaign to have the LTTE declared a terrorist organisation internationally. While the United States and Britain banned the group, Europe with its large Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora held back, professing the belief that positive diplomacy could better influence the Tigers. Like many others in the international arena who believed the LTTE must be given a chance to prove itself in the Norway-facilitated peace process, the EU has been disappointed at its intransigence, its insistence on being acknowledged as the "sole representative" of the Tamil people, and the anti-human extremes to which it would go to achieve its secessionist goal. The first sign of EU disillusionment came when its observers criticised the LTTE's conduct in North-East Sri Lanka during the 2004 parliamentary elections. The EU declaration of September 26 condemning the "continuous use of violence and terrorism" by the LTTE as "unacceptable" methods of achieving political goals is its strongest statement yet. The declaration makes it clear that designating the LTTE as a terrorist organisation is under "active consideration."

Whether the LTTE is eventually banned or not, the EU decision not to receive any delegation from the group in member countries with "immediate effect" will bite. It is a reality check on the prospects of peace, which are predicated on the willingness of the LTTE to accept a negotiated federal solution within the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka. After the February 2002 ceasefire, the Tiger strategy of building up international legitimacy included sending top cadres on junkets abroad, mainly to European countries, where they were received by high-ranking government officials. As recently as March 2005, the group's political wing leader, S.P. Thamichelvan, flew to Brussels to confer with EU officials; he also met Ministers of the Belgian Cabinet. All this helped the LTTE project itself as an entity with which the international community did business – despite Interpol notices on its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, a proclaimed fugitive from the Indian law, despite its grisly record of liquidating political rivals as well as civilians, and despite other abominable practices, starting with the recruitment of child soldiers. The travel ban, and the agreement among EU member-states that each will take additional measures to restrict the group's activities, are constructive steps towards ending the impunity with which the Tigers have functioned for far too long.

# European Union shuts the door on LTTE

S. Lanka  
11-12  
2009

**Warns it is considering listing it as a terrorist organisation**

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The European Union said on Tuesday that its member-states would no longer receive delegations from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and warned the group that the EU was "actively considering" listing it as a "terrorist organisation."

"The EU is actively considering the formal listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation.

In the meantime, the EU has agreed that with immediate effect, delegations from the LTTE will no longer be received in any of the EU member states until further notice," a statement issued by the British High Commission here said.

## **"Unacceptable methods"**

Condemning the LTTE's "continuing use of violence and terrorism," the EU said the "pursuit of political goals

by such totally unacceptable methods only serves to damage the LTTE's standing and credibility as a negotiating partner and gravely endangers the peace process so much desired by the people of Sri Lanka."

It reiterated its condemnation of the "shocking murder" of Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and "of so many others in Sri Lanka in recent weeks."

# EPDP for reviving North-East provincial administration

## A functioning administration could restore some form of governance to the region: Devananda

Special Correspondent

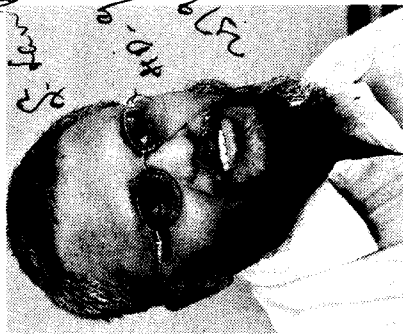
**CENNAI:** With the peace process between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam stalled for more than two years, a Sri Lankan Tamil party is seeking the revival of the provincial government in the country's conflict-torn North-East as an alternative interim solution.

The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), which is staunchly opposed to the LTTE, says an elected North-East Provincial Council with a functioning administration could restore some form of governance to the region, including carrying out post-tsunami rehabilitation work.

"As the provincial council is a system on which there is a con-

sensus among the Sinhalese, this is the most practical approach," said EPDP leader Douglas Devananda, on a recent visit to the city.

Sri Lanka's provincial council system came in with the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, giving a measure of self-government to the country's eight provinces within a unitary state. The system was specifically designed to meet Tamil demands of devolution in the North-East but was extended to the rest of the country. As things turned out, it is now operational everywhere else in Sri Lanka except the North-East province, where it was suspended in 1990. The LTTE, which opposed the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord as inadequate and ensured that the NEPC would never take off, proposed



*Douglas Devananda*

in 2003 an Interim Self-Governing Authority for the North-East with powers the Sri Lankan Government said it could not grant. Though the Government expressed a readiness to discuss

the proposals, the two sides could not come together for talks.

For the November presidential elections, the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party candidate, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, has entered into a campaign alliance with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. Mr. Rajapakse's agreement with the anti-federalism JVP includes a commitment not to disturb the country's unitary status.

"But no party, not even the JVP or the Hela Urumaya [a party representing extreme Sinhalese-Buddhist majoritarian views] is opposed to the provincial council system, and this is the reason we hope that the next President will set up the North-East provincial administration,"

said Mr. Devananda.

The EPDP has decided to back Mr. Rajapakse for President in the belief that he will adopt this approach to resolving the conflict, said Mr. Devananda.

United National Party candidate Rani Wickremesinghe had made clear when he was the Prime Minister that his approach to the conflict excluded other stakeholders in a permanent peace in North-Eastern Sri Lanka aside from the LTTE.

### Three-step approach

A minister in the present Cabinet, Mr. Devananda shrugged off the certain opposition of the LTTE to the revival of the nearly two-decade-old provincial government system in the North-East, saying it would function

only in the Government-controlled areas of the North-East and not in the parts under LTTE control. But Mr. Devananda also said setting up the North-East provincial government was only the first of a three-step approach to finding a permanent solution to the conflict.

The second step would be to strengthen devolution in the existing Constitution, and the third, to bring in a new Constitution to change the unitary character.

He expressed the confidence that this could be done through negotiations with all parties, and that even the JVP — whose anti-federalism he characterised as temporary political posturing — would eventually agree to a federal Constitution.

## Lanka makes UN distress call against Tigers

**United Nations:** Sri Lanka's president has said terrorism in her country was creating a level of distress similar to that of last year's tsunami, calling the current domestic situation "ominous" as she voiced support for targeted UN sanctions against armed rebel groups such as the Tamil Tigers.

Chandrika Kumaratunga levelled harsh criticism against the Tigers on the first day of the UN General Assembly's annual ministerial meeting.

"Just as my country was in national distress in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, we are now in distress in the face of an ominous renewal of terror on our soil," Kumaratunga said. Denouncing the group's "terrorist activities," she said the Tigers had demonstrated a disregard for international law for more than two decades.

Despite joint action between the government and the rebels in tsunami reconstruction work, Ku-

maratunga said, "all efforts to have talks renewed have so far failed."

A peace process "cannot and does not operate in a vacuum," she told the assembled leaders and ministers.

Kumaratunga called the assassination last month of Lakshman Kadirgamar, Sri Lanka's foreign minister, "a calculated and barbaric act of terrorism." She urged the international community to support her government's attempts to negotiate with the Tigers. AP



C Kumaratunga

One of the burning issues in Sri Lanka is the choice of presidential candidate. Whether it will be Mahinda Rajapakse or Ranil Wickremesinghe.

As far as the economy is concerned the perception is that Mr Wickremesinghe would be for free market policies in keeping with the policies of the IMF and the World Bank. The structural adjustments that would be made to liberalise capital accounts would be cloaked under the cover of poverty alleviation. Statistical evidence would show robust growth but the disparities between the haves

# In search of the lion-hearted

It is unlikely that either presidential candidate will tackle the LTTE problem head-on, writes NEVILLE LADDUWAHETTY

and have-nots would continue to grow.

The problem with greater liberalisation, however, is that foreign direct investments would flow in but it would also have the fluidity to flow back as happened during the Asian crisis. There is general uncertainty of the economic policies under a Rajapakse presidency. With the nationalist JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or People's Liberation Front) link, the policies adopted would be less liberal and more in favour of an economy that exploits national strengths and resources.

Foreign investors may find the political culture less enticing and consequently the results would not be as dramatic as the liberal option, but the disparities would be less and society would prosper in a more balanced albeit slower but sustainable pace.

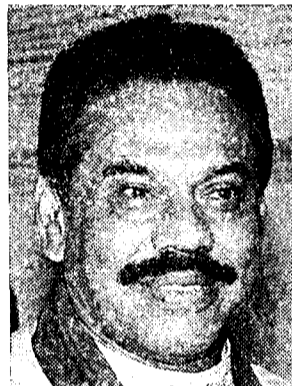
The policies adopted by either candidate in respect of the national question would also be different. But this difference would be in respect of posture rather than in substance and fundamentals of approach. While Mr Wickremesinghe would be for appeasing the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as he did during his last tenure, Mr Rajapakse would attempt to be more even-handed and strive for greater balance particularly in regard to the Cease-Fire Agreement (CFA) and arrangements for handling tsunami aid.

Despite this difference in posture, neither would take any action to jeopardise the CFA despite the daily provocations, child abductions, extortions and targeted assassinations. Both would expect to address the national question through negotiations.

Whatever the approach, can the national question, or for that matter handling tsu-

unami aid, be resolved through negotiations? Granting that resolving a contentious issue through negotiations is the most civilised approach, how realistic is it in the present context, where negotiations are to be conducted with only one party, the LTTE, which does not represent either a monolithic entity in view of the serious faultlines within it (the Karuna rebellion), or the Tamil people whose interests they claim to represent without the exercise of democratic processes?

As a result of this serious anachronism, whatever would be negotiated would have more to do with serving the interests of the LTTE, and



Mahinda Rajapakse and Ranil Wickremesinghe: In the race

less to do with serving the interests of the Tamil people.

They would not be beneficiaries of devolved powers under a federal arrangement because the powers devolved would be administered by the LTTE and not by representatives freely and fairly elected by the Tamil people.

LTTE supporters do not see a problem in this anomaly because to them it is all part of a transitional phase during which the LTTE is expected to transform. If the sceptics are to buy this line, let there be at least a hint that the LTTE would settle for a federal arrangement.

The fact that the LTTE is

not prepared to recognise the common sovereignty of Sri Lanka that is a sine qua non of a federal arrangement is demonstrated by its refusal to negotiate in any location other than Kilinochchi or a foreign country.

This may be a trivial issue to some, but its symbolism demonstrates its stand on the form of settlement it expects: which is not even a confederal arrangement, but one in which the Tigers are separate. It is from this fountainhead that every issue is approached.

Where the first step is the recognition and acceptance of two separate sovereignties, how can there be a federal option and if so, the obvious



question is: "What is there to negotiate?" There appears to be no hope of ever negotiating a federal option with the LTTE. Those who live in the hope that commitments to federalism made in Oslo were serious are being naive.

But the charade will go on. Both presidential candidates will attempt to continue the "peace process" through negotiations. Both are not likely to take a firm stand fearing an outbreak of war.

While Mr Wickremesinghe would be for appeasement and more carrots without any sticks, one has no clue as to what Mr Rajapakse's approach would be. But the

thread that would be common to both candidates would be fear and the belief that through a process of engagement the LTTE could be made to transform. This approach has been adopted by the Peace Secretariat under successive governments.

It had to take "the premeditated and diabolically planned assassination of Sri Lanka's foreign minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar" for Jayantha Dhanapala, head of the Peace Secretariat, to realise that "more than three years after the CFA it does not appear that the LTTE is able to change and accept the imperative for democratisation and the fact that it is not the 'sole representative of the Tamil people'" (*Sunday Times* dated 11 September, 2005).

He is now proposing that there should be a "policy review" of the whole process and it has taken a while for him to realise that "rewarding the LTTE with incentives by the international community in the hope that dialogue and engagement will slowly democratise the organisation is no longer a tenable policy". He has endorsed this position by adding that "the appeasement route or the 'carrot and more carrots' approach have not worked with the LTTE".

How many more "premeditated and diabolically planned" killings and incidents must occur for others involved in negotiations to come to the conclusions reached by Dr Dhanapala? There is no hope of rectifying the disadvantages to Sri Lanka in the CFA through negotiations. Appeals to the international community for a paradigm shift in its attitude to the LTTE would be like waiting for eternity as long as Norway is involved.

If any lessons are to be learnt they are that Sri Lanka cannot depend on the inter-

national community to resolve its national question and its related issues.

But it is unlikely that either candidate would be guided by these lessons. They would both cling to the international community for guidance and material sustenance. So, under either presidency, the country can only expect more of the same.

However desirous a future president may be in meeting the expectations of the Tamil people through the proposal and adoption of a federal structure, the existing political formations in parliament would not allow him to do so because of the lack of the needed two-thirds majority.

One avenue open would be for the only branch of government under the president's authority — the executive — to be structured in a way that would demonstrate to all communities, and in particular the Tamil community, the sincerity and commitment towards creating a unified Sri Lankan nation, by sharing executive power where the sovereignty of all communities would be represented in this, the most vital branch of government.

By creating an all-inclusive Cabinet of ministers in which all communities are represented in a proportionate ratio and some key ministries are also assigned to persons of proven ability from the non-Sinhala communities, a new president could charter a new course in Sri Lankan politics. Such an act would be within the president's purview. An inclusive Cabinet would help to propagate solidarity to help heal and unify a fractured nation and in the process serve as a catalyst for economic progress.

At the end of the day, it would probably not be an analytical evaluation that would guide the people but their intuitive perception as to which candidate would have the courage to take creative steps towards bringing them the peace with dignity that has been for so long denied.

— The Island/ANN

# Sri Lanka in muddier waters

In the last two decades, it seemed that much of the Sri Lankan polity had reconciled itself to federalism (by whatever name called) as essential to a solution to the Tamil question. The 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was admittedly India-driven but slowly, even its opponents within the Sinhalese polity agreed with its basic principle of devolution. In 1994, President Chandrika Kumaratunga became the first mainstream Sri Lankan politician to articulate a non-chauvinistic solution to the ethnic conflict along truly federal lines. It is no secret that Ranil Wickremesinghe, the leader of the opposition United National Party, who had no known disagreement with devolution, scuttled the constitutional reforms for opportunistic reasons. It is disappointing that Mahinda Rajapakse, chosen by President Kumaratunga's Sri Lanka Freedom Party as its candidate in the upcoming presidential elections, could sacrifice devolution so readily in return for the support of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. The pact Mr. Rajapakse recently signed with the JVP binds him to several commitments, including one not to revive the controversial agreement to share post-tsunami reconstruction funds with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Given the fact that the agreement gave the LTTE disproportionate control of the funds and, in the process, undeserved legitimacy, the JVP demand for a "new program" is justifiable. But it is in committing himself to "protect, defend and preserve the unitary nature" of Sri Lanka that Mr. Rajapakse seems to have set the clock back some 20 years on the issue of a permanent settlement to the conflict.

Understandably upset over the way Mr. Rajapakse turned his back on the most important project of her presidency, President Kumaratunga has criticised the pact with the JVP. How this will affect party support for Mr. Rajapakse is not clear, especially as the President herself forged an SLFP-JVP alliance for the 2004 parliamentary elections. It is easy to blame the recent developments on an underlying streak of Sinhala majoritarianism, but that does not capture the essence of the situation. True, Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism, with an extremist fringe, continues to afflict Sri Lanka. However, this is largely due to the LTTE — whose intransigence, refusal to commit itself to a political solution within a united Sri Lanka, and penchant for terrorism perpetually fuel Sinhalese chauvinism. Evidently, that is the sentiment Mr. Rajapakse hopes to tap for his campaign against Mr. Wickremesinghe. What the SLFP candidate needs to realise is that playing to the Sinhala-Buddhist gallery will only help the LTTE justify its extremism. Until now, Mr. Rajapakse was answerable only to his constituency in southern Sri Lanka. As a leader playing for national stakes, he has to show a long-term plan for the country. Instead, he has chosen Premadasa-like pragmatism. In consequence, the coming elections are likely to be focussed on which of the two candidates is a better manager of the contradictions of Sri Lankan politics, rather than who has the better vision for the country and for resolving the main question confronting it — the Tamil question.



# Buddhist monks' party supports Rajapakse

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) on Tuesday agreed to support Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, after he accepted the parties conditions including finding a solution within a unitary state and exploring an alternative aid-sharing deal with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for reconstructing the tsunami-hit north-eastern coastline.

A formal agreement between Mr. Rajapakse and the JHU is scheduled to be signed next week at the Dalada Mahigawa (Temple of the Tooth Relic) in Kandy — considered to be among the holiest of Buddhist

shrines in Sri Lanka. The other conditions set out by the JHU include replacing the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) by an alternative agreement and withdrawing the privatisation plans.

## Parliamentary debut

An all-Buddhist monk party, JHU, made its parliamentary debut at the April 2004 snap general poll on the plank of "restoring Dharma Rajya." The party polled 5.52 lakh votes (5.97 per cent) of the total votes, and won nine seats in the 225-member House.

The United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) — with the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the JVP as the main

allies — polled 45.60 per cent of the all-island vote in 2004. Though the JVP pulled out from the alliance in June, it has agreed to support Mr. Rajapakse's candidature. To be declared elected, a presidential candidate has to secure more than 50 per cent of the all-island votes.

## Chandrika declines offer

The SLFP on Tuesday marked its 54th anniversary with a rally in Colombo. The rally, which started with a procession, is the party's first major event since it announced the candidature of Mr. Rajapakse.

The state-run *Daily News* on Tuesday reported that President Chandrika Kumaratunga de-

clined an offer by the party to name her as the SLFP's life president.

## Poll campaign

Tuesday's rally, in which Ms. Kumaratunga and Mr. Rajapakse are scheduled to speak, also marks the start of the SLFP's election campaign, the newspaper said. Earlier in the day, the main Opposition United National Party (UNP) also commemorated its 59th anniversary. Presiding over the anniversary celebration, UNP leader and presidential candidate Ranil Wickremesinghe said the party would regain power in the presidential election, a private radio station reported.



**WARMING UP TO POLLS:** Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse (left) and Foreign Minister Anura Bandaranaike at a party convention in Colombo on Tuesday. — PHOTO: AP

W

10-15

79

S. K. v. K.

# JVP to back Rajapakse in Lanka polls

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, Sept. 5. — Sri Lanka's main Marxist party today said it would support Prime Minister Mr Mahinda Rajapakse in the Presidential election as he had agreed to scrap the tsunami aid sharing deal with the Tamil Tigers, adopt a new cease fire agreement and review the role of Norway in the peace process.

The JVP said Mr Rajapakse, candidate of the ruling People's Alliance, has agreed to their 12-point memorandum outlining the policies to be pursued by him if he won the Presidential election, to be held any time between 22 October and 21 November 21.

"We have agreed to sup-

port the candidature of Mr Mahinda Rajapakse based on the present conditions in the country. We will sign this agreement in five to six days," JVP leader Mr Somawansa Amarasinghe told reporters here. The JVP said Mr Rajapakse agreed to completely scrap the controversial aid sharing deal with the Tamil Tigers, to adopt a new cease fire agreement and to review the role of peace broker Norway.

"There are attempts by national and international conspirators to violate the sovereignty of this country. There are challenges to the sovereignty of the nation," he said. However, he declined to say if the party would rejoin the government following the latest agree-

ment with the ruling party's Presidential candidate. The JVP said the premier has also agreed to stop privatisation, a key policy which President Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga too had embraced.

Mr Amarasinghe said Mr Rajapakse will include the 12-point agreement with the JVP in his manifesto soon.

The Marxist party is bitterly opposed to any concessions to Tamil Tigers and to the cease fire the previous government entered into with the rebels in February 2002. Mr Rajapakse's main challenger at the polls is former premier Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe who wanted to revive the stalled peace bid with the Tigers.

# A move to defeat secret agenda of the separatists, says JVP

Party spells out 12 conditions for support to Rajapakse

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) on Monday said it would support Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse in the coming presidential election based on a set of 12 conditions.

JVP leader Somawansa Amarasinghe described the support as "the politically correct decision" and one taken "to defeat the secret agenda of the separatists."

## "Agreement soon"

The JVP said Mr. Rajapakse had agreed to the conditions and that the agreement would be signed in the "next five or six days."

There was no comment from the Prime Minister or his campaign managers.

The annual convention of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which named Mr. Rajapakse as its candidate, is scheduled for Tuesday.

Mr. Amarasinghe said the JVP's central committee had "considered all the circumstances, the situation in which our country is at the moment," and taken the decision "on certain

conditions." Key clauses include doing away with the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS), aimed at sharing international financial assistance with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, preserving the "unitary" state, not granting the Interim Self-Governing Authority or "any such political or administrative structure to the LTTE" without a lasting solution, abolishing the Executive Presidency, stopping privatisation of the economic "nerve-centres" and a non-aligned foreign policy.

