

LTTE claims sovereignty

P K Balachandran
Colombo, May 12

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The LTTE has claimed sovereignty over the land, sea and air in those parts of the Sri Lankan north and east that it controls.

"Nobody has the right to pass judgement on the sovereign rights of our access to the adjacent sea and airspace of our homelands," the head of the LTTE's political wing, S P Tamilselvan, told Major General Ulf Henricsson, the head of the Scandinavian-staffed Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, when the latter met him in Kilinochchi on Friday.

Henricsson had rushed to Kilinochchi after two sea battles and an air strike on Thursday left 67 Sri Lankan navy men and LTTE cadres dead. A Lankan troop ship with 710 men on board had narrowly escaped being sunk by the LTTE off the Point Pedro coast.

The LTTE had challenged the Sri Lankan government's sovereign rights over the sea,

and attacked Lankan naval craft even though these had international truce monitors on board. The truce monitors had supported the government's stand on its sovereign rights, saying it accorded with international law.

Tamilselvan said the LTTE did not enter the peace process to be described as a "non-state actor" and the government as the "state actor".

"The Ceasefire Agreement and peace process is between two parties. It is not based on LTTE as a non-state actor and GOSL (government of Sri Lanka) as a state actor."

The LTTE also asked the truce monitors not to board Sri Lankan naval vessels, warning that they would be doing so at their own peril.

"We urge you for the last time not to be on board Sri Lankan Naval vessels until further notice from us. If you chose to ignore our warning, we are not responsible for the consequences," Tamilselvan wrote to Henricsson on Thursday.

13 MAY 2005

We did not own up to killing: LTTE

Anton Balasingham only regretted incident, spokesman tells *The Hindu* ^{NO 1} 28/6

B. Muralidhar Reddy ^{28/6}

COLOMBO: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on Wednesday denied that it had owned responsibility for the Rajiv Gandhi assassination.

Daya Master, LTTE spokesman contested the interpretation of Anton Balasingham's NDTV interview by Sri Lankan defence spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella. Mr. Rambukwella told a news conference here earlier in the day here that the 'apology' tendered by the LTTE for the murder of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was interesting as the Tigers till yester-

day had consistently denied their involvement in the assassination. "The LTTE has not owned responsibility for the killing. Mr. Balasingham has only regretted the incident", Daya Master of the Tigers Secretariat told *The Hindu* over phone from Kilinochi.

[Anton Balasingham, LTTE's chief negotiator and ideologue, told NDTV on Tuesday: "As far as that event [Rajiv assassination] is concerned, I would say it is a great tragedy, a monumental historical tragedy for which we deeply regret and we call upon the Government of India and the people of India to be magnani-

mous to put the past behind and to approach the ethnic question in a different perspective."]

On the request of the LTTE for greater Indian involvement in the island's conflict, Mr. Rambukwella said India was involved as an observer at the first round of the Geneva talks and there have been 'strong requests' from Colombo to New Delhi for a more active role. He said the Government of Sri Lanka wanted to widen the scope of international monitors and observers.

Asked if the LTTE was sending any signal to India through the interview, he said: "We are taking the signals seriously but

the contents and assurances are dubious." He said when the subject of Rajiv assassination figured before the 2002 ceasefire agreement, the LTTE was visibly annoyed and walked out of the negotiation room.

A political observer was of the view that Mr. Balasingham's interview is a reflection of the desperation of the Tigers, particularly after the European Union (EU) ban and its growing international isolation.

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28 JUN 2006

Deputy Chief of Sri Lankan Army assassinated

Suicide bomber rams motorbike into General's vehicle

B. Muralidhar Reddy

COLOMBO: A suspected member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) assassinated the Deputy Chief of the Sri Lankan Army, Parami Kulatunga, along with three others and injured several persons on Monday morning.

The attack took place at 7.45 a.m. in Pannipitiya, 17 km from Colombo, as the General was headed for the Army Headquarters in his official vehicle. According to the police, the attacker, riding a motorbike, rammed into the car of Maj. Gen. Kulatunga and an escorting army pickup truck.

It was instant death for the General and his driver and a corporal with him. A civilian passer

• **Rajapakse blames LTTE for the attack**

• **Incident a further blow to the peace process**

by was also killed and a local bus in the vicinity was hit. Footage aired by local television channels showed the severed head of the suspected assassin close to the site of the suicide bombing.

President Mahinda Rajapakse denounced the killings as further example of the LTTE's concerted efforts to derail the peace process through acts of terror, and its disregard for the international community's repeated calls to cease all violence and acts of terrorism. In a special

message, Mr. Rajapakse said, "This unabated violence by the LTTE should attract the opprobrium of the entire civilised world.

"It is a reminder to the international community, and to the Tamil people, that the LTTE remains an organisation dedicated to pursue violent means, especially the use of terror to achieve its objectives, which are far removed from the actual needs of the Tamil people."

He said the act of violence targeting a high ranking officer of the army, and the callous disregard for the safety of civilians in such attacks will not intimidate either civilians or the security forces, nor deter them from overcoming the LTTE and its terror. There was no word from

the LTTE to the Government charges.

TamilNet said Sri Lanka has accused the LTTE of the suicide attack, "which comes in the wake of SLA [Sri Lankan Army] Deep Penetration Unit attacks, targeting senior LTTE commanders in Vanni."