The JVP formed the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) in 2004 along with the SLFP, but quit the Government on June 16 protesting against the P-TOMS.

The "policy-agreement" said the P-TOMS — on which there is an interim restraint by the Supreme Court — "shall not" be implemented.

However, "a new programme shall be formulated as a priority task" to review the programme and "to activate it forthwith through the assistance and intervention of the Government." On talks with the Tigers, the JVP

said it believed that "it is necessary" to talk "not only with the LTTE, but also with all other relevant parties" to resolve the "national question." It also said that neither an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) — an LTTE demand — nor "any such political and administrative structure" would be given without an agreement on a "lasting solution."

## Review of truce

The policy agreement also states: "It is hereby agreed to protect, defend and preserve the unitary nature of the Sri Lankan state under any solutions to be presented, formed or formulated" to solve the conflict.

The JVP said the 2002 ceasefire agreement "shall be reviewed and revised fully" and would be "completely re-done" by "removing and eliminating" clauses that are "prejudicial and harmful" to security, which "foster and nurture separatism," and are "inconsistent" with the Constitution.

As facilitator Norway had "shown unprecedented bias and partiality towards the LTTE," the JVP wants the Prime Minis-

ter to "reconsider seriously whether Norway should be allowed to engage in those activities further and necessary."

Restoration of human rights, democracy and law and order, which had become a "non-existent phenomenon" due to the LTTE's "terrorist activities" would have to be given priority.

"Appropriate action" should be taken to ensure multi-party democracy and "to create an atmosphere for the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim peoples to live without any fear and perplexity." The Executive Presidency must be abolished as it was "most destructive and harmful" to democracy.

The JVP also wanted Sri Lanka to adopt a "non-aligned foreign policy," which would "in particular" take into account "the regional and Asian co-operation."

On the economic front, JVP wanted an economic policy that would strengthen and promote national economy. Economic "nerve centres" such as ports, banks, oil and electricity "shall not be privatised" and any action taken so far in these areas would have to be abolished.



**SETTING TERMS:** JVP leader Somawansa Amarasinghe (right) addressing reporters in Colombo on Monday. — PHOTO: AFP

# Sri Lanka: problems of a possible pact

A possible alliance between the JVP and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse ahead of the Presidential election could sharpen the polarisation in the party.

V.S. Sambandan

IN SETTING out its conditions for supporting Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse in the upcoming Sri Lankan Presidential election, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) has cast the die for a polarisation of the island-nation's electorate into unitarist and non-unitarist camps.

The conditions, which the JVP says have been accepted by Mr. Rajapakse, are an emphatic reiteration of the unitarist *status quo*. Consequently, President Chandrika Kumaratunga's paradigm of a federal solution — which has won broad acceptance among the island-nation's two main formations: the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party and its traditional Left allies, and the Opposition United National Party and its allies — runs the risk of fading away from the main discourse.

There is also a danger of shrill rhetoric during the campaigning, rather than any serious criticism of the way the peace process has been conducted. This could result in the entrenchment of an unchanged Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and thus challenge a solution within a united and pluralist Sri Lanka.

Two points in the JVP's 12 conditions are likely to distance even the non-LTTE minority vote from Mr. Rajapakse. Clause Three, which wants the Presidential aspirant to "protect, defend and preserve the unitary nature of the Sri Lankan state," is one. Clause Seven, which wants the Presidential system abolished, is another. Both are likely to make it difficult for the minority parties, including those opposed to the LTTE, to publicly share a platform with the JVP.

One direct outcome of the emerging Rajapakse-JVP alliance is the difficulty faced by anti-LTTE Tamil parties and the other minorities — Muslim and upcountry Tamil formations. The anti-LTTE formations, which are apprehensive that the Tigers would be given a free run in the event of a UNP victory, would also find it difficult to align with Mr. Rajapakse backed by the JVP holding onto these conditions.

With the SLFP yet to formally pronounce its position on the JVP's conditions, the key development to watch for is the comfort level between these two parties in the emerging equation.

In what turned out to be his final public



Workers carry a poster of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse, to the venue in Colombo where the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party is meeting on Tuesday to ratify the latter's candidature for the Presidential election. — PHOTO: AFP.

appearance, the late Lakshman Kadirgamar lauded Ms. Kumaratunga for changing the mindset of the SLFP towards one that found a federal solution acceptable.

Now, with the JVP agreement to be signed, the SLFP will have to decide whether to continue along the Kumaratunga path of federalism or revert to its pre-1994 unitarist mould. The high-point of the latter stance was the SLFP's opposition to the India-Sri Lanka Accord that provided for Provincial

Councils. But now a clear public positioning by the main Presidential aspirants that continuity would be maintained with the Kumaratunga paradigm on the key issue of conflict resolution becomes critical.

An emerging strand of *realpolitik* is the manner in which the two ends of the political spectrum — the JVP and the LTTE — have started calling the shots for the poll. The LTTE has, for the moment, expressed "disinterest" in "southern politics." But go-

ing by past experience it is evident that as election-day nears, its position will become more visible — through words and deeds.

Also on test will be an axiom that Sri Lanka's directly elected Executive President is a safeguard for the minorities and hence the victor is determined by the minority vote. A broad indication that this need not necessarily be the case presented itself in the 1999 Presidential re-election of Ms. Kumaratunga. In 1994, Ms. Kumaratunga was swept to power, winning an unprecedented 62.28 per cent of the all-island vote. She polled more than 50 per cent in all electoral districts — the highest (87.30 per cent) was in Tamil-majority Batticaloa district. Though she won 96.35 per cent of the popular vote in Jaffna; the 1994 election saw a low turnout in the northern town with only 16,934 people voting.

In the 1999 re-election, Ms. Kumaratunga won 51.12 per cent of the all-island vote — a clear drop across the island's 22 electoral districts. She crossed the 50 per cent mark only in 14 districts and fared badly in the Tamil-majority electoral districts. For instance, in Batticaloa, she polled a mere 34.66 per cent. Her second victory, hence, was despite the minority Sri Lankan Tamil vote going against her.

The 1999 outcome has one important bearing on the coming election — that a Presidential victor need not necessarily have the complete backing of the Tamil vote.

While the JVP's condition that a solution should be within a unitary framework would push the anti-LTTE Tamil votes away from Mr. Rajapakse; the other condition that the Executive Presidency be abolished could cost him the support of Muslims and upcountry Tamils. One implication of this would be the possible hardening of electoral rhetoric in the days ahead and the risk of a victory for a JVP-backed candidate being translated into a victory for a majoritarian unitary state.

The more lasting consequence would be that the rhetoric surrounding these two clauses — particularly retaining the unitarist state — would dilute the other critical points in the proposed agreement such as re-negotiating the ceasefire agreement, reworking an agreement on tsunami reconstruction, and peace talks involving all parties.

# “The Tigers must feel the heat for what they have done”

Sri Lanka's new Foreign Minister **Anura Bandaranaike** has no doubts about the role of the LTTE in the August 12 assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar. In an exclusive interview, Mr. Bandaranaike says election time is also killing time in his country. Excerpts:

Amit Baruah

HD-11 25/8

**What is the objective of your visit to New Delhi?**

**Anura Bandaranaike:** After I was unexpectedly allocated the portfolio of foreign affairs under very tragic circumstances, I wanted to send a loud and clear message to the world of our [Sri Lanka-India] friendship.

I still recall what my mother [Sirimavo Bandaranaike] said before she died. She said, remember, our best friend is India. And, our friends are the Gandhis. So, with the return of the Gandhi family ... it was only logical that I come here first.

**What effect do you think the tragic assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar will have on the peace process?**

It will have a tremendous effect because the evidence that we have so far found has definitely indicated that it was a job done by the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam]. He [Kadirgamar] was on the hit list, as you know, for the last 10-11 years.

Why did they [the Tigers] choose this particular time? On the eve of Presidential elections, to kill him; it's something that puzzles a lot of us. It's very difficult for democratic politicians like us to put our mind frame into the mind frame of a terrorist killer. We think democratically, they don't.

So, why they chose [to kill Kadirgamar], and at this point, no one knows. Another good example is the killing of [former Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe] Premadasa [by the LTTE] who sent out the IPKF [Indian Peace-Keeping Force], who played up to the LTTE, who gave vast amounts of money from the treasury [to the Tigers], which was totally illegal and immoral. We have evidence of it being transported to the north. He [Premadasa] brought them [the Tigers] to Colombo for several discussions and they killed him.

Now, the killing of Rajiv Gandhi was also something that nobody expected. They knew the wrath of the world would come on them, but they didn't care a hoot.

**What is the future of the ceasefire agreement between your Government and the Tigers?**

Well, we are trying very hard ... [turns to Jayantha Dhanapala, Senior Adviser to President Chandrika Kumaratunga]

**Jayantha Dhanapala:** The ceasefire has been violated 3,066 times by the LTTE up to the end of July and 136 times by the Government. But, the Government's violations have



Anura Bandaranaike ... worried about the violence.

— PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR.

been restricted to harassment at checkpoints, which is minor compared to the egregious violations of the LTTE, consisting of assassinations, abductions, various kinds of torture, and, of course, child recruitment, which is over 50 per cent of their violations.

We have pointed out the imperfections in the ceasefire agreement because we know there are no sanctions at all for persistent violations.

It is a very imbalanced ceasefire agreement, but we continue with it because, as a responsible Government, we cannot abro-

gate a ceasefire and plunge the country into conflict.

At the same time, there is an urgent need, especially following the brutal killing of the Foreign Minister of the country, for us to try to find ways and means of stopping the killings. And, for some time, even before the assassination, we have been discussing with the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission how best this can be done. Now, after the assassination, it has become more urgent.

So, what we have proposed is a technical-level discussion of the ceasefire agreement,

conducted by the local military commanders with the military cadres of the LTTE so that all killings should stop. We are not at all supportive of any killings on any side; we want the ceasefire to stop all killings and we want to stop all child recruitment as well.

We would like to have this discussion in Sri Lanka and we have made this abundantly clear. We are not talking about a discussion on the core issues of the peace process at this stage of the peace process because it would be far too premature given the current situation, where there is a total lack of trust.

**What would you like the Indian Government to say or do at this juncture?**

**Anura Bandaranaike:** We would like the Indian Government to be very emphatic to the free world that this [the LTTE] is a terrorist organisation ... try to influence the Europeans, in particular, who have been misled by the Norwegians into various other channels, away from the LTTE.

They must feel the heat for what they have done [the assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar]. Election time is killing time. It [the Rajiv murder] happened during election time in India; it happened in Sri Lanka twice during elections.

We are going to face two [Presidential and parliamentary] elections probably one after the other or [both] on the same day, I don't know. India's concerns were expressed by sending its Defence Minister [Pranab Mukherjee] for his [Kadirgamar] funeral, which we appreciate very much.

India has done everything it can, but we would like them to be very hard on them [the LTTE] for ceasefire violations and political killings.

**The United Kingdom has recently announced new steps against those who speak in favour of terrorist violence. In the light of what's happened in Sri Lanka, should European Governments be more proactive on the question of LTTE activities like raising funds?**

Definitely. I think the Europeans have been misinformed deliberately ... the role of Norway is under severe criticism in Sri Lanka.

**How will your Government manage the question of violence in the run-up to the elections?**

We cannot manage it. You'll could not manage it either. How can we manage it? It's not possible. We really come back to the original point that we don't know what their [LTTE] agenda is; we don't know what they will do.

# Sri Lanka Presidential poll this year: apex court

HO-13 ✓  
27/8

## SLFP accepts ruling, says it will work for success of Rajapakse

V. S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's Supreme Court on Friday unanimously ruled that the next Presidential election would have to be held later this year.

Holding that President Chandrika Kumaratunga's second six-year term of office commenced on December 22, 1999, a five-member Bench directed Commissioner of Elections Dayananda Dissanayake to hold the next Presidential poll accordingly.

The 25-page verdict, read out by Chief Justice Sarath N. Silva said: "The President will hold office for a period of six years commencing on the date on which the result of the election is declared being in the present case, 22nd December 1999." The court "directed" the Commissioner of Elections "to take steps on that basis" to conduct the next poll.

Elmore Perera, counsel for the Commissioner of Elections told *The Hindu* that according to the Constitution, the next Presidential poll would have to be held between October 22 and November 21 this year.

The Sri Lankan President, who

• **Commissioner of Elections directed to take steps**

• **Verdict ends year-long speculation**

• **Matter was referred to Supreme Court in early August**

enjoys vast executive powers, is directly elected by the people in an all-island poll.

The verdict ends a nearly year-long speculation on the timing of the Presidential poll. Ms. Kumaratunga, who was first elected President in 1994 for a six-year term, opted for an early Presidential re-election in 1999 — a year ahead of schedule. After surviving a suicide bomb attack on the last day of her election campaign, she was declared elected on December 22, 1999 and was sworn in immediately as President for the second term.

The controversy over the period of her second term started last year when Ms. Kumaratunga said a "secret swearing-in ceremony" was held in 2000 to mark the start of her second tenure.

The Opposition United National Party had protested against what it termed as Ms. Kumaratunga's attempt to extend her presidency.

This July it took out a long march from Dondra, in the southern tip of Sri Lanka, to Colombo demanding that the Presidential poll be held in 2005.

The matter was referred to the Supreme Court in early August by Ms. Kumaratunga. Subsequently the all Buddhist-clergy parliamentary party, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) also moved the court.

As the Constitution sets a two-term limit on Presidency, Ms. Kumaratunga would be unable to contest for another term.

The ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) has already named its Prime Minister, Mahinda Rajapakse, as its Presidential candidate, while the Opposition UNP, has chosen its leader and former Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe.

In Parliament, Cabinet spokesperson Nimal Siripala de Silva said the SLFP accepted the ruling and would work for the success of Mr. Rajapakse, the state-run radio Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) reported.

THE HINDU



# LTTE wants to talk to avoid terror tag

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN

The assertion by the leader of the political wing of the LTTE, S P Tamilselvan, that the government will have to demonstrate flexibility if progress is to be achieved in negotiations highlights the competing pulls which the Tigers are seeking to balance. By expressing cautious optimism about current peace efforts, Tamilselvan is trying to deflect criticism of the LTTE for its alleged involvement in the assassination of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar earlier this month.

Besides, although the 2002 ceasefire agreement has increasingly come under strain (especially in eastern Sri Lanka), a return to the armed struggle is an unviable option for the LTTE at this stage. This is because the LTTE lacks the requisite firepower to secure its political objectives on the battlefield, there is a sense of war weariness at the grassroots level which it cannot ignore



LTTE political wing leader  
S P Tamilselvan

## NEWS ANALYSIS

and global realities in the post-9/11 period have placed considerable pressure on the Tigers not to jettison the ceasefire.

At the same time, by underscoring the LTTE's growing impatience with the stalled peace process, Tamilselvan is implicitly focusing attention on certain core demands. These include abrogating emergency regulations and reviving the joint mechanism for the distribution of tsunami aid

which has virtually been suspended after the supreme court stayed the implementation of some key aspects of the scheme. In addition, the LTTE is likely to increasingly press for greater freedom of movement for Tamils, restrictions on troop movements and a more effective security cover to be provided to its officials travelling in government-controlled areas. For its part, the Kumaratunga administration will be reluctant to yield substantial ground on these questions unless it achieves headway in getting the LTTE to soften its stand on stricter monitoring of the ceasefire and curbs on the stockpiling of illegal weapons.

As long as these differences persist, there is little prospect for commencing negotiations on an interim power-sharing arrangement in Lanka that is so essential for revitalising the search for peace. In any case, the substantive gap on the core issues that will form the basis of such discussions still remains extremely wide.

27 AUG 2005 11:00 AM



Anura Bandaranaike

## Chandrika brother new foreign minister

**Colombo, Aug. 22 (Reuters):** The brother of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga was sworn in as foreign minister today to replace Lakshman Kadirgamar, assassinated by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels, the government said.

Anura Bandaranaike will also retain his portfolio as tourist minister, Kumaratunga's office said in a statement. Finance minister Sarath Amunugama has taken over Bandaranaike's Industry and investment promotion portfolio.

"Minister Anura Bandaranaike took his oaths as the minister of foreign affairs before President Chandrika Kumaratunga this evening," the statement said.

The Bandaranaike family has been one of the dominant forces in national politics since the 1950s, when her father founded the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Both her parents served as Prime Minister.

Kadirgamar, an ethnic Tamil who campaigned to have the LTTE outlawed by the US and Britain, was shot dead on August 12 in a killing that raised the spectre of a return to a two-decade civil war that killed more than 64,000 people.

Kumaratunga has squarely laid blame for the assassination on the Tigers, who have denied any responsibility — a denial analysts say is a stock disclaimer from the rebels.

Peace mediator Norway is arranging emergency talks between the age-old foes in a bid to find ways to preserve the three-and-a-half-year truce — the longest period of relative peace since the Tigers began their war for self-rule in earnest in 1983.

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court will announce on Friday whether the next presidential election will take place this year or next, the chief justice said today, after a bitter political feud drove the issue into the courts.

Kumaratunga is locked in a public wrangle with her political opponents over the timing of the next presidential election. She cannot run again, and argues that the constitution allows her to serve two full six-year terms despite the fact that she stood for re-election a year early.



# The death of a ceasefire agreement

Unless Colombo moves rapidly towards negotiations for a new ceasefire agreement and a permanent political solution, it will be guilty of selling out Tamils in order to buy an illusory peace for the Sinhalese.

Rohini Hensman

THE CEASEFIRE Agreement (CFA) of 2002 is dead: it breathed its last when Lakshman Kadirgamar was assassinated. When members of one party to a ceasefire agreement (the LTTE) shoot dead a leading member of the other party (the Government of Sri Lanka), they are in effect killing the agreement. So let us not kid ourselves with empty rhetoric about the peace process. The fact is that the CFA was buried along with Kadirgamar.

However, this does not mean that war is inevitable. On the contrary, it offers us a great opportunity to avert war by putting in place a much stronger CFA. The assassination of Kadirgamar, which was only the latest in a string of hundreds of LTTE murders of independent-minded Tamils during the ceasefire, was a direct consequence of fatal flaws in the old CFA. In a revealing interview in early August, leader of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission Hargrup Haukland said: "One of the cornerstones of the ceasefire agreement is that the LTTE should have the possibility to do political work in the north and in the east and also have the freedom of movement of the cadres. If that cornerstone is removed, then it is in jeopardy." It was abundantly clear at least two years ago what the LTTE's 'political work' and 'freedom of movement' meant: a licence to kill Tamil critics and abduct Tamil children with impunity. Mr. Haukland's statement that this licence is a 'cornerstone' of the CFA tacitly assured the LTTE that the SLMM supported its 'right' to commit these crimes. That assurance, and the past performance of the SLMM, gave the LTTE the confidence that it could kill Kadirgamar (whom the Tigers had threatened with death several times in the past) without losing the backing of the Norwegian monitors.

Yet a ceasefire means nothing if it is not a commitment that the parties to it will refrain from killing each other, and there is no way Kadirgamar's assassination can be seen as anything other than the termination of the agreement. A new CFA must tie the peace process to watertight guarantees of respect for human and democratic rights by all parties. If the Norwegian mediators wish to participate in the negotiations for such an agreement, they should make it clear that they do not support the 'right' of LTTE death squads and press gangs to do their dirty work with impunity. If they feel the Sri Lankans are inferior beings who do not deserve human rights and democracy, let them go home and good riddance. Unless the LTTE signs such an agreement, its members should be barred from entering Colombo and other Government-controlled areas. The Government has been punished for its *laissez-faire* attitude to LTTE killings of Tamil civilians by the loss of one of its most distinguished members; now it should begin to protect its citizens from the LTTE's criminal activities.

Whether the Norwegians stay or go, we must call on the United Nations to provide independent human rights monitors. The past few years have shown quite conclusively that there is a conflict of interest involved in monitoring both the ceasefire and human rights. The SLMM and Norwegian Government have consistently ignored human rights violations in order to preserve what they call the peace process. Yet it should be obvious to any sane person that if the

whole conflict started due to violation of the human and democratic rights of Tamils, it is absurd to think that it can be resolved by continuing to violate the rights of Tamils. Therefore it is crucially important to the peace process to have monitors whose only remit is to defend the human rights of all Sri Lankans. Their role will be especially important in the uncleared areas, where they must ensure that all child conscripts are released and put a stop to child conscription as well as killings of civilians — both of which are defined internationally as war crimes. And until they guarantee that the LTTE has stopped child conscription, the U.N. should impose on the LTTE the sanctions it threatened, especially an embargo on arms sales and financial contributions to the LTTE and its front organisations, and a ban on international travel of its members.

The new CFA must recognise that *de facto*, there are three parties to the conflict: the Government, the Prabakaran faction and the Karuna faction; indeed, most of the fighting during the ceasefire has been between the two latter parties. Thus a cessation of fighting necessitates a three-cornered ceasefire. However, even if the Prabakaran faction refuses to sign the agreement but the Government signs it with the Karuna faction, it will reduce the threat of war and human rights violations quite significantly, and is therefore a goal worth pursuing. It should also be clear that while the CFA concerns only the armed parties the peace process and negotiations for a new constitution are the concern of all citizens, who should therefore be encouraged to participate individually and collectively in arriving at a permanent political solution that addresses the genuine aspirations of the Tamil people as well as protecting the human and democratic rights of all citizens in all parts of the country. Unless the Government moves rapidly towards negotiations for a new CFA and a permanent political solution, it will be guilty — like the UNF Government, the Norwegian mediators and some Sinhalese liberals and NGOs — of selling out Tamils in order to buy an illusory peace for the Sinhalese.

By now it should be obvious even to the most naïve that the objective of the LTTE is not a homeland for Tamils. A homeland is a place where you need not fear violence, persecution or discrimination; the very idea that the LTTE is trying to achieve this is laughable. What it is trying to create, on the contrary, is a vast concentration camp for Tamils, where any Tamil with courage and integrity — like Lakshman Kadirgamar — can be incarcerated and tortured or killed. All those who promote the myth of the LTTE as the sole representative of Tamils in Sri Lanka are effectively accomplices in its drive to liquidate all critics. The alternative vision, promoted by Kadirgamar in a speech shortly before he was murdered, is that "The movement for democracy in certain districts of the North and East must begin to roll. If the Government of Norway is unable to plead this cause with the conviction and determination that it deserves, it should stand aside and yield to other parties who could carry the flag of democracy into areas where darkness presently prevails." If his death spurs on the realisation of this vision, then he would not have died in vain.

(Rohini Hensman is a writer and rights activist based in Sri Lanka and India.)

# অস্ত্র সংবরণে অন্যু-থাকবে এল টি টি ই

কিলিনোজি, শ্রীলঙ্কা, ১৭ অগস্ট:  
অস্ত্র সংবরণ তুলে নিয়ে দু'দশকের  
পুরনো গৃহযুদ্ধ ফের শুরু করতে চায়  
না টাইগাররা।

তবে এলটিটিই-র পক্ষ থেকে  
জানানো হয়েছে, তারা দেশের  
সংখ্যালঘু তামিলদের স্বার্থ রক্ষায় সব  
রকম চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাবে। গত  
শুক্রবার অজ্ঞাতপরিচয় দুষ্কৃতীর হাতে  
শ্রীলঙ্কার বিদেশমন্ত্রী লক্ষ্মণ  
কাদিরগামারের হত্যার পরে এই প্রথম  
মুখ খুলল এলটিটিই।

কাদিরগামার-হত্যার দায়  
এলটিটিই স্বীকার না করলেও  
সন্দেহের তির এখনও তাদেরই দিকে।  
কিন্তু আজ তারা সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছে,  
শান্তি বজায় রাখার দায়িত্ব তাদের নয়,  
সরকারেরই। এলটিটিই-র রাজনৈতিক  
শাখার প্রধান এস পি তামিলসেলভান  
সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, “আমরা শান্তি  
বজায় রাখতে চাই। যুদ্ধ করে সমস্যার  
সমাধান সম্ভব নয়। কিন্তু আমাদের  
উপরে যদি জোর করে যুদ্ধ চাপিয়ে  
দেওয়া হয়, তা হলে কোনও উপায়  
থাকবে না।”

২০০২ সাল থেকে শ্রীলঙ্কায়  
যুদ্ধবিরতি চললেও গত কয়েক মাসে  
দেশের পূর্ব প্রান্তে সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে  
জঙ্গিদের ব্যাপক সংঘর্ষ চলছে।

বিদেশমন্ত্রীর মৃত্যু সম্পর্কে  
তামিলসেলভান বলেন, “কাদিরগামার  
যে বিশ্বাসঘাতক, সে বিষয়ে কোনও  
সন্দেহ নেই। তামিল সম্প্রদায়ের সবাই  
এ কথা জানে। তবে সেই জন্যই যে  
কাদিরগামারের মৃত্যু হয়েছে, এ কথা  
বলা যায় না। এই মুহূর্তে আমরা বদলা  
নেওয়ার কথা ভাবছি না।” — রয়টার্স

## এলটিটিই-র প্রভাব বাড়ছে দিল্লিতেও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৭  
অগস্ট: খোদ রাজধানীতেই থানা  
গাড়ি টাইগারেরা!

আজ রাজ্যসভায় এক প্রশ্নের  
উত্তরে এই সম্ভাবনার কথা জানিয়েছেন  
কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল।  
সেই সঙ্গেই তাঁর বক্তব্য, অন্যান্য  
সম্ভ্রাসবাদী সংগঠনের সঙ্গেও  
যোগাযোগ রয়েছে টাইগারদের।  
শ্রীলঙ্কার বিদেশমন্ত্রী লক্ষ্মণ  
কাদিরামারের হত্যার পর এল টি টি ই-  
বিতর্ক আবার সামনে চলে এসেছে।

কলম্বোয় গিয়ে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রশ্নব  
মুখোপাধ্যায় সে দেশের প্রেসিডেন্টকে  
জানিয়ে এসেছেন, ভারতের  
সার্বভৌমত্ব এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ শান্তি  
যাতে হিংসায় বিঘ্নিত না হয় তা নিশ্চিত  
করতে হবে। তার পরেই আজ সংসদে  
পাটিলের এই মন্তব্য যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ  
বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে।

পাটিল জানান, যদিও এল টি টি ই  
দিল্লিতে অন্যান্য জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির  
মতো সক্রিয় নয়, তবে তারা ‘বিভিন্ন  
কাজে’ রাজধানীতে আসে।

# Tearful farewell to Kadirgamar

Sri Lankan Prime Minister calls upon all countries to join together to wipe out terrorism

S. Kumar  
119-12  
1878



Foreign Minister Natwar Singh and Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee pay last respect to the slain Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in Colombo on Monday. Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri is at extreme left. At right, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga consoles the wife of Kadirgamar, Suganthie. - PHOTOS: AFP/AP

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The assassinated Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, was cremated here on Monday at a state funeral attended by President Chandrika Kumaratunga and a host of foreign dignitaries.

At a funeral oration on behalf of the nation, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse called upon "all countries" to "join together to wipe out terrorism and strengthen the norms and values of democratic life."

The Prime Minister, in his

first public address since the assassination of Kadirgamar, said: "The evil hand of terror has taken away yet another champion of peace."

Pointing out that the late Kadirgamar projected Sri Lanka as a country that had different communities speaking different languages, but sharing a common heritage, the Prime Minister said: "It is this ground reality that the LTTE seeks to destroy." Their objective is to divide our country and destroy our democratic way of life to which we stand firmly committed.

The acts of terror across the world — September 11, the London bombings, the assassination of former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa and Kadirgamar "are events of the same magnitude," he said. "We have no doubt that all countries of the civilised world will join us as much as we join them in the common struggle against terror in every form and manifestation," he said.

The state funeral was attended by official delegations from several countries, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Norway, Ja-

pan, the Maldives and others.

Earlier in the day, a huge turnout thronged the neighbourhood of the late Kadirgamar to bid him a tearful farewell. The national flag was lowered to half-mast as a mark of respect for the slain Minister and the city wore a funeral look with white flags and condolence banners dotting the city's public spaces.

## Last rites

After religious ceremonies were performed by members of the Buddhist clergy at his official residence, the mortal remains of

Kadirgamar were then taken with military honours from his official residence to Colombo's Independence Square — a venue for important national occasions.

As the decorated hearse wound its way to the cremation site, followed by over a 1,000 people, the tri-services and the police marched to a funeral beat. The school flag of Trinity College, Kandy — from where Kadirgamar won the best all-round student medal — was also carried at the procession.

At the Independence Square,

Kadirgamar's coffin, draped in the national flag, was carried by leading dignitaries. Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Hindu clergy leaders spoke on the need for peace and prayed for the departed soul.

Kadirgamar's son, Sri Rathana Kadirgamar, and nephew, Kevin Jayawardana, jointly lit the funeral pyre.

Kadirgamar is survived by his wife, Suganthie Kadirgamar, two children from his first marriage — Mr. Kadirgamar and Ajitha Perera (daughter) and a grandson, Kiera Perera.

# Chandrika to renew efforts for devolution

S. Lanka

HD-1

1578

## Hunt on for sniper; 12 detained

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Sunday said she would "redouble" her efforts to provide for political devolution to find an end to the island-nation's decades-long separatist conflict.

In a televised address to the nation after Friday's assassination of the Foreign Affairs Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar, the President called for the "continued support" of all Sri Lankans and "friends in the international community."

Clad in a white sari symbolising a state of mourning, Ms. Kumaratunga said: "I will redouble the efforts of my government for the devolution of power based on dialogue with all parties."

She called upon the people to exercise "restraint" and said the state of emergency declared on Saturday was to enable the security forces to track down the assassins.

"Initial indications of the investigations seem to reveal the responsibility of the LTTE in the brutal murder. It is unacceptable that a group that talks endlessly about being committed to a ceasefire would so blatantly violate it. This violation of the ceasefire is the latest in a series of violations by the LTTE. It has denied involvement in the murder, but the denial contradicts the facts and our knowledge of their long-held desire and their repeated attempts to murder both my Tamil Cabinet colleagues," Ms. Kumaratunga said. [Leader of the anti-LTTE Eelam People's Democratic Party Douglas Devananda is also a Cabinet Minister.]

Praising Mr. Kadirgamar as a "true patriot, who paid the ultimate price in the service of his motherland," Ms. Kumaratunga said: "We cannot let hate and terror overcome us. If we are to achieve lasting peace, we need to deal with the root causes of the politics of terror and redress it objectively and effectively."

Sri Lankan authorities on Sunday said 12 persons were detained for questioning following a hunt to track down the assassins of Kadirgamar.

"Most of them are from the north and east. But there has been nothing so far to link them with the assassination," Sri Lankan military spokesperson Daya Ratnayake told *The Hindu*.

The hunt is on for at least one sniper who assassinated the Foreign Minister on Friday night and a probable accomplice. The police were unable to state how many killers were involved in the assassination, but the Sri Lankan Inspector General of Police said on Saturday that it was "most likely" that there were two persons.

Newspaper reports on Sunday described the killing as a "security lapse." Police said the sniper had gained access to the house next door to the Foreign Minister's private residence and had shot him with a long-range rifle, with a telescopic view-finder. While the tripod used to mount the rifle was recovered from a toilet on the first floor of a neighbour's house, the weapon has not been traced, security sources said.

A report in the *Sunday Leader* said police officers from the elite Special Task Force recovered "a modified tripod with a seat." The tripod was reportedly "seven feet in height and appeared to be made to measure."

The officers had also recovered two sets of fingerprints from the site.

"The tripod had been kept overlooking the pool at the Minister's residence. The assassins had made use of the ventilation opening in the toilet and the gunshots were fired from inside the toilet," the newspaper quoted DIG of the STF Nimal Lewke as saying.

Sri Lankan IGP Chandra Fernando told journalists on Saturday that the investigations "are very, very successful at the moment."

# Requiem for a peace process

HD-13

S. Lanka

The assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar has shattered the last remaining illusions about the peace process in Sri Lanka, about the LTTE, and about Norway's role and abilities as a peace facilitator.

1578

Nirupama Subramanian

**I**N 1995, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam withdrew from a truce and peace process with the Sri Lankan Government by blasting two navy ships in the high security Trincomalee harbour. It was an open declaration of military hostilities, and led to an all-out war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government that lasted until 2002.

This time, the LTTE has employed a different tactic. It has declared war against Sri Lanka but in a way that the Government is unable to respond. By killing Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, the LTTE has not just liquidated an arch enemy, who was responsible for exposing the LTTE's ugliness to the world, and whose very existence was a repudiation of the LTTE's claim of "sole representative of Tamils." It has committed a hostile act against the Government with the full awareness that the State will balk from punitive reaction that could endanger the "no-war" situation of the three-year-old ceasefire. After all, no accountable politician can ignore the huge constituency for the peace both in Sinhala-majority southern Sri Lanka and in the North-East.

In a sense, the LTTE never stopped waging the Eelam war. The fighting between the two armies stopped with the ceasefire, but every day since the truce came into existence in February 2002, the LTTE has fought an unconventional war against the Government. And in this, its main weapon is none other than the ceasefire agreement.

Using the truce, the LTTE quickly established *de facto* administrative control in the North-East. The Government had officials posted in the region, but they took orders from the Tigers who ran a parallel government, collected taxes, had their own police force. The LTTE also turned the ceasefire line into a virtual international boundary, even issuing visitors visas for onward travel. The Tigers have pounced on every opportunity to drive home that they are the masters of the North-East.

Simultaneously, the LTTE has been strengthening itself militarily, rearming itself and building an air wing. It deployed senior cadres in a diplomatic charm offensive, sending them globe-trotting while Velupillai Prabhakaran played host in his Mullaithivu jungle hideout to a steady stream of international dignitaries. It did not seem to matter that the LTTE was proscribed by the United States, India, and Britain, that there were Interpol "red corner" notices for Mr. Prabhakaran, or that the LTTE was a known recruiter of children, over which the United Nations has repeatedly expressed concern.

The Sri Lankan Government, which in the decade before had gone on a global campaign to squeeze the LTTE's fund-raising and arms smuggling capacities, now found itself facilitating some of these visits by throwing



President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Lakshman Kadirgamar. — FILE PHOTO: SRIYANTHA WALPOLA.

in Air Force helicopters to ferry Mr. Prabhakaran's visitors and easing Customs and other procedures for the Tigers when they returned from their jaunts abroad.

But the most significant aspect of this unconventional war for Eelam was the way in which the LTTE swiftly used the ceasefire to set itself up as the "sole representative" of the Tamils. Permitted by the truce to open political offices in areas of the North-East under the control of the Government, and where it previously had only a clandestine presence, the LTTE established itself as the predominant, and soon, the only force.

## Tamils targeted

Tamil political parties that did not want to bow to the LTTE withdrew after they were obliged under the agreement to turn in their weapons, because it would leave them unarmed against the LTTE. Those who remained did so at their own risk, and the LTTE started liquidating them, one by one. Among the first to be killed was Thurairajah "Robert" Subathiran of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, picked out long-distance by an LTTE sniper, just as the Foreign Minister was.

The LTTE added to its list of enemies Karuna, its military commander in Batticaloa, who led a rebellion against the top leadership — the first such in the organisation — citing discrimination by it against eastern Tamils. The situation got bloodier as the March 2004 parliamentary elections approached. The LTTE used murder, political intimidation, and plain thuggery to ensure that hand-picked candidates of its proxy, the

Tamil National Alliance, were elected.

Norway, the facilitator of the peace process, and the Norwegian-led Scandinavian ceasefire monitors showed little will to rein in the LTTE, although they periodically paid homage to the importance of safeguarding democracy, pluralism, and human rights in the North-East. When an EPRLF activist in Batticaloa recently told a senior SLMM official that he feared for his life from the LTTE, the official advised him to leave the region.

Norway seemed unconcerned even when the LTTE took this covert war to Colombo, taking out political opponents in the streets of the capital in broad daylight. Last year, the LTTE dispatched a suicide bomber to kill Douglas Devananda, the leader of the Eelam People's Democratic Party and a Minister in President Chandrika Kumaratunga's Cabinet. Intercepted by policemen before she reached her target, the human bomb blew herself up killing the policemen.

But the LTTE notched up other successes, killing several other members of the EPDP and People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam.

This year, it also killed a top intelligence official who had been at the forefront of anti-LTTE operations in the pre-ceasefire years. Even the Government, in its eagerness to show the international community that it would do nothing to upset the LTTE or the peace process, did not show strong enough concern at this violence.

The LTTE would not have done any of this had it been an honest negotiator. But to any observer of the drama in Sri Lanka over the years, and especially since February 2002, it

has been clear for a while that the LTTE's perception of the peace process is not — as Norway would have us imagine, or as Sri Lankans have desperately wanted to believe — as a means of securing a negotiated federal political settlement to the Tamil question.

From day one of the ceasefire, each act of the LTTE — whether the forcible recruitment of children, violence against Muslims in the region, the battle for control of post-tsunami reconstruction finances in the North-East or the lynching of a senior police official in Jaffna last week — was designed to take it further towards the goal of a separate Eelam, and definitely not towards a federal set-up with Colombo.

It is true that the Sinhala political establishment is itself divided about the nature of a permanent solution to the conflict, but to hold this solely responsible for the intransigence of the LTTE is to miss the point that the Tigers themselves are not interested in such a solution.

For the LTTE, the main advantage of the ceasefire is that it can keep pushing towards its ultimate goal while the Sri Lankan Government, accountable to its people and to the international community, can do nothing to stop it.

With the assassination of Mr. Kadirgamar, the LTTE has pushed the envelope even further. It has struck at the heart of the Sri Lankan state, quite confident that there will be no comeback. The assassination has shattered the last remaining illusions about this peace process, about the LTTE, and about Norway's role and abilities as a peace facilitator.

AUG 2004

THE HINDU

119-12  
14/8

# A cowardly act, says Chandrika

## President vows to spare no effort to bring perpetrators of the dastardly act to justice

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga condemned the assassination of Foreign Affairs Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and said her Government "will not be bowed by such heinous acts of violence and will spare no effort to bring the perpetrators of this dastardly act to justice."

Ms. Kumaratunga, for whom Mr. Kadirgamar was a confidante, had visited the National Hospital here on Friday immediately after the critically-wounded Minister was admitted with injuries to his head and chest.

She appointed a committee to coordinate the arrangements for a state funeral to be held on Monday. She has appealed for "calm and restraint in the face of this grave and cowardly attack

transformation of conflict and who were determined to undermine attempts towards a negotiated political solution to the ethnic conflict.

Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse condemned the "brutal act of terrorism," and called upon the nation to be "vigilant in order to defeat the objectives of the perpetrators of this dastardly crime."

He described Mr. Kadirgamar as "one of the best and most successful Foreign Ministers that Sri Lanka has had." He was "mainly responsible for building Sri Lanka's image abroad which was badly tarnished at the time he first assumed office in 1994."

Describing him as "a national leader who was respected by all communities for his stance on the national question," Mr. Rajapakse said, "he worked tirelessly to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and also stood firmly for an undivided Sri Lanka."

Recalling the assassinations of Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Martin Luth-

er King and Rajiv Gandhi, Mr. Rajapakse said, "The ideals for which they sacrificed their lives continue to live and nourish their countries — paradoxically strengthened by the fact of their assassination."

The former ruling ally, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, said "a true son of Sri Lanka has fallen" and that the "LITE bullet aimed at Hon. Lakshman Kadirgamar, was a bullet aimed at all those who reject racism and believe in democracy and human rights. This horrific crime instead of cowering us strengthens the will of the people to resist dictatorship, and fight for true equality, multi-culturalism and multi-ethnicity."

The JVP's politburo said though the JVP and he "came from different histories and different backgrounds, we developed a strong bond based on his transparent decency and love of the country. Born as a Tamil he was at ease with all in Sri Lanka, except with those who believe in racial hatred. We of the JVP have lost a friend; the country has lost a true patriot."

LTTE UNDER CLOUD, TIGERS DENY INVOLVEMENT

# Emergency in Sri Lanka

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, Aug. 13. — Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency for an indefinite period today following the killing of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, calling the slaying a grave setback to the peace process. "The re-starting (of talks) is going to be seriously undermined...," government spokesman Mr Nimal Siripala de Silva said. "The LTTE has denied any involvement, but we find it difficult to accept."

The island nation today said it would not unilaterally violate a ceasefire with the Tigers after the military accused the rebels of killing the 73-year-old minister but made it clear that, would do everything necessary to safeguard its citizens. Earlier, the head of LTTE's political wing, SP Thamiselvan, said: "We strongly condemn this attempt to put the blame on us and we strongly deny any involvement," he said. The rebels today said the state needed to look "inwards" to get at the killers.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga declared a state of emergency to facilitate enhanced security measures and probes into this act of "wanton terror" and appealed for calm. The Tamil Christian minister, a close confidant of the President, was shot in the head and chest at his heavily-guarded residence here last night by two snipers perched on an adjacent building. Police chief Chandra Fernando conceded a security lapse. He said the killers shot the minister from a bathroom of the house which had not been properly checked.

Describing Kadirgamar, who had led the efforts to ban the LTTE as a terrorist outfit, as a "hero of our times", she said: "He

## India condemns killing

NEW DELHI, Aug. 13. — India has condemned the assassination, calling it a "heinous act". Union defence minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee, MEA minister Mr K Natwar Singh and foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran, will attend the funeral. PTI

waged a relentless war against terrorism despite continuous threats to his life." The slain minister will be publicly cremated with state honours on Monday in Colombo's Independence Square, a Cabinet member said. The government has declared Monday a day of mourning.

The emergency gives security forces sweeping powers to arrest and detain suspects for long periods. "We strongly suspect the Tigers because he (Kadirgamar) received threats from the LTTE," defence ministry spokesman Mr Daya Ratnayake said. "Only two weeks ago, we arrested two suspected LTTE men who had been spying on the minister." Seven persons were detained and a massive security operation was launched with police conducting house-to-house searches in Colombo. All vehicles coming into and going out of the city are being checked. Military aircraft hovered over rebel-held territories to monitor the movement of the separatists. Mr Hargrup Haukland, chief of Norway's truce monitors, said the assassination was a "big, big blow to the ceasefire and the whole peace process".

The Oxford-educated minister was the most senior Sri Lankan leader to be assassinated since a bomb attack killed President Ranasinghe Premadasa in May 1993.

AUG 2 2009

THE STATESMAN







# Sri Lanka declares emergency

## Door-To-Door Hunt For Minister's Killers

**Colombo:** A state of emergency was imposed in Sri Lanka on Saturday, hours after the assassination of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, suspected to have been carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE).

"A state of national emergency has been declared to facilitate enhanced security measures and effective investigation into this act of wanton terror," President Chandrika Kumaratunga's office said in a statement. "The President appeals for calm and restraint in the face of this grave and cowardly attack upon Sri Lanka," it added. The minister, whose killing TOI had reported in

official function when he was attacked.

The emergency was declared to give secu-



► **NOT US, SAY TIGERS:** Denying involvement in the killing of Lakshman Kadirgamar, the LTTE on Saturday said the government must look "inwards" to get to the killers who were trying to sabotage the fragile truce. In a statement posted on the pro-rebel Tamilnet website, it said there were government insiders who were seeking to sink the Norway-brokered truce by using violence and accusing the separatists. Agencies

► **INDIA CONDEMNS KILLING:** India on Saturday condemned the killing of Lakshman Kadirgamar as a "heinous act" of terrorism by those seeking to undermine the nation's unity and political stability. "We have learnt with deep shock and profound grief of the brutal killing of a friend of India. It is a heinous act and we condemn it unreservedly," external affairs ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said. Agencies

its final edition on Friday, will be cremated here on Monday.

The announcement came after the Friday night's assassination of 73-year-old Kadirgamar, a Tamil Christian and a Jaffna native who had led the efforts to ban the LTTE as a terrorist outfit. He was shot several times in the head and chest at his heavily-guarded home by suspected rebel snipers. He was rushed in critical condition to hospital, where he died.

The Oxford-educated foreign minister was shot between 10 pm and 11 pm and succumbed to his wounds at 12.15 am. He had gone home for a shower after attending an of-

rity forces sweeping powers to arrest and detain suspects for long periods.

Defence ministry spokesman Daya Ratnayake has asked Colombo residents to remain indoors on Saturday to allow a major search operation to go ahead. He said the Tamil Tigers were the prime suspects in the slaying but the authorities were working with an "open mind". "We strongly suspect the Tigers because he had threats from the LTTE," Ratnayake said. "Two weeks ago, too, we arrested two suspected LTTE men who had been spying on the minister." Kumaratunga's spokesman did not say how long the emergency would last. Agencies

19/8  
S. Lanka  
D-1

1 AUG 2 1998

INDIA

# A man who transcended the ethnic divide

Kadirgamar was in many respects the country's crown jewel

V. S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** Lakshman Kadirgamar, the assassinated Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister, was in many respects the country's and particularly President Chandrika Kumaratunga's crown jewel.

Locating Mr. Kadirgamar in Sri Lanka's bitterly divided and often self-destructive polity requires a step back in time — to the decades of despair when the island-nation's class and ethnic assertions were met with state's entrenchment of the *status quo*.

Born on April 12, 1932, Mr. Kadirgamar schooled at the prestigious Trinity College in Kandy, winning a gold medal for the best all-round student.

## Career in law

Sri Lanka was still peaceful when the young Mr. Kadirgamar passed the Bachelor of Laws (Honours) with a first class in 1953. A year later he was again a topper in the Advocates Final Exam of the Ceylon Law College. In 1955, he was admitted to the Ceylon Bar.

A successful legal career saw him elevated as President's Counsel (1991), Honorary Master of the Inner Temple (1995) and took him to several international positions — the Amnesty International Commissioner to investigate Catholic-Buddhist crisis in Vietnam (1963), a consultant to the International Labour Organisation (1974-76) and Director, Asia Pacific for the World Intellectual Property Organisation (1983-88) — before he began his innings as Sri Lanka's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1994.

The People's Alliance (PA) team led by Ms. Kumaratunga in

imagery. The U.N. was a key forum for Mr. Kadirgamar, who addressed the General Assembly as the Foreign Affairs Minister. His eloquence, marshalling of facts, elaboration of nuances and impeccable delivery won for Sri Lanka hearts across the world. His basic success was in ridding Sri Lanka of a stigma that it had terrorised a linguistic section of its citizens.

By then the international image had swung, catalysed by the LTTE's role in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the "liberation movement" of yesteryear plummeted into being listed a internationally-banned terrorist organisation.

## LTTE's wrath

A squeeze on its finances followed. Significantly, the last major bill piloted by Mr. Kadirgamar was one on July 7 this year, which put into effect the U.N. Convention on suppressing terrorist funding.

More than anything else, in Mr. Kadirgamar's own estimation, it was this role as Foreign Minister that had earned him the wrath of the Tigers.

In an interview to *The Hindu* on August 9, 2002, Mr. Kadirgamar said he was convinced what he did was right. Asked how he reacted to the LTTE's wrath, Mr. Kadirgamar said: "I was, at that time Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka, not any particular group of people. I cannot accept that concept. The Government, and I as Foreign Minister, had to take a stand. I was simply doing my duty. I make no excuses for doing that." For the Tigers, however, Mr. Kadirgamar's call of duty was difficult to digest.

- **A natural debater, suave and eloquent, incisive and compelling**

- **Successfully piloted bill against terrorist financing**

- **Leading figure of Sri Lanka's foreign policy establishment**

- **Face of island nation's changed image**

1994, in which Mr. Kadirgamar was the most visible international figure, made a perceptible change from the decades of despair — the Seventies and the Eighties. As Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Kadirgamar — an ethnic Tamil with an international stature — was Sri Lanka's assertion to the world that it was beyond ethnic differences. A natural debater who was President of the Oxford Union (1959), suave and eloquent, incisive and compelling, Mr. Kadirgamar would, in double quick time, dismiss being isolated and identified as a "Tamil" and take pride in calling himself a "Sri Lankan."

## Powerful statement

The outside world nevertheless saw in him a powerful statement that the majoritarian state of the past was just that — a matter of the past.

Prior to Mr. Kadirgamar's role as the helmsman of Sri Lanka's foreign policy, the nation was viewed globally as a majoritarian state. Think Sri Lanka; think the 1983 pogrom and aerial bombings was the most popular global

# World condemns assassination

Killing puts the peace process in Sri Lanka to a serious test, says Norway

V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The international community on Saturday condemned the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, with world leaders describing it as a "vicious act of terror," and "a gruesome deed."

India, Pakistan, Japan, the Maldives, and Norway have confirmed sending delegations to the state funeral to be held in Colombo on Monday, said Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary H.M.G.S. Palihakkara.

## "Deeply tragic"

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said she was "shocked and saddened by the assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. This senseless murder was a vicious act of terror, which the United States strongly condemns. Those responsible must be brought to justice."

Recalling her meeting with Mr. Kadirgamar this June, Dr. Rice said: "He was a man of dignity, honour and integrity, who devoted his life to bringing peace to Sri Lanka. Together, we must honour his memory by rededicating ourselves to peace and ensuring that the ceasefire remains in force."

Norwegian Foreign Affairs Minister Jan Petersen described the assassination as "a gruesome deed, which is deeply tragic for Sri Lanka. I condemn this killing of a significant politician and a respected representative for his country," Mr. Petersen said.

Striking a note of caution that the "killing puts the peace process in Sri Lanka to a serious test," Mr. Petersen said: "It is



**A REVERED LEADER:** Lakshman Kadirgamar (left) taking oath as Foreign Minister in the presence of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga in this October 19, 2000 file photo. — PHOTO: REUTERS

now of great importance that both parties to the conflict do their utmost to fully fulfil their obligations according to the cease-fire agreement."

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he was "greatly shocked and saddened at the tragic news".

"I strongly condemn that act of violence and would like to offer my deepest condolences to

his family and the people of Sri Lanka," Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, expressed his country's "sorrow and strong condemnation."

## Senseless act: Annan

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed shock and sadness over what he called the "criminal and

senseless" act. "The Secretary General is shocked and saddened to learn that a few hours ago, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was shot and killed in Colombo," his spokesman said.

"He deplores in the strongest terms this criminal and senseless act and hopes that the perpetrators will be found and brought to justice."

In Beijing, China condemned the assassination as "an act of terror" and restated its continued support for the island government's efforts to safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In Brussels, the European Union's Foreign Affairs Commissioner said the assassination was a brutal and senseless terrorist act.

## গুলিতে নিহত

### শ্রীলঙ্কার বিদেশমন্ত্রী



■ অজ্ঞাতপরিচয়  
দুর্ভুক্তীর গুলিতে  
নিহত হয়েছেন  
শ্রীলঙ্কার  
বিদেশমন্ত্রী লক্ষ্মণ  
কাদিরগামার।  
শুক্রবার রাতে  
নিজের বাড়ির

সামনে তাঁর মাথায় গুলি করা হয়।  
শ্রীলঙ্কার সরকারি সূত্রে এ খবর  
জানানো হয়েছে। প্রেসিডেন্ট চন্দ্রিকা  
কুমারতুঙ্গার ঘনিষ্ঠ সহযোগী ৭৩ বছর  
বয়সী কাদিরগামারের হত্যার ঘটনায়  
সন্দেহের তির মূলত তামিল  
টাইগারদের দিকেই। যদিও এলটিটিই  
এ ব্যাপারে এখনও কোনও মন্তব্য  
করেনি। প্রশাসনও সরাসরি তাদের  
নাম নেয়নি। তবে আইজি (পুলিশ)  
এক কথায় বলেন, “এটা টাইগারদেরই  
কাজ।” রাজধানীর বুলার রোডে  
কাদিরগামারের বেসরকারি বাসভবন  
চত্বরটি যথেষ্ট নিরাপত্তাবেষ্টিত। কাছেই  
প্রেসিডেন্ট চন্দ্রিকারও বাসভবন।  
শুক্রবার সন্ধ্যায় নিজের লেখা বইয়ের  
উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠান সেরে লক্ষ্মণ  
কাছের একটি পুলে সাঁতার কাটতে  
যান। সেখান থেকে ফেরার পথেই  
রাত এগারোটা নাগাদ গুলিবিদ্ধ হন  
তিনি। পাশের বাড়িটির বাসিন্দা এক  
তামিল। সেখান থেকেই স্নাইপারের  
পরপর তিনটি গুলি ছুটে আসে বলে  
পুলিশের সন্দেহ। এ মাসের গোড়ায়  
কাদিরগামারের সরকারি বাংলোর  
বাইরেও দুই তামিল জঙ্গিকে গ্রেফতার  
করেছিল পুলিশ। রয়টার্স জানাচ্ছে,  
ঘটনার প্রায় সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই  
কাদিরগামারকে হাসপাতালে নিয়ে  
যাওয়া হয়। জরুরি ভিত্তিতে তাঁর  
অস্ত্রোপচারও হয়। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত  
তাঁকে বাঁচানো যায়নি। রাত সোয়া  
বারোটা নাগাদ তাঁকে মৃত বলে  
ঘোষণা করা হয়। ২০০২ থেকে  
শ্রীলঙ্কায় জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে সরকারের  
সংঘর্ষবিরতি চলছে। কিন্তু গত কয়েক  
মাসে টাইগারেরা একাধিক বার ফের  
অস্ত্র শানানোর হুমকি দিয়েছে। তাদের  
বক্তব্য, পূর্বের প্রদেশগুলিতে  
জঙ্গিদেরই কিছু দলছুট গোষ্ঠী  
সেনাবাহিনীর মদতে এবং খোদ  
সেনাদেরই একাংশ টাইগারদের  
বিরুদ্ধে নিঃশব্দ লড়াই চালিয়ে যাচ্ছে।  
এই পরিস্থিতিতে কাদিরগামারের মৃত্যু  
শ্রীলঙ্কার রাজনীতিতে ফের অশান্তির  
সম্ভাবনা তৈরি করল।

### রাজ্য কর্মীদের ডিএ

■ রাজ্য কর্মীদের ১ সেপ্টেম্বর থেকে  
এক কিস্তি ডিএ বা মহার্ঘ ভাতা  
দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে।  
পূজোর পরে তাঁদের আরও এক কিস্তি  
ডিএ দেওয়ার কথা বিবেচনা করা  
হচ্ছে বলে জানিয়েছেন অর্থমন্ত্রী অসীম  
দাশগুপ্ত। শুক্রবার অর্থমন্ত্রী বলেন,  
“এই ভাতা হবে মূল বেতনের তিন  
শতাংশ। এর ফলে বিভিন্ন দফতরের  
প্রায় ১০ লক্ষ কর্মী, শিক্ষক, পথগায়েত  
ও পুরসভার কর্মী উপকৃত হবেন।  
সুবিধা পাবেন চার লক্ষ অবসরপ্রাপ্ত  
সরকারি কর্মীও।” (সবিস্তার পৃঃ ৭)

### নৈহাটিতে সিটু নেতা খুন

■ সিটু অনুমোদিত বেঙ্গল চটকল  
মজদুর ইউনিয়নের নেতা চিত্তরঞ্জন  
দাস (৫৮)-কে গুলি করে খুন করল  
দুর্ভুক্তীরা। নৈহাটির হুকুমচাঁদ জুট  
মিলের পিছনে ঘরিক জাঙ্গাল রোডে  
শুক্রবার রাত ৯টা নাগাদ চটকলের  
কোয়ার্টারের কাছেই তাঁকে একেবারে  
সামনে থেকে গুলি করে দুর্ভুক্তীরা।  
ঘটনাস্থলেই তাঁর মৃত্যু হয়। এর পরেই  
এলাকায় যান পুলিশের পদস্ব  
অফিসারেরা। শুরু হয় তল্লাশি। তবে  
রাত পর্যন্ত কাউকে গ্রেফতার করা  
যায়নি। চিত্তরঞ্জনবাবু ওই জুটমিলের  
বি সি এম ইউ-এর সাংগঠনিক  
সম্পাদক ছিলেন। এলাকায় গভীর রাত  
পর্যন্ত উত্তেজনা ছিল।

PATRIKA

# Lanka minister shot, in critical condition

**Colombo, Aug. 13 (Reuters):** Sri Lankan foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was shot near his Colombo residence late today and rushed to intensive care in critical condition, police said.

The shooting comes amid escalating tensions between the government and the Tamil Tigers rebels, who have repeatedly threatened to resume a two-decade civil war because of a rash of violence in the island's restive east that each side blames on the other.

"The foreign minister was shot. He is being treated in intensive care," said Constable H.A. Hemapala, who is attached to the police unit at the National Hospital in Colombo.

Military and government sources confirmed the shooting. "His condition is critical," said a top government aide on condition of anonymity. "We are awaiting further news from the hospital."

Officials declined to comment when asked who was

suspected to be behind the shooting. Police cordoned off the roads around the residence of Kadirgamar, a top adviser of President Chandika Kumaratunga in Sri Lanka's protracted peace process with the Tigers. Helicopters circled overhead.

Heavily armed police officers fanned out into the plush central Colombo neighbourhood, searching the area.

Kadirgamar is a Tamil Christian, an unusual combination in a country dominated by Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamils.

He was educated at Trinity College, Kandy, and obtained a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) degree in 1953. He also has a B.Lit. from Oxford University. He practiced law at the Lanka Bar and in London until 1974, when he became a consultant to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva.

Kadirgamar is a long-time supporter of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). He

was foreign minister in the SLFP government of Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. After the defeat of the government in 2001, he became special adviser on foreign affairs to Kumaratunga.

Despite being himself a Tamil, he strongly supported the Bandaranaike government's policy of not negotiating with the Tamil Tigers in northern Sri Lanka.

In 2003, Kadirgamar was a candidate for the position of secretary-general of the Commonwealth, but was defeated by Don McKinnon of New Zealand.

In a separate incident, suspected Tamil Tigers today shot dead a Tamil television presenter and her husband, who was a supporter of the anti-rebel front, police said.

Relanki Selvarajah, a presenter for the state-run Rupavahini Television Network and her husband S. Selvarajah were shot dead in Colombo's Bambalapitiya area.



**Kadirgamar**

AUG 2001 THE SRI LANKAN

# Rajapakse named for President

26/7 10-17 S. Lanka S. Lanka  
**SLFP chooses Anura Bandaranaike as Prime Minister candidate in next poll**

V. S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO:** The ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) on Thursday officially named Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse as its candidate for the next Presidential election, and said President Chandrika Kumaratunga would lead the poll campaign.

The SLFP also announced

that senior Cabinet Minister Anura Bandaranaike (Ms. Kumaratunga's younger brother) would be the Prime Minister "when Mr. Rajapakse becomes President."

## Chandrika for campaign

Announcing the decision taken earlier in the day by the party's central committee,

Government spokesperson Nimal Sripala De Silva said Ms. Kumaratunga had decided the candidature of Mr. Rajapakse. "It was her wish that Mahinda Rajapakse, our Prime Minister, be the Presidential candidate. The campaign will be led by none other than the President to ensure that [the Leader of the Opposition United National Par-

ty and former Prime Minister] Ranil Wickremesinghe is defeated".

## Poll plank to be decided

The poll plank of the SLFP, Mr. De Silva said, would be decided by a committee which would "formulate our new policy based on a review of its present positions."

29 JUL 2005

THE HORIZON

## Lankan army to honour ceasefire

**Colombo:** The Sri Lankan military on Saturday said it is totally committed to a cease-fire agreement with Tamil Tiger rebels, a day after the guerrillas threatened to start using their own armed escorts in government-held areas in breach of the three-year-old truce.

"Our commitment to the cease-fire is total," military spokesman Brig Daya Ratnayake said. Asked to comment on the rebels' threat to use armed guards, he said: "There is no room for such things under the ceasefire agreement." He did not elaborate.

The rebels have demanded more security for their representatives who conduct political activities in government-controlled areas.

They had given the government a Thursday deadline to improve security and on Friday relayed their warning about starting their own security escorts in a letter delivered to the government by ceasefire monitors.

The ceasefire accord allows the rebels to conduct politics but not to carry arms in government areas.

There was no immediate new statement from the Tigers on Saturday.

The rebels began fighting in 1983 for a separate homeland for minority ethnic Tamils in the country's northeast, claiming discrimination by the majority Sinhalese.

The conflict killed nearly 65,000 people before the 2002 cease-fire.

Post-truce peace talks have been stalled since 2003 over rebel demands for wide autonomy. AP

# Sri Lanka gov't rushes forces to LTTE areas

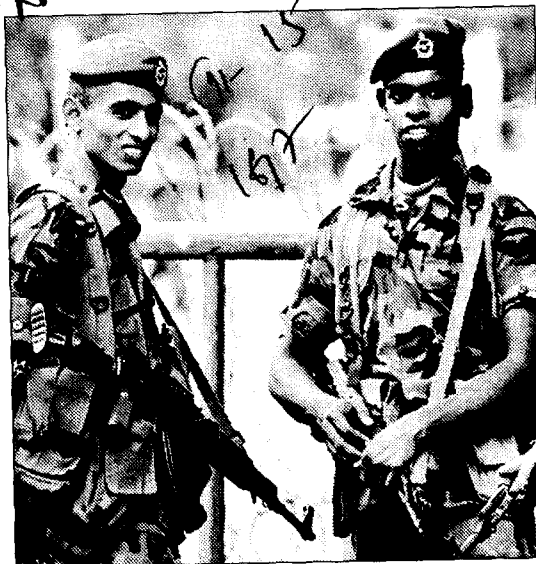
Colombo: Sri Lankan police have sent hundreds of reinforcements to the country's northeastern region as tensions mounted after troops shot dead a suspected Tamil rebel, police and military officials said on Friday.

Men were being moved from neighbouring police stations as security forces increased their presence in the district of Trincomalee where navy sailors on Thursday night killed a suspected rebel in a shootout, a police official said. He said security personnel in the area were also taking extra precautions when travelling within the region following a spate of attacks that injured at least 20 people in the past five days.

Military spokesman Daya Ratnayake said security forces recovered the body of a Tiger rebel together with an automatic weapon used in the firefight with the navy. Sri Lankan President Kumaratunga on Thursday ordered "specific measures" to bring the situation under control after an upsurge of violence following the killing of four Tigers.

There was no immediate response from the Tigers to the latest developments but Tamil legislator Joseph Pararajasingham said the situation was highly volatile in the region.

"There is a lot of tension and the situa-



tion is not good," Pararajasingham said while expressing fears for the stability of the Norwegian-brokered truce that has been in place since February 2002. The Tigers on Monday had warned that Sri Lanka could slip back into war and accused the government of provoking them to break the truce.

European truce monitors rushed to the rebels' area on Thursday to meet guerrilla leaders to try and avert more attacks. The rebels had given the government 14 days before Thursday's deadline to improve security—or risk a return to civil war. Agencies

16 JUL 2005 THE TIMES OF INDIA

# East Sri Lanka turns into a killing field

**Batticaloa, Sri Lanka:** Killers on motorbikes hunt down their targets everywhere in this strip of Sri Lanka's coastline: In temples, stations or rice fields.

An internationally monitored cease-fire hasn't stopped it. Days ago, gunmen suspected to be Tamil Tiger rebels sprayed three Sri Lankan soldiers with dozens of bullets, killing

around the eastern town of Batticaloa — an area that's become a killing ground in the shadow of Sri Lanka's supposedly suspended civil war.

The latest wave has left people here confused and terrified. Who is killing whom? They just don't know.

In theory, the cease-fire means there should be no

came the centre of violence after a split in among the Tamil Tigers in March 2004.

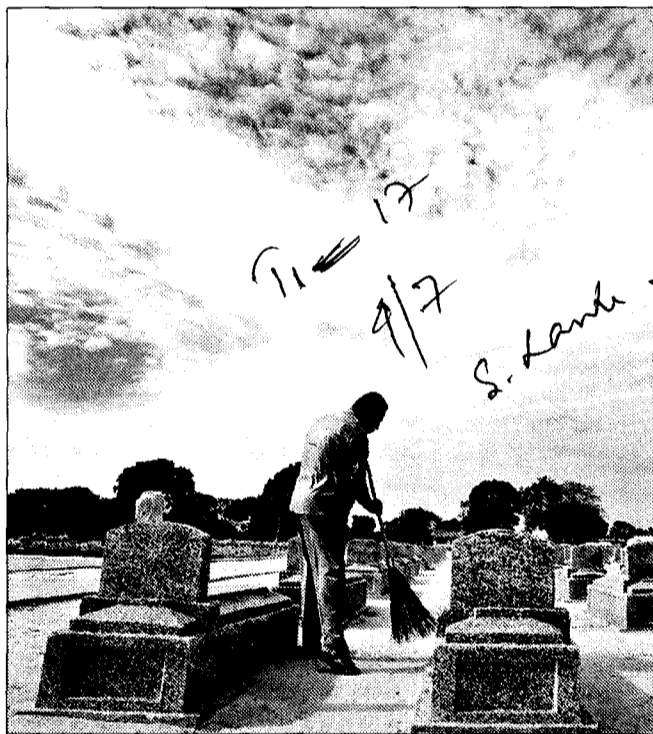
The Batticaloa-based Tigers—alleging regional discrimination—rose against the guerrillas' central leadership, based in the north of this island country.

But almost anyone else around Batticaloa can also be a victim—breakaway rebels, innocent civilians and former militants from nearly a dozen groups that have moved into official politics, said Helen Olafsdottir, a spokeswoman for the Norwegian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

Election candidates, university teachers, journalists and government officials have all been targeted. Media blame the near-daily killings on "unidentified gunmen". No group claims responsibility.

The area has a war-zone feel, with rifle-carrying policemen and government soldiers standing guard in the streets, checking the identity papers of students, shoppers and workers. The latest cease-fire lets unarmed rebels travel freely for political work.

Many senior Sri Lankan military officials say the rebels have taken advantage of that freedom, using it to eliminate opponents. Truce monitors have warned that killings may derail the already-fragile peace process. AP



**A Tamil man sweeps at a mass cemetery for LTTE cadres on the outskirts of Kilinochchi in Sri Lanka**

them as they boarded a motorised rickshaw.

About 90% of the 425 such killings reported since the government and the Tamil Tiger rebels signed a Norwegian-brokered 2002 cease-fire have occurred

fatalities. Area residents, mostly farmers, fishermen and traders, had hoped the truce would bring normalcy, and things were quiet for a while.

But then Batticaloa, 225 km east of Colombo, be-



SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2005

# Sri Lanka and post-tsunami structure

**N**ow that Sri Lanka has established the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure, the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam must, without further delay, get down to the task of repairing the extensive destruction that the ocean left behind almost all round the country's coast on December 26, 2004. The agreement signed by the Government and the LTTE for establishing a joint mechanism to disburse international financial aid for reconstruction was six months in the making, already too long a wait for the people whose homes the tsunami washed away. But such are Sri Lanka's special circumstances that the agreement is nothing short of a miracle. The idea of the joint mechanism was problematic from the beginning. Would the LTTE use it to grab administrative powers in the North-East? Would the group use it as a stepping-stone to reach its goal of an independent Eelam? Over and above these doubts was the threat by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna to pull out of the ruling coalition. On the other side was the reality that the LTTE has *de facto* administrative control of the North-East, and that international aid was conditional on the setting up of a joint mechanism. In setting up the P-TOMS despite political difficulties, especially after the JVP's withdrawal from the coalition, President Chandrika Kumaratunga has shown exemplary courage. The absence of opposition to the P-TOMS from India also appears to have played a crucial role in the decision.

As Sri Lanka's only truly non-chauvinist, non-majoritarian leader, President Kumaratunga has had one overriding goal through two terms as President: to bring peace to her country. At times, this goal seemed to have slipped out of her grasp, as the LTTE and the opposition United National Party played dangerous games with her plans for peace. Now, with a year to go before her second and final term comes to an end, President Kumaratunga has taken the path that she believes is just and the way forward, not merely for post-tsunami reconstruction, but also for a permanent peace. It may, as the President believes, bridge to some extent the trust deficit between the Government and the LTTE and prod life back into the stalled peace process. The P-TOMS is sure to cause a realignment of political forces, considering that a presidential election is due in 2006, and the air is thick with other possibilities, including that of a parliamentary election. Aside from the opposition from the JVP and some elements of the Buddhist clergy to the P-TOMS, the unhappiness among Sri Lanka's Muslims over not being co-signatories to the agreement – Muslim-majority areas in the east were badly affected in the tsunami – must be watched for its political fall-out. For the peace process, the main implication is this: President Kumaratunga has demonstrated that she will go a long way to safeguard the peace, even if the practicalities entail losing the support of crucial political forces in southern Sri Lanka. That leaves the LTTE with no excuse to stay away from the peace process any longer.

## Lankan Marxist party quits govt

Associated Press

COLOMBO, June 16.

— The Sri Lankan President's refusal to drop a plan to share tsunami relief with separatist Tamil rebels drove a Marxist party from the governing coalition today, threatening the government's hold on power but unlikely to cause its immediate collapse.

The deal, supported by the Sri Lankan

President, Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga, would establish a body run by the government and the rebels to ensure billions of dollars in aid is distributed to all tsunami-hit areas, including in the Tamil-majority north and east, parts of which are controlled by the Tamil Tiger rebels. The tsunami killed more than 31,000 Sri Lankans and displaced about a

million more. "We leave with a sense of deep regret for work not completed," Mr Somawansa Amerasinghe, head of the People's Liberation Front, said in announcing the party's decision. "Our earnest request to safeguard the integrity of the country fell on deaf ears." LTTE began fighting in 1983 for an independent homeland for ethnic Tamils.

17 JUN 2005

THE S. L. ...

# JVP pulls out of Government

**"Return depends on steps taken by  
President Chandrika Kumaratunga"**

V.S. Sambandan

*S. Lanka*  
*17/6*

**COLOMBO:** The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, Sri Lanka's main ruling ally, on Thursday formally withdrew from the 14-month coalition Government, with a "mission to return soon" and with "greater" numbers. The party, however, has kept the door open on a possible return, saying it would depend on the steps taken by President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

"We leave with a sense of deep regret of work not fully completed," JVP leader Somawansa Amarasinghe told a press conference here.

The JVP, with 39 MPs, withdrew support to the United Peoples' Freedom Alliance after Ms. Kumaratunga refused to yield to its ultimatum that the proposal to share international assistance for post-tsunami reconstruction of the north and east with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam be withdrawn.

"Regrettably, our earnest request to maintain the integrity of this country had fallen on deaf, autocratic ears," Mr. Amarasinghe said.

## Political fallout

On the political consequences of the pullout, he said: "Once we leave the UPFA and sit in the Opposition in Parliament, the hold of the other key partner, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, on the politics of this country will vanish within weeks."

The JVP has withdrawn support to the coalition both at the national and provincial council levels.

"There is no point in staying in this Government, which cannot safeguard the sovereignty and security of this country," Mr. Amarasinghe said.

The JVP was a critical factor in the multi-party combine's vic-

• Says its "mission is to return soon" and with "greater" numbers

• Support withdrawn at both national and provincial council levels

tory in the parliamentary elections held last April. However, differences between the two main allies, the SLFP and the JVP, persisted through the last 14 months. Things came to a boil last week when the JVP issued an ultimatum to Ms. Kumaratunga asking her to withdraw the proposed Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) by June 15, failing which the party would pull out of Government.

Mr. Amarasinghe, however, said the party would return to governance if Ms. Kumaratunga agreed to reconsider her plan for P-TOMS, popularly known as joint mechanism.

"Let us wait till we hear from the other side. There can be an understanding between the two parties in the future also. This is not going to be the first and the coalition between the JVP and the SLFP."

The party's pullout marks the second attempt at an SLFP-JVP coalition, the first being a five-week "probationary" government that ended when Ms. Kumaratunga called for parliamentary elections in October 2001.

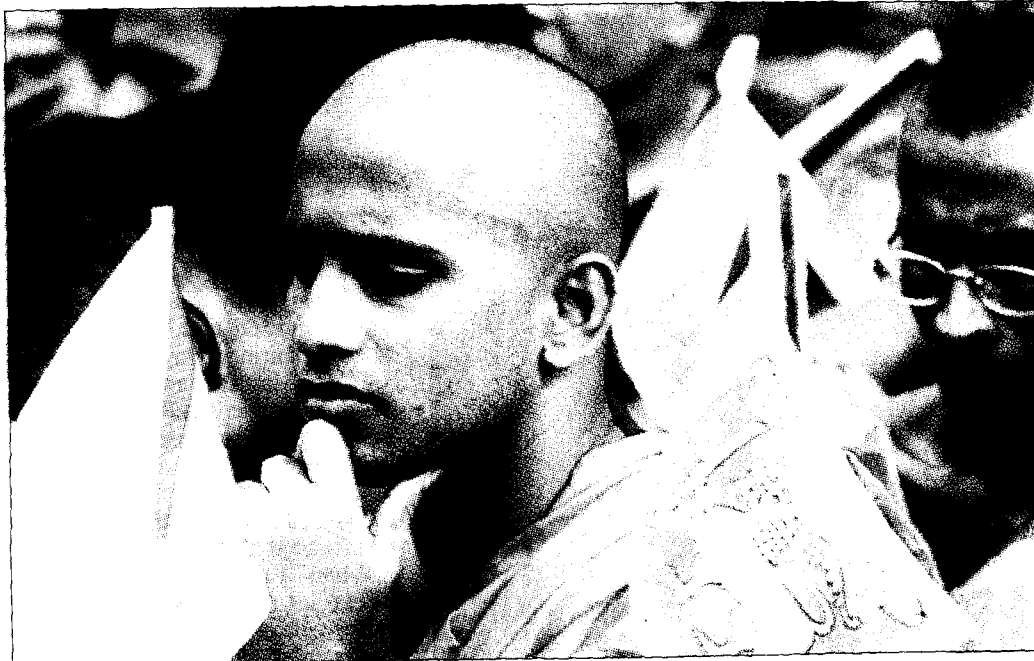
Criticising the joint mechanism move, Mr. Amarasinghe said: "The LTTE has a warfare machinery, not a welfare machinery."

Pointing to the continued killings by the LTTE, he said the rebel group "is not going to perform miracles when they join the joint mechanism."

17 JUN 2005

7

# Lanka leaders rush to save coalition



Buddhist monks sit down at the venue where a colleague was staging a fast in protest at government plans to enter into an aid-sharing deal with the LTTE. In Colombo on Wednesday. — AFP

Associated Press

COLOMBO, June 15. — Sri Lanka's President today to go ahead with a deal to share tsunami aid with the LTTE, despite a threat by a ruling coalition partner to leave the government at midnight if she does not back down.

President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga, however, has not set a date for signing the pact, a top aide said on condition of anonymity, though he denied it would happen in the next day or two.

Prime Minister Mr Mahinda Rajapakse and other lawmakers from Ms Kumaratunga's party were in round-the-clock meetings with the Marxist People's Liberation Front, who say the deal threatens the country's sovereignty and will help the LTTE rebels

in their quest to carve out a separate state.

The country's influential Buddhist monks agree, but Ms Kumaratunga says her aid-sharing plan is a golden opportunity to forge peace with the guerrillas.

The LTTE demands a say in how aid gets distributed in the Tamil-majority north and east — parts of which are under rebel control — following the devastating 26 December tsunami. The rebels claim that assistance has not reached Tamil areas fast enough.

The Marxists' leader, Mr Somawansa Amerasinghe, stepped away from hectic talks among coalition lawmakers to visit the central city of Kandy and update two chief Buddhist monks on the situation, a senior Marxist party official said.

Meanwhile, senior monk

Dambara Amila entered the fourth day of his death-fast to protest the deal. Mr Rajapakse appealed to Amila to end the fast today, but to no avail. "He needs urgent hospital treatment," said Dr Sanath Jayasinghe, who examined Amila. "Tomorrow maybe too late." He said the monk had early symptoms of kidney failure.

The Marxists hold 39 crucial seats in Ms Kumaratunga's 119-seat majority in the 225-member parliament. If they leave the coalition, Ms Kumaratunga's party will be reduced to a minority and risks collapse.

Yesterday, more than 10,000 Marxist-backed demonstrators rallied in the capital, Colombo, against the aid pact. On Monday, police fired tear gas at 5,000 protesters who tried to converge on Ms Kumaratunga's home.

# Ally threat to Lanka govt

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, June 8. — The Sri Lankan President's main Marxist coalition partner today said it was ready to "sacrifice" the government to block a deal she had reached with the LTTE for distribution of tsunami aid, in a move that could topple the alliance.

The Marxist People's Liberation Front (JVP) said Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga's decision to enter into a deal with the rebels was "dictatorial" and taken without consulting coalition members.

JVP leader Mr Wimal Weerawansa, in the first ever announcement regarding the party's stance on the issue, said it was "willing to sacrifice the government".

He added: "The country needs a government to defeat separatism, not to nourish it. In the next few days we will announce our decision to save the country first. The government

## Chandrika push to aid plan

COLOMBO, June 8. — Sri Lanka's President said her proposal to join with the LTTE to distribute tsunami aid is a golden opportunity for the country to forge peace, despite high-profile opposition to the plan — including from monks on protest fasts. "Today we have a golden opportunity to stop fighting and move forward through peace," Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga was quoted as saying in the state-run *Daily News* newspaper today. — AP

comes later."

Mr Weerawansa vowed to defeat the President's moves even as Ms Kumaratunga pledged to press ahead with the proposed plan that has been endorsed widely by the international donor community.

The JVP argued that the proposed deal with the LTTE could be a stepping stone for a separate state the guerrillas have been fighting for decades.

09 JUN 2005 THE STATESMAN

# Lankan monks fast to protest aid to rebels

Reuters  
Colombo, June 8

BUDDHIST MONKS in Sri Lanka started a fast-unto-death protest on Wednesday against plans to share tsunami aid with Tamil Tiger rebels, as intensifying political squabbling interrupted parliament.

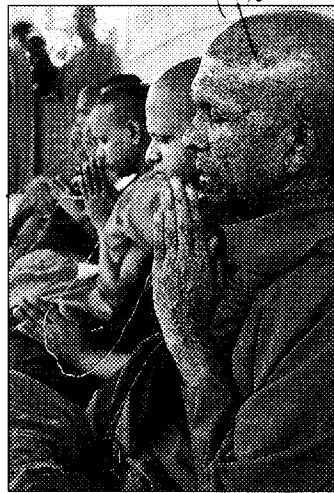
"Withdraw the joint mechanism offering state power to the Tigers," proclaimed a banner strung above seven monks who began their fast outside Colombo's central railway station.

The country's top Buddhist monk is sitting on a fast unto death in protest against the government's bid to establish a Joint Mechanism with the LTTE.

The fast unto death, by the Venerable Dr Omalpe Sobitha Thero, is being staged outside the Dalada Maligawa, the holiest Buddhist shrine in Sri Lanka, which houses a tooth of the Buddha. This is the first time in history that the Dalada Maligawa has been used as a venue for a political protest.

As per the constitution of Sri Lanka, Buddhism is the "foremost religion" in the country, and the state is expected to foster the Buddha Sasana.

A top government aide and senior diplomats said the proposed pact, which aims to ensure that \$3 billion in badly needed international tsunami aid is



The protesting monks at Colombo.

shared fairly across Sri Lanka's ethnic divide, was unlikely to be signed for days.

"It has not been signed yet. There's a lot of ironing out to be done," one senior aide said on condition of anonymity. "It will take days," he added, knocking down rumours swirling in local financial markets that President Chandrika Kumaratunga had already secretly signed it.

"We can't expect the hoi polloi to understand the complexities of conflict resolution," he added, referring to junior ruling coalition ally the Marxist People's Liberation Front (JVP), which is vehemently against giving the

Tigers aid, self-rule or any form of legitimacy.

The JVP has promised to quit the government if the aid pact with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) goes through, which senior government officials say could trigger a snap election.

"As a government we are not ready to sacrifice more young lives when this problem (the conflict) can be solved through peaceful negotiations," Kumaratunga said in a War Heroes' Day address late on Tuesday.

"The (LTTE) is more flexible and willing today than ever before so as a democratic, peace-loving government we must be in a position to accommodate them," she added.

The Tigers, whose two-decade war against the state killed 64,000 people until a 2002 ceasefire, warned on Tuesday that government foot-dragging over aid risked endangering the truce.

The JVP, whose own uprising against the state in the 1970s and 1980s killed an estimated 50,000 people before they renounced violence and joined the political mainstream, stepped up their protest campaign on Wednesday.

JVP parliamentary group leader Wimal Weerawansa said the party would quit the ruling alliance "in the next few days" if the aid sharing is approved, a move that would strip away the government's slim majority.

CRISIS ERUPTS OVER AID SHARING DEAL WITH LTTE

# Lanka minister quits

Agencies

COLOMBO, June 7. — The Sri Lankan media minister, Mr Mangala Samaraweera, resigned today amid a deepening rift within the coalition government over President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga's plans to enter into an aid sharing deal with the LTTE.

Mr Samaraweera, once a staunch ally of Ms Kumaratunga, quit his position as media minister but will continue to hold other portfolio of ports and aviation, an official said. "He has cited personal reasons for the decisions. He gave the letter last night and it has been accepted," the official added.

The minister was a key figure who engineered the coalition that went on to narrowly win the April 2004 parliamentary elections with the support of the People's Liberation Front (JVP). The party is threatening to quit the government over Ms Kumaratunga's plans to enter into an aid sharing deal with the LTTE.

According to the deal, the government and the rebels would be partners



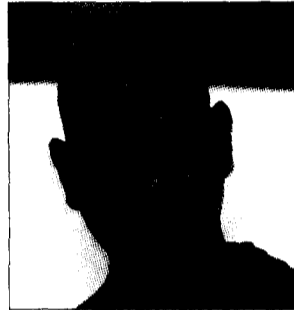
President Kumaratunga argues that the aid sharing deal would encourage the rebels to resume stalled peace talks.

for the first time to deliver foreign tsunami aid in Sri Lanka's Tamil-majority north and east, parts of which are under the LTTE's control.

## Monks angry

Meanwhile, a powerful body of Buddhist monks today said Ms Kumaratunga's political career would be finished if she refuses to shelve the aid sharing plan.

The monk-led National Bikku Front wields tremendous influence over politics and society on the island. Since Sri Lanka's independence from Britain in 1948, the monks have scuttled several government efforts to accommodate the mostly



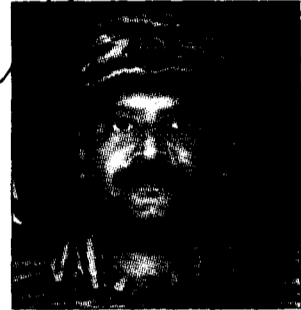
The Buddhist monks fear that the deal would help the LTTE achieve its goal of establishing a separate state.

Hindu Tamils in the country's north and east who have sought power-sharing arrangements.

"If the deal is signed, it would be the end of the President's political career," said Kalawelegala Chandraloka, secretary of the National Bikku Front.

The monks as well as the the President's main coalition partner, the JVP, say the tsunami aid-distribution proposal threatens the sovereignty of the country, because such a deal would help the LTTE achieve their goal of establishing a separate state.

Ms Kumaratunga has vowed to press ahead with the plan, however, saying it would encourage the rebels to resume stalled



The Tamil Tigers are getting impatient over what they allege is the government's delay in finalising the aid agreement.

peace talks.

## Tigers growl

The LTTE's political chief has denounced the government's delay in signing the deal, and said a fragile cease-fire signed after nearly two-decades of civil war was in jeopardy.

The truce was "under serious threat by actions and inactions of the Sri Lankan government," said SP Thamilselvan, according to a rebel website.

Norway's ambassador Mr Hans Brattskar, whose country is also helping broker peace on the island, today held talks with Thamilselvan in the northern rebel capital of Kilinochchi over the aid proposal.

# Sri Lanka's post-tsunami peace moves

Chandrika Kumaratunga faces a complex exercise in gathering domestic support for a joint mechanism with the LTTE for post-tsunami reconstruction.

V.S. Sambandan

WITH INDIA stating its "understanding" and "support" for Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga's efforts to create a Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS), the formal international response to the popularly known "joint mechanism" is now complete.

Practically the entire international lineup — though with varying degrees of acceptance — has endorsed Ms. Kumaratunga's objective of a mechanism for post-tsunami reconstruction with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. She will now have to grapple with ensuring domestic political acceptance, particularly within the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA). This, however, is likely to turn out to be a complex exercise.

The mechanism broadly envisages involving the LTTE to ensure equitable resource and project allocation from the international kitty for reconstructing the tsunami-ravaged north-eastern coast. The more important context of the P-TOMS is its impact on the peace process, its legitimisation of the LTTE in administrative affairs and its

fallout on the southern Sri Lankan psyche. It is on these counts that the domestic Sri Lankan opposition to the President's proposal appears to overrule the international financial largesse seen as accruing from a joint mechanism.

The "joint mechanism" proposes equal representation for the Government, the LTTE and the Muslims at the apex level, with five LTTE, three Muslim, and two Sinhalese nominees at the regional level. The domestic opposition to the proposed P-TOMS arises from two broad groupings — a hardline ruling ally, the left-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), and sections of Sinhalese and anti-LTTE Tamil societies. There are two objections.

The first is that the P-TOMS will result in the "formalisation" and "expansion" of the LTTE's role in the north-east to areas beyond its control currently. According to military estimates, about 1,056 km of Sri Lanka's 1,568-km coastline was affected by the December 26 tsunami. About 130 km (13 per cent) of the affected coastline is under LTTE control. The Government controls 60.6 per cent of the 330 km affected north-eastern coastline and the remaining 39.4 per

cent — covering Mullaitivu district and parts of other northern and eastern districts — is under LTTE control.

The second is in granting to the LTTE the status of a "sole representative" of the Tamils in the north and east, which is resented, though silently, by anti-LTTE Tamil parties. That the LTTE continues to remain an armed group, with an expanding arsenal, including the confirmed presence of an airstrip and reports of acquisition of aircraft, has also raised the concern of those opposed to the proposed P-TOMS.

Sections of Tamil opinion, not necessarily confined to the LTTE or its supporters, see in these reasons cited for the need for rejection, a continued political majoritarianism that opposes any accommodation with the Tamils. The early signs of a hardline Sinhala-Buddhist revivalism are also evident from recent unauthorised erection of statues of the Buddha by "fringe elements" and tacitly supported by sections of the polity, in an already volatile east. A continued political impasse, the JVP's reported decision to pull out from the ruling coalition if the P-TOMS were to be signed and moves by some Sinhala organisations to approach the courts of

law to stop the mechanism, point to an emerging dis-equilibrium in the governing alliance. Though seemingly peripheral issues now, these do not bode well for a nation aspiring to draw the curtains on decades of mutual mistrust, bloodshed and conflict between the state and the armed insurgent.

In the meantime, there are clear signs that Sri Lanka's frozen war is starting to thaw. The continued bloodletting in the east, the daylight gunning down of a top Sri Lankan military intelligence officer by suspected LTTE gunmen in Colombo, periodic hartals by the Tamils in the north-east and a sense of edginess across the board, point to the frozen war "melting at the edges," to recall a phrase used by Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen in July 2004 — six months before the tsunami changed it all. Now, instead of signs of accommodation, there are warning signals of a drift apart.

It is against this backdrop that the main challenge for Ms. Kumaratunga will be her ability as the constitutionally-powerful executive president to either win over her allies in governance or to recalibrate her proposals that would not provide the ground to alienate the LTTE.



# Sri Lanka outfit ups the ante

Associated Press *6/6*

COLOMBO, June 5. — The LTTE today said they would arrange their own transportation through government controlled-territory if Sri Lanka fails to provide them with escorts amid stepped-up tensions between the two sides.

In a letter to the head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) — which oversees the country's three-year-old truce — the rebels' political chief SP Thamilselvan warned of finding "other means" if the government fails to transport them, senior rebel officials said on condition of anonymity.

Days ago, the government for the first time refused air transport

to several key LTTE guerrillas who were asking to fly from the rebels' capital, Kilinochchi, to eastern Trincomalee, in protest over the slaying of a top military officer by suspected rebels.

The rebels were furious about the refusal. "The LTTE raised serious concerns over delays in arranging transport," said Ms Helen Olafsdottir, spokeswoman for the monitoring mission, confirming having received the letter. "The LTTE considers that the delay of the transport is a serious threat to the ceasefire," she said.

Ms Olafsdottir said the rebels' concerns had been communicated to the government, and was hopeful that a "solution may be found so that transports may resume or be restored to normal

levels". *S. Lanka*

In another development, the bullet-riddled bodies of two Tamil men were found today in Colombo, police said.

The exact identities of the men were yet to be established, said Mr S Bandara, a policeman in Kotehena, a Tamil-majority area in Colombo. He said residents had informed the police after finding the bodies by the roadside close to a Hindu temple. Police had begun investigations but no other details were immediately available.

Meanwhile, a 20-year-old man was shot dead by suspected LTTE rebels yesterday in Batticaloa. Police said the victim was a supporter of a breakaway rebel leader who parted ways with the main LTTE faction last year.

# JVP rejects Chandrika's proposal

Proposes "national council" with representatives from a cross section of society

V. S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's ruling ally, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), has rejected a proposed joint mechanism for sharing tsunami aid with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and proposed an alternative "national council" with representatives from a cross section of society.

The JVP said the mechanism should adhere to the four basic principles of democracy, constitutionality, equity and regional stability.

The party termed the President Chandrika Kumaratunga's move as "unconstitutional, undemocratic and one that could lead to regional instability in South Asia." It said: "To enter a mechanism with a number one terrorist group in the world who are not people's representatives would be a task out of question for any democratically elected government."

The JVP's proposal consists of the President, Cabinet Ministers, representatives of political parties, officials, professionals and civil society members. There is no mention of the LTTE in it or on how the reconstruction should be carried out in areas under the LTTE control.

Another headline section of the Sri Lankan polity — the Buddhist clergy — has also opposed the joint mechanism with the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) staging a protest in Colombo on Thursday. The JHU, which is represented by nine MPs, all of whom are Buddhist monks, "vowed to do



**NO TO LTTE:** Lawmakers of the Buddhist monks' political party, National Heritage, stage a protest in Colombo, denouncing the Government proposal to enter into a tsunami-aid sharing deal with the LTTE. — PHOTO: AP

everything possible to stop the Government from signing an agreement for a joint mechanism with the LTTE," a report in the *Daily Mirror* said.

Ms. Kumaratunga's proposal is to create a three-tier mechanism to share the international funding for post-tsunami reconstruction in the north and east. Though the international donors maintain that there is no precondition for the release of the funds, there is an emphasis that it has to be equitably shared.

22 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

# Dangers of the LTTE's air capability

R. Hariharan

**S**INCE THE end of last year, the Sri Lankan media have reported off and on about the newly acquired air capability of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In February 2005, a press report said President Chandrika Kumaratunga had even told the two former American Presidents, George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton, about this in the course of her briefing on the tsunami disaster and relief work organised by her Government.

The Sri Lanka Air Force Chief Air Marshal Donald Perera had briefed the President on the LTTE's capability from information gained through surveillance by unmanned aerial vehicles some time in November 2003. The surveillance revealed that the Tamil militants had built an airstrip near Iranamadu tank in the Wannai area and a light aircraft was seen there. A number of reconnaissance missions are reported to have shown a paved 1250-metre-long runway at the site and video footage of at least one light aircraft landing at the airstrip. One more light aircraft was probably based there. Air Marshal Perera had said the two planes spotted on the new airstrip were similar to the Czech-built Zlin Z-143. He also said the Tigers were training their own pilots and were well on the way to establishing a full-fledged air force.

The runway length indicates a capability to operate medium-sized aircraft such as Dorniers with ease. Dorniers used by Indian security forces have the capability to lift one section of commando troops (12 to 14 persons) with their load or about 1.2 tonnes of cargo. Basically, the LTTE gaining air capability will mean loss of the Government's sovereign control of Sri Lankan airspace.

Apart from this, it provides the LTTE capability to strike at a place of its choosing without telegraphing its intentions. Thus even with lim-

That the LTTE has flouted the spirit of the peace process with total impunity to strengthen its ability to wage war should be a matter of concern for the international community.

ited air capability, a commando raid of the type carried out by the LTTE at the Katunayake airport becomes much easier to execute. A light aircraft can evade radar surveillance because of its minuscule signature and low flying capability. Some of the more deadly uses of a light aircraft should be causing sleepless nights to those in charge of security at Temple Trees, the official residence of the Sri Lankan President. Even in the U.S., where the airspace above the White House is well sanitised, on more than one occasion light aircraft have penetrated the safety systems.

## Deadly uses of light aircraft

Apart from the extreme use of an aircraft for a suicide attack as was done during 9/11, even light aircraft give LTTE a number of added operational capabilities. Airborne commando missions both on land and at sea, ability to fly in arms and supplies from abroad, surveillance of naval ships and troops, airborne direction of artillery fire, evacuation of casualties, and spiriting away leaders at short notice are some of these.

The LTTE appears to have built the airstrip between mid 2003 and end 2004. In this period, the LTTE was vociferously demanding the resumption of the peace process. This is so typical of the LTTE, which has refined the art of doublespeak springing strategic operational surprises even while involved in a peace process.

Technology as a force multiplier: At all times, whether peace or war, the LTTE has been on a quest to acquire new military technology. This process helps it in three ways — it keeps up the morale of the fighters, opens up new areas and methods of operation, and achieves tactical and strategic surprise upsetting the enemy. It also becomes a good bargaining ploy when trade-offs are required in a peace settlement.

The LTTE has always had ambitions of air power. Even during the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) operations in 1988, we had recovered assembly parts of micro light aircraft from LTTE hideouts along with plans with manuals. Subsequently, during its operations Sri Lanka forces had also found an LTTE engineering workshop with aircraft spares. In late 1988, the LTTE acquired surface-to-air missiles, which were used effectively in the later years against the Sri Lankan air force. Since then it has moved on to augment its artillery, radar systems, and naval capability. So acquiring air capability was a logical sequence in LTTE's vision for creating a full-fledged armed force.

Vision of Tamil Eelam: Undoubtedly, the LTTE acquiring air capability improves its image as the world's best organised insurgent force. It also shows that the LTTE is giving form and content to its vision of land, air and sea operational freedom. The fact that the LTTE had invested precious resources of time, energy and money to acquire the air capability indicates that

it would continue with the process of technical refinement and technology acquisition to improve its fighting capability despite the ongoing peace process. In short, the LTTE as a fighting force will continue, whether in the end the Tamil Eelam that comes out as an entity is within a federal set-up or otherwise. So much for LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran's much heralded readiness to accept a solution within the federal framework!

Ability to beat the U.S. sanctions: The LTTE has shown that despite U.S. and European Union sanctions, it has the ability to internationally muster large scale financial and technical resources required for its projects and move them to Sri Lanka clandestinely. This is not a happy situation for Sri Lanka or India, the immediate neighbour.

The LTTE's record shows that it used every peace pause to acquire more weapons. After the current peace process began, by the first half of 2004 the LTTE had received 11 shipments of arms. The fact that the LTTE has flouted the spirit of the peace process with total impunity to strengthen its ability to wage war should be a matter of concern for international community. It also highlights the ineffectiveness of the present terms of operation of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, a toothless entity with its capability limited to issuing watered-down statements.

The lack of unity among Sri Lankan political parties on the question of talks with the LTTE is delaying the resumption of the peace dialogue. The LTTE has put this delay to good use by augmenting its strike capability. Thus when the peace process is resumed Colombo's negotiators will face a stronger LTTE in a better bargaining position.

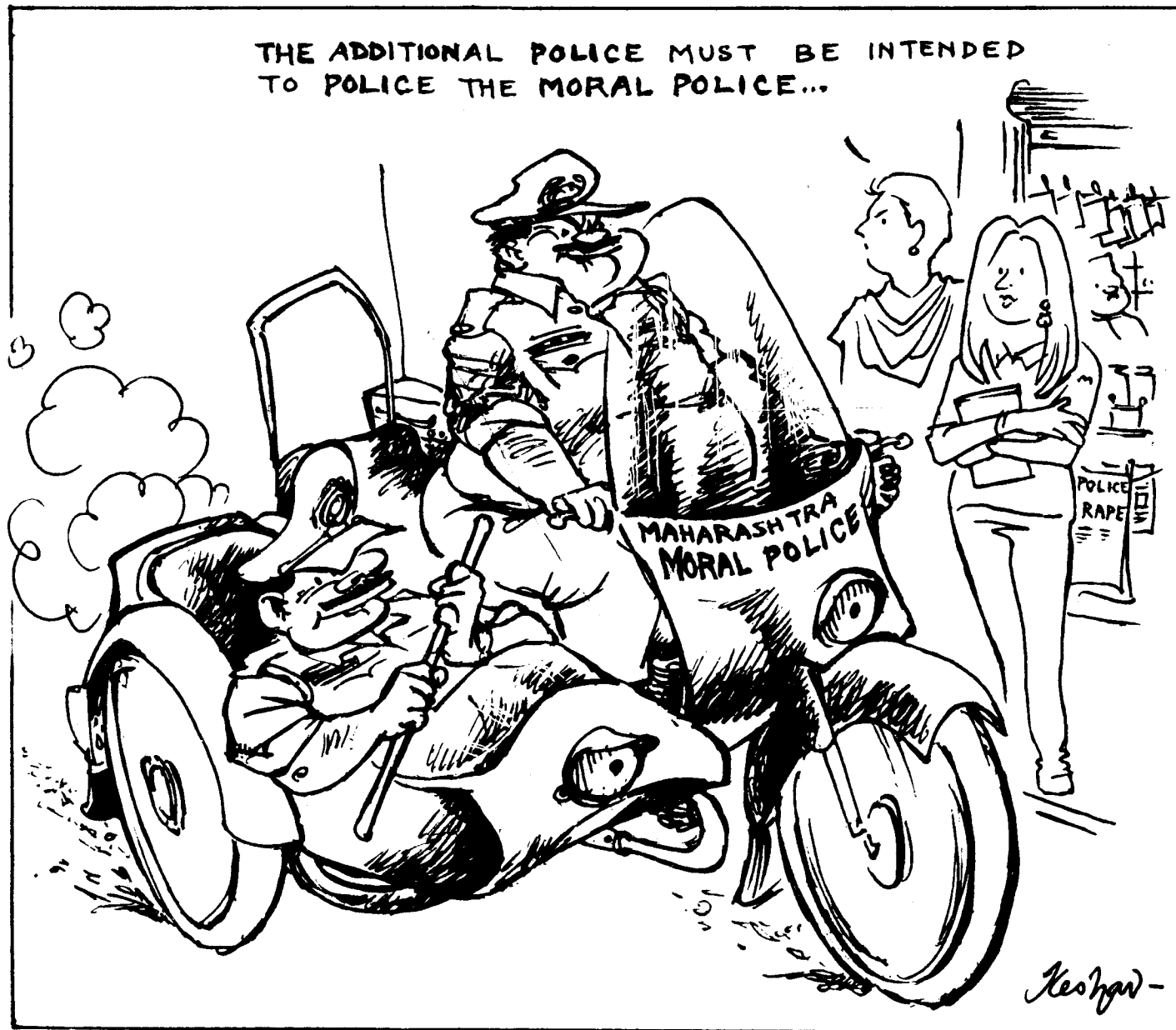
The LTTE's single airstrip and a few light aircraft may not be a major threat to Indian security in the conventional sense. However, India should take a hard look at it at two levels — vis-à-vis its Sri Lanka policy options and the security measures against the LTTE's offensive terrorist capability, which has been augmented.

The LTTE has emerged as a more ruthless and much better organised killing machine since the IPKF days. So the validity of foreign policy dispensations of IPKF vintage needs a fresh scrutiny. When the Sea Tigers came into being as a naval force, the Government of India blissfully ignored it despite it becoming a third naval force that could intrude into the waters of India and Sri Lanka without any legitimacy whatsoever. This perhaps enabled the LTTE to get it legitimised in the eyes of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, which had tried to equate it with the Sri Lankan Navy.

Viewed in this context, it was disappointing to note External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's bland statement, "We are concerned about the LTTE having built an airstrip and having two aeroplanes and there's news about more coming," in the course of his recent interview (*The Hindu*, May 7). However, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, at his meeting with Erik Solheim, the Norwegian peace envoy, in New Delhi on May 11, is reported to have stated that India was "bitterly opposed to LTTE dictatorship." It is time the Government of India came out with a detailed and unambiguous statement on the various aspects of the Sri Lankan issue including on the LTTE, the Tamils right to be their own masters in a federal Sri Lanka, and the peace process. Otherwise, the LTTE would only be encouraged to strengthen its armed capability much to the detriment of peace in this part of the subcontinent.

As regards the security aspects, proactively we need to initiate security measures taking into consideration the LTTE's augmented capability to launch and carry out commando operations using its air capability. Those who consider this alarmist would do well to remember the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, plotted and executed with precision by the very same organisation after Indian troops pulled out of Sri Lanka. Precautionary measures could include tightening surveillance of less used airstrips, deploying intelligence assets for gathering specific information on procurement of aircraft spares, aviation fuel, and training of LTTE pilots in Tamil Nadu and adjoining States. Of course, India should also maintain a continuous surveillance of the activities at the airstrip.

## CARTOONSCAPE



# JOINT MECHANISM

Sri Lanka 5/6 19/5

## Sri Lanka Reluctant To Sign Pact

By SAM RAJAPPA

The joint mechanism between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam for post-tsunami reconstruction called for by international aid donors was intended as an important confidence-building measure in the strife-torn island. Put together with the help of Norwegian facilitator, President Chandrika Kumaratunga was on the verge of signing it when the Janatha Vimukthi Perumana, major partner in the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance coalition led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, has threatened to quit if the pact was signed. She has used it as an excuse to wriggle out of her commitment.

### Finances

The joint mechanism would have seen the government sharing its sovereign power to handle finances with the rebel LTTE, an organisation banned by many donor countries, including India. Under Section 148 of the Sri Lankan Constitution, only parliament has the power to disburse or allocate funds. If the international donor countries treat the LTTE on a par with Colombo, it amounts to diplomatically recognising the LTTE as the legitimate representative of Sri Lanka's North-East. Once that happens, the de facto Tamil Eelam headed by Velupillai Pirapaharan, in the north-east becomes de jure. It was the belated realisation of this aspect that made Kumaratunga refrain from signing the agreement.

According to the agreement reached between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE with the help of the Norwegian mediator, Eric Solheim, a three-member body comprising one Sinhalese, one Tamil and one Muslim would be set up in Colombo. This body will decide in principle how much of the international aid should go to the north-east and how much to the other parts of Sri Lanka. While this is certainly not a part of the peace process, if it has worked well, it could create a climate in which the peace process could be taken forward. Tsunami did not make any distinction between Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities. All three were af-

*The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai.*

fect. There was urgent need to rehabilitate those who lost their homes.

The first person to suggest the idea of LTTE working with the government on reconstruction in the north-east was Kumaratunga herself. In a letter to Tamilchelvian, the LTTE's political wing leader, she explained consider-



able aid was pouring in from overseas and the government wanted to make sure that this could be shared in an efficient and equitable manner. She wanted to engage the party that was in control in some of the areas devastated by tsunami. The LTTE appreciated the gesture as it needed support of the government machinery for reconstruction of the affected areas under its control. The international community too wanted the aid to be spend in such a way that did not discriminate between any of the regions.

### Donations

Contrary to the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's stand as reflected by President Kumaratunga, the JVP held that the international donations belonged to the country and could only be utilised by the government and "not by an anti-democratic group like the LTTE or some NGO's". The JVP considers NGOs as part of the international conspiracy to dismember Sri Lanka. Before her meeting with the JVP on the subject, Kumaratunga declared: "The government may fall...I might lose the presidency, but those things are not of national interest unlike bringing lasting peace to the country".

The Left-wing JVP has mobilised the Right wing Sinhala parties of the Jathika Hela Urumaya of hardline Buddhist monks against the creation of a joint mechanism. The National Unity Alliance, a minor Muslim constituent of the ruling alliance, has also come out against the joint mechanism. The JVP does not

see eye-to-eye with the SLFP on other key issues, privatisation and de-regulation programmes, which international donors are urging.

Kumaratunga's prevarications have improved the prospects of the United National Party. Led by Ranil Wickremasinghe, the main opposition party came out firmly in support of the joint mechanism with the LTTE and has wholeheartedly supported economic reforms demanded by the donors. Driven out of office by the SLFP-JVP alliance last year, the UNP is awaiting a serious rift between the two which might pave the way for its return to power. The JVP, which was able to increase its strength in parliament from 16 to 40 by this alliance, is unlikely to quit even if Kumaratunga goes ahead and signs the joint mechanism agreement, for it will not be able to retain its present position by going it alone. Kumaratunga, on the other hand, is keen on abolishing Sri Lanka's executive presidency and replace it with the earlier parliamentary system of government in which she would be able to compete for the prime ministership unlike a third term as President, which the present Constitution does not allow.

The Tamils in the north-east,

meanwhile, continue to suffer. Even after five months of the tsunami, aid pledged by the international community has not reached them because of the political wrangling in Colombo. With the monsoon about to set in, the plight of those rendered homeless could only worsen.

Even three years after the LTTE signed a ceasefire agreement with the Sri Lanka government, there is total lack of normalcy in the north-east, traditional homeland of the Tamils. The ceasefire certainly has given the longest pause in the country's ethnic blood-letting. But the "no war" situation has failed to yield any substantive movement towards a lasting peace. Two years ago the LTTE decided to boycott the Norwegian brokered peace talks unless Colombo agreed to an Internal Self-Governing Authority controlled by it for the north-east.

### Difficulties

The extraordinary focus on the joint mechanism to manage post-tsunami aid, according to Tamilchelvian, is masking the severity of the obstructions to rehabilitation work and the day-to-day difficulties faced by ordinary people in the North-East. The Sri Lankan armed forces were operating an undeclared embargo on movement of essential goods and materials and thereby undermining the development activities of local and international NGOs.

Arbitrary restrictions were imposed on the movement of cement and other construction materials into areas devastated by the decades-long ethnic conflict and the tsunami of 26 December last. "The international community should recognise the causes of these tensions and take steps to ensure that the public's confidence in the peace process is not further eroded by the Sri Lankan government's tardy approach to restoring normalcy in the Tamil areas", the website report said.

Kumaratunga's reported readiness to share aid with the LTTE was not helpful because the President was aware of the JVP's opposition to the peace process when she invited it to be a partner in her coalition, it was said. The "no war, no peace" situation in Sri Lanka could slip out of control unless the LTTE is persuaded to return to the peace talks.

# From killing to killing

Sri Lankan Tamils must debate how to stop retributive killings in the community, not who's next.

Nirupama Subramanian

“ONE DAY some gun will silence me and it will not be held by an outsider but by the son born in the womb of this very society, from a woman with whom my history is shared,” wrote Rajani Thiranagama in 1989, a few months before she was killed in Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka.

As those who knew journalist Dharmaretnam Sivaram, or knew of him, mourn his brutal death last week, the words of the 35-year-old doctor, teacher in the medical faculty of Jaffna University and committed human rights campaigner seem prescient not only of her own end, but of all the other victims of the cycle of intolerance, killing, and revenge that is the distinguishing hallmark of Sri Lankan Tamil politics.

Sivaram, or Taraki as he was better known, was abducted and shot dead in Colombo on the night of April 29. Clearly, he was killed by forces that disagreed with his political views.

He was no ordinary journalist — as a former member of the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, he brought to his writings first-hand experience of the Tamil militant movement.

In the last decade, he had turned openly in favour of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam; his columns in Sri Lankan newspapers and TamilNet, the web site he began, were windows to the LTTE's military and political mind.

Of the several theories in circulation about who might have killed him, the most widely prevalent is that he was the latest victim of the tit-for-tat war between the LTTE and the rebel faction that broke away from it last year under the leadership of Karuna. This mini-war has claimed dozens of victims, including three other lesser-known journalists — one close to the LTTE, the other two opposed to it.

If it is true that Karuna was behind the killing, Tamils are whispering, the LTTE will surely avenge Sivaram's death. So, they are asking, who is next? But instead of such macabre and cynical speculation, the community would be better served by an open and honest debate on why Tamils are killed by Tamils simply for expressing their political views, and how to stop these relentless murders.

## Failure to condemn

The past is instructive. The seeds of Sivaram's untimely death were sown early in the militant struggle, with Tamil society's failure to condemn the very first retributive killings. Thiranagama was among the first of the Tamil intellectuals that the LTTE eliminated. The silent acceptance of her death in Jaffna, especially by the academic community, sent out the message to the killers that whatever they did, no one would oppose them.

Thiranagama was the political antithesis of Sivaram. The LTTE's military capabilities were the meat of Sivaram's columns; for him, the LTTE could do no wrong, at least going by what he said in public. Thiranagama was anti-war in every sense, openly condemning the LTTE's wrong-doings and failures, just as she condemned the actions



**STOP THE VIOLENCE:** Sri Lankan journalists protest against the death of Dharmaretnam Sivaram on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, in Colombo on Tuesday. - PHOTO: AFP

of the Sri Lankan military and the Indian Peace Keeping Force. She was shot dead as she cycled back home from the University one evening in September 1989.

It is telling that the first attempt to piece together Thiranagama's life and death has been made not by a Tamil, but by a Canadian film-maker. Helene Klodowsky's *No More Tears Sister*, sponsored by the National Film Board of Canada, was screened last week at the Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto (this writer saw it by arrangement in Chennai). The film, based mainly on interviews with members of Thiranagama's family and on archival material, and narrated by the Sri Lankan-Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje, vividly captures Thiranagama's transformation from a sympathiser of the Tigers' cause to one of its fiercest critics. Sivaram's death makes the film all the more important.

Following Thiranagama's killing, Jaffna saw a few protests but they quickly fizzled out when the LTTE began contacting participants individually, asking them to pipe down.

As the documentary notes, those were the last spontaneous instances of free expression in northern Sri Lanka.

Since then, Tamils have watched without protest as the LTTE eliminated almost every voice of opposition in the community.

Worse, so deeply have they internalised the LTTE rule of thumb that dissent gets a bullet in the head that there are always enough voices to justify the killing of a person who breaks ranks.

After its February 2002 ceasefire agreement with the Sri Lankan Government, the LTTE has blatantly taken out every Tamil opponent on whom it can lay hands. Many Tamils, including those in the media, have defended its actions, including the morally reprehensible practice of recruiting child soldiers.

When Karuna broke away from the LTTE, and the group vowed to hunt down and kill him, there were those who came up with the pathetic argument that for the sake of Tamil nationalism, the best place for the rebel leader was six feet under. It is no surprise that Karuna chose to hit back in exactly the same way as the LTTE — he was after all a Tiger once.

## State's indifference

In all this, the Sri Lankan state's near indifference is frightening. Those under threat from the LTTE have looked to the Government for help and support to survive, but have received little assistance. It is as if this is a family feud between Tamils that no one else but they can settle.

The attitude was exemplified in the Gov-

ernment position that the fighting between the LTTE and the Karuna faction is an "internecine" war that it has no power to stop.

In these conditions, Tamils find it easier to say that sanity will return to the community with a permanent solution to the ethnic conflict.

This may help to shift part of the blame for what is happening within the Tamil community to the Sri Lankan Government.

But it would be suicidal for Sri Lanka's Tamils to think they can put off the fight against internal repression and terror until after a political solution is found, because any settlement built on the fascistic conditions that prevail in the community today would be akin to building a house without a foundation.

If the Tamils want to halt the community's slide into darkness, the time to tackle the problem is now.

It has to be done by condemning Sivaram's murder in no uncertain terms, and, at the same time, by condemning unequivocally the killings of Thiranagama, Yogeswaran, Pathmanabha, Sarojini Yogeswaran, Neelan Thiruchelvam, Mylvaganam Nimalrajan, Thambirajah Robert Subathiran, and of all the others.

It is not yet too late to do this. In any case, this is the only way forward.



## NEWS ANALYSIS

# Losses for all in eastern Sri Lanka

The past year has seen opportunities missed by all concerned — the LTTE, 'Col.' Karuna, Colombo, and the international community — in the quest for a viable political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic problem.

V.S. Sambandan

**A** YEAR after a rebellion within the organisation, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is yet to regain control of eastern Sri Lanka, particularly the politically and symbolically significant Batticaloa and Amparai districts.

It is a truism that lasting peace in Sri Lanka will have to dawn in the east, given its volatile mix of the three main ethnicities — Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims.

A failed east means a failed peace prospect, and the current vacuum does not augur well. A weakened LTTE in the east means an escalation of violence as the Tigers try to establish their "sole representative" claim.

### Key issues

When Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan ('Col.' Karuna) rebelled last March, he raised key issues that still remain, especially the first — his questioning of the "Eastern domination by the North" — as the LTTE's military appointments demonstrate.

One significant conceptual poser raised by 'Col.' Karuna was "internal autonomy" within a putative "Tamil Eelam," in rebel-held areas in the north and the east. Yet another, and the one most devastating to the LTTE, is his direct challenge to the "traditional homelands" concept, and by direct implication, to a merged north-east, the basis of the Sri Lankan Tamils' decades-long call for separation. These prompted a political analyst to assert recently that 'Tamil Eelam' was a "failed state."

The rapid slide since the revolt marked a brutal throwback to the early years of militancy, when "hit-and-run" attacks and internecine killings dominated. Militarily, 'Col.' Karuna failed to deliver on his claim that the LTTE would be reduced to a guerrilla organisation after his split.

### Missed opportunities

An international community single-minded on delivering 'peace' failed to recognise political plurality and the multiplicity of concerns, by implication, endorsing the LTTE's claim for a 'sole representative' status.

The LTTE, which fought the state in the name of autonomy and self-rule, failed its own moment-of-truth when one of its most respected battlefield commanders demanded the same. It lost, irrecoverably, that test of internal tolerance and autonomy.

By all indications the LTTE's individual power centres, another issue raised by the Colonel, also continue.

For his part, 'Col.' Karuna, who then commanded the awe of many a Tamil, did his cause no good by a hurried split, but there could have been no option for a rebel in an organisation where dissent means death.

However, as the revolt was before a general election, his non-opposition to



'Col.' Karuna ...raising major issues

the eastern Tamil National Alliance (TNA) candidates, most of whom were his nominees, meant the loss of political bargaining power.

Nursing hopes that the Ceasefire Agreement would come to his rescue after the split was his second miscalculation.

These two early mistakes cost him considerably — politically and militarily.

Now, as the only LTTE veteran to have challenged the monolith and lived to tell his tale, much of his success will depend on his ability to survive.

### Government's failure

The Sri Lankan state, in turn, failed to utilise the division with tact, relegating it to yet another "Tamil-killing-Tamil" internecine combat, to the benefit of the LTTE.

The two major parties — the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance and the Opposition United National Party — count on the support of the 22 LTTE-backed Tamil National Alliance MPs, and through them the critical votes of the Tamil population in any subsequent poll.

The eastern districts, with their critical mix of Sri Lanka's main ethnicities, continue on a downward spiral, taking along with them the hopes of any early solution to the decades-long separatist conflict.

# Chandrika willing to work with LTTE for tsunami relief

By V.S. Sambandan

*S. Kumar*  
*AP-19*  
**COLOMBO, FEB. 25.** The Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, has reiterated her Government's "sincere commitment" to establish a "working arrangement" with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for "equitable allocation and implementation of post-tsunami aid."

Ms. Kumaratunga, who met the Norwegian Special Adviser to the Sri Lankan peace process, on Thursday, also "unreservedly condemned" the

recent killing of an LTTE regional political wing leader, E. Kousalyan.

The President "emphatically rejected" the suggestion that "there are paramilitary forces operating in association with the Sri Lankan security forces" — a charge made by the LTTE linking the killing of Kousalyan.

Ms. Kumaratunga also deplored the killing of a Sri Lankan soldier and the injury caused to another by the LTTE on February 23, the third anniversary of the CFA.

Mr. Solheim, who has been

involved in Sri Lanka's peace process since the late 1990s, "briefed the President on his discussions" with the LTTE's chief negotiator, Anton S. Balasingham, earlier this month. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Secretary-General of the Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Process, popularly known as the peace secretariat, and H.M.G.S. Palihakkara, the Norwegian envoy to Sri Lanka, Hans Brattskar, and other Sri Lankan and Norwegian officials were present at the meeting.

THE HINDU

26 FEB 2005

# Lanka govt in minority

Colombo, Feb. 25 (AP): Sri Lanka's ruling alliance lost its majority in parliament today after a Tamil political party withdrew its support, putting the country into a state of political uncertainty as it grapples to recover from the Asian tsunami.

The Ceylon Workers Congress, which has eight seats in the 225-member legislature, said it was joining the Opposition because of unspecified disagreements with President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government. The move left the

ruling alliance with 111 seats.

Though the loss weakens the government, it is unlikely to cause its downfall. However, the alliance could collapse if its key partner, the Marxist People's Liberation Front, follows through on a threat it made yesterday to also withdraw because of a dispute over the peace process with Tamil rebels.

"We have resigned from the government," R. Yogarajan, a senior member of the Ceylon Workers Congress, said. He said the decision to

quit was prompted by "the government's failure to implement certain agreements and programmes."

The Marxist People's Liberation Front threatened to withdraw its 39 lawmakers from the alliance because it opposes the government's proposed power-sharing agreements with the Tamil Tiger rebels.

## World Bank aid

The World Bank yesterday approved an additional \$75 million in emergency aid for Sri Lanka's tsunami recovery and reconstruction effort, bringing to \$150 million the total assistance made available this

month.

The new funding will help victims of the December disaster rebuild houses, provide employment opportunities and fund repairs to infrastructure systems including roads and water supply, the World Bank said in a statement.

Of the funds approved yesterday, \$30 million is a grant and the rest is a credit from the bank's lowest-cost financing arm, the International Development Association. "The financing package approved today is geared to help people get their lives back," said Peter Harrold, World Bank country director for Sri Lanka.



S-Lanka  
#8-14

## JVP softens stand

25/2

By V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO, FEB. 24.** Sri Lanka's Left-nationalist ruling ally, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), today opposed resumption of talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) based on an interim administration and said negotiations would have to include the outlines of a final settlement.

On a politically charged day, the JVP threatened to pull out of the Government if the talks resumed on the basis of an interim administration, only to tone down its position a few hours later. The JVP, with 39 MPs, is a major constituent of the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA).

At the centre of the political storm was a statement on February 23 by the Government to mark the third anniversary of the ceasefire agreement. In its statement, Colombo reiterated that it "continues to be ready" to resume "direct negotiations with the LTTE on the establishment of an interim authority to meet the urgent humanitarian and development needs of the people of the north and east and to proceed thereafter to negotiating a final settlement of the ethnic conflict."

### Changed position

The JVP contended that it was a changed position of the Government and its frontbencher, Wimal Weerawansa,

told Parliament this morning that the party "decisively" rejected "the latest position".

"We state clearly that if the present government took such a step, we would immediately withdraw from being a constituent of the Government," Mr. Weerawansa had said.

However, at a hurriedly convened press conference, the JVP leader declined to set a timeframe and was non-committal on the future course of action. The JVP, he said, "was part of the Government," but was "not consulted" on the statement.

He also said two senior Ministers were not aware of the statement and wanted the Government to change its position.

THE HINDU

25 FEB 2005

25 FEB 2005

Sri Lanka 15  
HO

## "Sri Lanka-LTTE talks must for peace"

By V.S. Sambandan 26/2

**COLOMBO, FEB. 22.** Striking a cautionary note on the Sri Lankan ceasefire, the international monitors in Sri Lanka today said the lack of talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was "putting a serious strain" on the agreement.

Stressing the importance of negotiations, said the Acting Head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), Hargrup Haukland, said the two sides "will inevitably have to return to the negotiating table."

In a special statement to mark the completion of the third year of the ceasefire agreement (CFA), Mr. Haukland commended the Sri Lankan government and the LTTEs' "pure willingness to act with restraint in situations that could have escalated."

The SLMM, he said, "will do its utmost to assist both sides in upholding the CFA by continuing our work and confidence building measures."

Though "there have been no clashes between the parties' military forces after the signing of the CFA," the continued "assassinations and killings" were "still jeopardising" the agreement. Strongly condemning "these horrible acts," Mr. Haukland said they "undermine and pose a serious threat to the peace process."

Echoing the Japanese Special Envoy, Yasushi Akashi's recent views, Mr. Haukland said the killings had "without a doubt poisoned the atmosphere" and lead to "an unsafe environment creating fear among the

general public."

Mr. Haukland's observation is against the backdrop of continued killings of political opponents, with 44 complaints lodged against the LTTE since 2002.

The SLMM had so far ruled that four assassinations were violations of the ceasefire agreement.

Three were ruled as not violations and 19 cases were pending.

### Intelligence operatives

Nearly all those killed since the ceasefire, barring a handful, were Tamils - mostly those termed as "intelligence operatives." The killings escalated particularly after the March 2004 rebellion by the former LTTE special commander, V. Muralitharan ('Col.' Karuna).

Among those killed were the Parliamentary candidate, Rajan Sathiyamoorthy, and Reggie who backed Karuna after the rebellion. Striking back, Karuna's supporters killed several LTTE cadres and officials, including the political wing leader for Batticaloa and Amparai, Kousalyan.

The killings must be stopped and SLMM urges both sides to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice," Mr. Haukland said.

The December 26 tsunami, he said, "brought added suffering to Sri Lanka and has increased pressure" on the two sides, making it "more imperative than ever" that the CFA holds.

Striking an optimistic note, Mr. Haukland said, "my experience with both parties leads me to believe that the two will do everything in their power to keep the ceasefire."

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2005

## Top LTTE leader killed in ambush

Colombo  
8 FEBRUARY



KOUSHALYAN

A top leader of Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers group has been killed—the senior-most rebel functionary to die since the group inked a peace pact with the government in February 2002. E. Koushalyan, who headed the political wing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Amparai and Batticaloa districts, was killed in an ambush along with four others late on Monday at Welikanda, 285 km from here. Suspected members of a break-away LTTE group headed by Karuna killed the man around 8 pm. Chandran Nehru, a former parliamentarian belonging to the pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance, was injured. —IANS

*The Economic Times*

09 FEB 2005

9 FEB 2005

# Batticaloa LTTE leader killed

By V.S. Sambandan *of Lanka*

**COLOMBO, FEB. 7.** A key eastern political wing leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), E. Kousalyan, was killed in an ambush this evening, along with five other LTTE cadres.

Mr. Kousalyan, political wing leader for the Batticaloa-Amparai district, was travelling towards the eastern Batticaloa district in a van when he was

*KD-1*  
killed in the ambush at 7.45 p.m., eastern police sources said.

The ambush occurred at Welikanda in the Sinhalese-majority Polonnaruwa district, adjoining Batticaloa.

Mr. Kousalyan was reportedly returning from the LTTE-held northern Vanni region after a meeting of regional leaders.

A former MP from the LTTE-backed Tamil National Alliance (TNA), Ariynayagam Chandran-

*8/7*  
eru, was critically injured in the attack, police said.

Supporters of the LTTE's former special commander, V. Muralitharan ('Col.' Karuna), are suspected to be behind today's ambush.

Today's killing is the biggest strike against the LTTE's eastern leadership after months of reduced levels of violence in the eastern district following last year's rebellion by 'Col.' Karuna.

The TamilNet website said Mr. Kousalyan was the "senior-most LTTE leader to be killed after the Government and the LTTE signed a ceasefire agreement in February 2002."

According to military observers, today's ambush has the potential to weaken the Tigers in the east, as Mr. Kousalyan was "one of the few persons from Batticaloa to continue with the LTTE after 'Col.' Karuna's rebellion".

# Tsunami won't impact LTTE, say experts

Sri Lanka

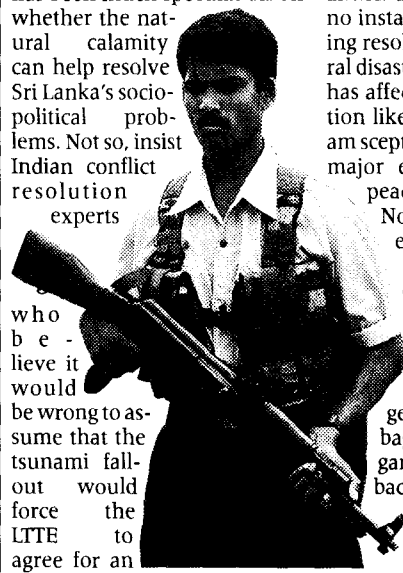
16/1

Shantanu Nandan Sharma  
NEW DELHI 15 JANUARY

early resolution of South Asia's biggest conflict.

WITH conflicting reports continuing to pour in regarding the recent tsunami's impact on militant organisation LTTE, there has been much speculation on whether the natural calamity can help resolve Sri Lanka's socio-political problems. Not so, insist Indian conflict resolution experts

who believe it would be wrong to assume that the tsunami fallout would force the LTTE to agree for an



Even as contradictory reports kept surfacing on whether LTTE supremo V Prabhakaran was dead or alive, C Uday Bhaskar, the officiating director of IDSA (Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis) told ET there was no instance of any conflict being resolved because of a natural disaster. "No doubt, tsunami has affected a strong organisation like the LTTE. However, I am sceptical about it having any major effect on the present peace process in Sri Lanka. No natural disaster can end a political problem."

Dr Ajai Sahni, the executive director of the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM) argues on the same lines. An insurgent group doesn't carry a baggage like any other organisation. They will go back to the jungles and recover from whatever little loss they have suffered.

# Gunfire in rebel areas may hit relief work

**Colombo/Banda Aceh:** Two hand grenades hurled in a rare clash between Christians and Hindus killed at least three people and injured 37 others in a part of eastern Sri Lanka where international aid workers are helping tsunami victims, police said on Sunday.

No aid workers were injured or near the explosions, officials said. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, in Sri Lanka to assess the tsunami damage, was in Colombo at the time of the blast.

Two suspected assailants were arrested soon after the attack in a Tamil rebel-controlled area late on Sunday night, said V H Anil, a police officer in the eastern town of Valaichchenai.

He said Christians were angry after Hindus allegedly demolished a church, and may have carried out the attack in retaliation. Clashes between Hindus and Christians are rare since both groups belong to the Tamil minority. The Tamil Tiger rebels, who have been fighting for two decades for a Tamil homeland, have both Hindus and Christians among their ranks. About 76% of Sri Lanka's 19 million

people are Sinhalese while Tamils make up 18%.

Meanwhile in the tsunami-hit Indonesian city of Banda Aceh, suspected rebels fired shots at the home of a top police official near the United Nations' relief headquarters, officials said. There were no casualties.

An unspecified number of Free Aceh Movement rebels fired at officers guarding the home of Aceh province's deputy police chief, located about 100 metres from the UN building, said police Sgt Bambang Hariyanpo.

Police returned fire but the rebels vanished into the city, he said, adding that authorities were investigating the incident. Police and UN officials said the UN's relief headquarters was not the target of the shooting, in which there were no casualties. A truckload of soldiers arrived outside the building shortly after the automatic gunfire was heard, a UN staffer said on condition of anonymity.

The shooting underscores concerns about security during the relief effort in Aceh, which was devastated by the earthquake and tsunami. AP



**UN chief Kofi Annan with Chandrika Kumaratunga**

HELL & HIGH WATER  
PAGES 3, 5, 11, 12 & 15

# Annan hopes for peace in Lanka

Island/ANN

## Radio retracts death report

COLOMBO, Jan. 9. — The UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, today said he hopes to return to Sri Lanka and “visit all parts of the country” while “celebrating peace”. He was addressing the local and international media at the conclusion of his visit to the tsunami-affected areas in the South of the country and Trincomalee.

Asked if he regretted not being able to visit LTTE-controlled areas and if it would affect relations between the UN and Sri Lanka, he replied: “I hope not. I have been here for only 48 hours and met the people on the ground, community leaders, the President, Prime Minister and Opposition leader. I hope to come back and visit all parts of

COLOMBO, Jan. 9. — The Sri Lankan Broadcasting Corporation has retracted its report that elusive LTTE chief Velupillai Pirabhakaran and his intelligence chief Pottu Amman are among the dead or missing in the tsunami disaster, an SLBC official said today. The broadcaster offered no reason for its retraction of the report. The state broadcaster had yesterday run reports on its English and Tamil language services that the two men had not been seen since the tsunami struck the island on 26 December. The LTTE criticised the broadcaster for carrying the reports, saying now was “not the time for gossip mongering and malicious propaganda”. — AFP

the country. Not only that, I want to celebrate peace.”

Mr Annan said he was in Sri Lanka not take sides but to help it overcome a great tragedy. “We have an unprecedented disaster on our hands and all our energies should be focussed on relieving the suffering of the thousands of affected persons.”

The UN, he added, was not a one man organisation when pressed on whether he had been pre-

vented from travelling to LTTE controlled areas.

“We have many people in all parts of the country and are here for the long haul. The world is prepared to assist Sri Lanka and I hope it will use the opportunity not only to recover from the tragedy but achieve peace as well.”

Asked if he had discussed the stalled peace process with Tamil leaders, the UN chief said had urged the Tamil National Alliance, considered the political proxies of the rebels, to intensify the peace process. Mr Annan said he had also discussed the issue with President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

The UN’s priority he said was to deal effectively with the recovery stage and much more aid was needed. “I met some children housed in a mosque in Trincomalee and saw Tamil and Muslim children play together. I was also touched by the destruction in the south. Shelter is important, so is the reconstruction of damaged schools.”



Mr Kofi Annan with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga in Colombo on Sunday. — PTI

# প্রভাকরন-কাণ্ডে দ্বন্দ্ব বাড়ল শ্রীলঙ্কায়

কলম্বো, ৯ জানুয়ারি: চব্বিশ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই সুনামিতে এল টি টি ই নেতা প্রভাকরনের মৃত্যু বা নিখোঁজ হওয়ার খবর প্রত্যাহার করে নিল শ্রীলঙ্কার সরকারি রেডিও। শ্রীলঙ্কান বডকাস্টিং কর্পোরেশন (এস এল বি সি) গত কাল প্রচার করেছিল, সুনামিতে মৃত বা নিখোঁজের তালিকায় আছেন এল টি টি ই নেতা প্রভাকরন এবং তাঁর গোয়েন্দা-বাহিনীর প্রধান পোতু আশ্মান। কোনও কারণ না-দেখিয়েই আজ সেই খবর প্রত্যাহার করে নিয়েছে এস এল বি সি। আর ক্ষুব্ধ টাইগারেরা বলেছে, উদ্দেশ্যপূর্ণ ভাবে ভুল তথ্য পরিবেশন করা হচ্ছে। এল টি টি ই-র বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, “গুজব ছড়ানো বা অপপ্রচার চালানোর সময় এটা নয়।” ফলে, জল নামতেই সরকার এবং এল টি টি ই-র পুরনো বিরোধ ফের প্রকট হয়ে উঠেছে শ্রীলঙ্কায়।

প্রভাকরন-সংক্রান্ত খবর নিয়ে বিভ্রান্তি এবং সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত শ্রীলঙ্কার টাইগার-অধ্যুষিত এলাকায় কোফি আন্নানের সফরে বাধা— এই দুইয়ে মিলে জটিলতা বেড়েছে। রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের মহাসচিব আন্নান স্বয়ং আজ বলেছেন, তিনি শ্রীলঙ্কার সমস্ত বিপর্যস্ত অংশই ঘুরে দেখতে চান। কিন্তু তাঁকে বাধা দেওয়ায় টাইগারদের ক্ষোভ কমেনি।

এরই মধ্যে আবার ঘটেছে অন্য বিপত্তি। পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কার ভালাইচেনাই শহরে দু’টি ধর্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে সংঘর্ষের জেরে ত্রেনেড বিস্ফোরণে অন্তত তিন জন মারা গিয়েছেন, আহত হয়েছেন ৩৭ জন। টাইগার-নিয়ন্ত্রিত এই শহরে বিভিন্ন আন্তর্জাতিক সংগঠনের যে-ত্রাণকর্মীরা কাজ করছিলেন, তাঁদের অবশ্য কোনও ক্ষতি হয়নি। ঘটনার পরে পরেই দু’জনকে গ্রেফতারও করা হয়েছে। এই ঘটনার সময় আন্নান ছিলেন কলম্বোয়।

ত্রাণ ও উদ্ধারের কাজে কোনও

বাছবিচার করা হচ্ছে না বলে ফের জানিয়ে দিয়েছে শ্রীলঙ্কার সরকার। টাইগারেরা তাতে বিশেষ কর্ণপাত না-করে বরং হুমকি দিয়েছে, ত্রাণ শিবির থেকে সেনা না-সরলে পরিণতি ভাল হবে না। দ্বন্দ্ব আরও বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের উদ্বাস্ত-সংক্রান্ত শাখা ইউ এন এইচ সি আর। তারা বলেছে, ত্রাণ বা উদ্বাস্ত শিবির সামলাতে সেনা ব্যবহার ঠিক নয়।

উত্তর ও পূর্ব শ্রীলঙ্কার টাইগার-নিয়ন্ত্রিত এলাকাগুলিতে আন্নানকে যেতে না-দেওয়া নিয়েও বিস্তর জলঘোলা হচ্ছে। দেশের বড় বড় কাগজগুলোতে আজ এই বিষয়ে নানা সূত্র থেকে জোগাড় করা যে সমস্ত খবর বেরিয়েছে, তাতে জল্পনা আরও বেড়েছে। শ্রীলঙ্কা সফর শেষে কোফি আন্নান আজ বলেছেন, “ফিরে আসতে পারব বলেই আশা করছি। এ দেশের সব এলাকা ঘুরে দেখতে চাই। শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া এগোনের কাজেও সাহায্য করতে চাই।” বিরোধী নেতা রনিল বিক্রমসিংহ-সহ প্রথম সারির রাজনৈতিক নেতাদের সঙ্গে আন্নান আজ কথা বলেছেন। আন্নানের মতোই মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব কলিন প্যাওয়েল আশা করছেন, ‘সহযোগিতার মনোভাব’ শ্রীলঙ্কায় সরকার ও টাইগারদের দূরত্ব কমাতে।

প্রেসিডেন্ট চন্ডিকা কুমারতুঙ্গা অবশ্য ‘দূরত্ব’কে তেমন গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছেন না। তিনি বলেছেন, উত্তরাঞ্চল-সহ শ্রীলঙ্কার সর্বত্র ত্রাণ পাঠানো হচ্ছে এবং তামিল টাইগারেরাও তাতে সন্তুষ্ট।

শ্রীলঙ্কায় বাড়ির শঙ্কা: সুনামি-বিধ্বস্ত শ্রীলঙ্কায় এ বার সামুদ্রিক ঘূর্ণিঝড়ের আশঙ্কা করছেন আবহাওয়াবিদরা। তাঁদের শঙ্কা, বঙ্গোপসাগরে নিম্নচাপের কারণে ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে সাইক্লোন আছড়ে পড়তে পারে শ্রীলঙ্কার পূর্ব ও দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব উপকূলে। — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই



S. Lanka  
+10-

# Is Prabakaran dead or alive?

✓✓  
9/1

COLOMBO, JAN. 8. The elusive Tamil Tiger chief, Velupillai Prabakaran, and his intelligence chief, Pottu Amman, are among the dead or missing after the December 26 tsunami disaster, the Sri Lankan state radio said today, sparking fresh tension between the Government and the rebels who immediately denied the report.

*The Island* newspaper, meanwhile, reported today that an expensive coffin "for a top LTTE leader" had been smuggled into a northern Tiger area inside a container carrying relief material for tsunami survivors.

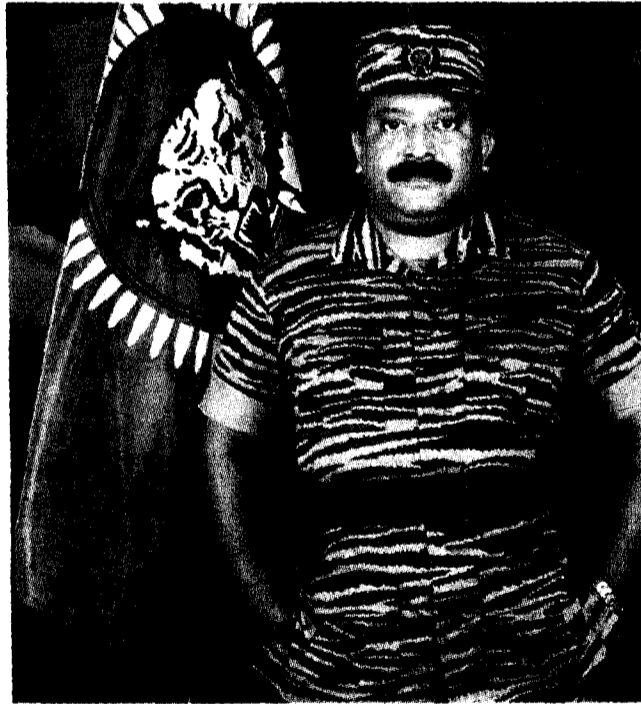
The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, in a statement posted on its Peace Secretariat website, slammed the Sri

Lanka Broadcasting Corporation for carrying the reports, saying that now was "not the time for gossip mongering and malicious propaganda." "The LTTE and the Tamil people wish to strongly protest against this mischievous act of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, stooping down to such low level of broadcasting news that [is] fabricated by interested parties," the statement said.

"At a time of a national catastrophe of this magnitude, it is very... regrettable that a responsible media of the Government takes upon itself the job of spreading rumours and speculation that tend to create confusion in the minds of the people," it added. The radio reports quoted Vice-Admiral Daya Sandagiri as saying that Mr. Prabakaran and Mr. Amman were among those killed or missing in the tsunami. — AFP

V.S. Sambandan reports:

Since the tsunami, speculation has been rife on the fate of Mr. Prabakaran who lives in the rebel-held north Sri Lanka. Except for a signed statement by him expressing condolences to all the victims of the tsunami, the elusive leader has neither made a public presence nor delivered a radio speech, further fuelling such speculation.



LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabakaran in this file photo taken in 2003. — AFP

## LTTE chief missing

COLOMBO,  
Jan. 8. — Short-  
ly after Sri Lan-  
ka's state-run  
radio reported  
that LTTE supr-  
emo Velupillai  
Pirabhakaran  
and his Intellige-  
nce chief Pottu  
Amman are am-



ong the dead or missing in the 26  
December tsunami disaster, the reb-  
els denied it and termed the report as  
"mischievous" and "fabricated".

Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation,  
quoting navy chief Vice-Admiral Daya  
Sandagiri, had reported that Pirabha-  
karan and Pottu Amman were among  
the tsunami casualties. The LTTE, in  
a statement posted on its website,  
strongly denounced the report. "The  
LTTE and the Tamil people wish to  
strongly protest against this mischie-  
vous act of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting  
Corporation," the statement said. "At a  
time of a national catastrophe, it is  
very regrettable," it added.

A privately-owned newspaper added  
to the speculation by reporting that  
an NGO smuggled an expensive cof-  
fin "for a top LTTE leader", but did  
not give any name. — PTI

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2005

## SRI LANKA AND THE TSUNAMI H-12

SRI LANKA IS no stranger to large-scale death and destruction. But the death and destruction caused by a 20-year-old internal conflict could not have prepared the country, often described as the "teardrop island," for the devastation of the tsunami. The giant waves left an estimated 40,000 dead in two hours, more than half the number of people killed in two decades of the ethnic conflict. No reliable estimate of the damage to property is available at this juncture. All that is known is that the sea inundated several villages and towns along Sri Lanka's elliptical coastline, from the Tamil North to the Sinhala South. This was the country's biggest natural disaster; after Indonesia, it was the worst hit by the giant waves that the under-sea earthquake triggered. For a people trying to rebuild their lives and their country utilising the window of opportunity provided by the ceasefire between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam — the truce will enter its fourth year next month — the calamity is a brutally unexpected setback. The tsunami has devalued the few other tangible dividends of the three-year-old truce.

At such a time, one should expect a country bitterly divided along political, ethnic, and of late, religious lines, to stand united and endeavour to rebuild and bring back a semblance of normality to the lives of the people and to the areas affected by the tsunami. It is disturbing that the LTTE should use a disaster of such epic proportions to underscore Tamil separateness by unreasonably demanding that foreign donors should channel all aid to the North-East only through it and not the Sri Lankan Government. The LTTE's desire to be the sole administrator of relief operations in areas under its

control is evidently also driven by its fanatical determination to maintain secrecy about the fate of its military installations, especially the Sea Tiger base in Mullaithivu, one of the places reported to be badly hit by the tsunami. However, for the people living in LTTE-controlled areas of the North-East, a far more urgent requirement at this juncture is the LTTE's full co-operation with the Sri Lankan Government. There is no other way of speedily reaching relief that is pouring into the country to the region, and beginning the task of rehabilitation. As President Chandrika Kumaratunga said in her address to the nation last week, "it is not possible to deal with a massive calamity of this magnitude separately as Sinhalese, Muslims or Tamils." In this sense, there could be a silver lining to the tsunami. A unity forged now will surely recharge the stalled peace process with positive implications for a settlement of the country's Tamil question.

It is to India's credit that despite its own share of tragedy from the tsunami, it was the first to respond to its neighbour's distress, a demonstration of the warm relations between the two nations. Indeed, Indian relief supplies arrived at the island faster than they reached some badly affected parts of the Tamil Nadu coast. New Delhi has pledged a generous Rs. 100 crore (\$25 million) as assistance. Hearteningly, several other countries have joined the relief effort. In the coming months, Sri Lanka will need all the international help it can get to rebuild its coastline. Many times during the last two decades of conflict, the people of Sri Lanka have shown tremendous grit and resilience in the face of the most testing situations. They can certainly overcome the present crisis.

THE HINDU

5 JAN 2005

# Floods strike Lanka

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLOMBO, Jan. 1. — Flash floods in eastern Sri Lanka today, forced the evacuation of 2,000 people already affected by last Sunday's tsunami that killed nearly 29,000 people along the country's coast, officials said.

Rains subsided later in the day and flood waters were receding in some places. Officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they ordered the evacuation of people from low-lying areas. An aid official in eastern Sri Lanka's Batticaloa town confirmed the floods and evacuation. "The situation is not looking good and 2,000 people have already been displaced," Mr Angelo Pinchero, a Canadian working for the aid group Nonviolent Peace Force said.

Several roads leading to the eastern town of Ampara — one of the worst hit by the tsunami — were inundated, in some cases preventing or delaying trucks carrying relief goods from arriving, said Mr Neville Wijesinghe, a police officer. "The main roads are ok now, but there are patches where water is yet to drain out," he said. Sri Lankan authorities on today put the nationwide tsunami death toll at 28,729. The National Disaster Management Centre said that 16,525 people were injured and 5,240 missing.