It further said, "press reports today quoted political observers as saying that in the tit-for-tat killings going on in the 'shadow war' which has escalated steadily for the past two years, the assassination of Maj. Gen. Kulatunga followed the killing of two top ranking LTTE military commanders, 'Lt. Col.' Ramanan of Batticaloa and 'Lt. Col.' Mahindi of Mannar, for which Tigers have blamed the Sri Lanka Army."

S. Lanka
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27/6

Norway's next step key to Lanka peace

Agence France Presse

COLOMBO, June 25: A tense calm has settled over Sri Lanka as the government and Tamil Tiger guerrillas await a decision from peace broker Norway that could make or break the fragile truce keeping the island from returning to war, analysts say. Norwegian diplomats who have struggled to bring the two sides together will meet on Thursday with other Nordic nations to decide the fate of a truce monitoring mission, known by its acronym SLMM, that is observing the 2002 ceasefire.

"Both sides are poised to wait and see clearly what replies are given by the Norwegians," said retired Air Force chief Mr Harry Gunatillake. "Now everything has stalled," he said. Peace efforts

Anti-rebel member shot dead

COLOMBO, June 25: A member of a political party that opposes separatist Tamil Tiger rebels in Sri Lanka was shot dead today in the country's troubled north, a party official said. Jeinulabdeen Mohammad Basheer, 46, was shot dead by two gunmen on a bicycle in the northern town of Jaffna, said Rajan an official of People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam, or PLOTE, a former militant separatist group which later gave up arms to enter mainstream politics.

Jaffna is about 300 kilometers north of the capital, Colombo. Rajan blamed the rebels for the killing. "Judging by things that have happened in the past, we suspect the Tigers for this," Rajan, who only uses one name, said. PLOTE was among a dozen militant groups that fought alongside Tamil Tiger rebels to carve out a separate state for the country's ethnic minority Tamils.

■AP

appeared at the break-point earlier this month after a deadly bus blast blamed on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) killed 64 people, including 15 children. The government retaliated with air strikes and artillery bombardments

S. J. M. N.

three people are dying each day in what he called a "low intensity conflict".

In the past week, the government and Tiger rebels have instead turned to a war of words, in effect to keep up appearances while at the same time giving the Norwegians some room to maneuver, a diplomatic official told AFP.

"In the last few days nothing major has happened - both sides have sort of taken a breath," said the diplomat, who did not want to be named.

"After the failure of Oslo, I think they are giving the Norwegians some time to see if they can do something." The two sides refused to come together for talks in Oslo earlier in June. The ceasefire took another blow

last week when the Tigers said European Union (EU) members Finland, Sweden and Denmark must quit the truce monitoring mission within one month.

"There is a lot of mistrust, particularly among some partners within the government. They don't like the Norwegians," he said, calling the current standoff "really dicey" said Boteju. Like the other analysts he warned the Tigers might launch a massive attack just before the 29 June talks as they try to force Norway's hand.

"It is a case where they want to score something and then say, Let's talk," he said.

"My gut feeling is that (the Tigers) will try to do something before the talks to make the other side bend down."

RAJAPAKSE OPTS FOR WAR

In the prevailing circumstances, India has a special responsibility in preventing this mindless blood-letting in Sri Lanka

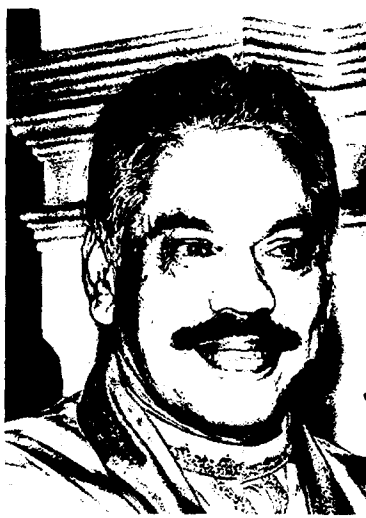
CONTRARY to the perception, particularly in the Western and Indian media, that he is a model of restraint in the face of LTTE provocations, Mahinda Rajapakse, Sri Lankan President, is a firm believer in the Sinhala Buddhist supremacist ideology which stands in the way of resolving the ethnic crisis that has plunged the country into undeclared war. Unlike his predecessors who were keen on a negotiated peaceful settlement, Rajapakse has not been able to come forward with a single proposal to end the ethnic crisis. He is totally dependent on the armed forces to solve the Tamil problem that has plagued the country right from the time of its independence from British colonial rule. Cast in the mould of the Janatha Vimukthi Perumana and the Jathika Hela Urumaya with whose support he became the President, and the right-wing Patriotic National Movement, Rajapakse had not been exposed to liberal democratic traditions. He firmly believes the Sinhala Buddhists are the sole rightful heirs to the island nation and the Tamils, who are as much a part of the country as the Sinhalese are, can go to India if they do not like their status as second class citizens in the Dhammadeepa. A strong undivided Sri Lanka under a unitary constitution was necessary to maintain this privileged position of the Sinhala people in which the minorities may coexist without any special rights or power.

Like most Sinhala hardliners, Rajapakse does not believe that the LTTE will ever agree to anything other than a separate Tamil Eelam comprising the Northern and Eastern Provinces, the historic homeland of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Even if the LTTE agrees to a united Sri Lanka under a federal system, as it did in the Oslo round of talks under the Ranil Wickremasinghe government a couple of years ago, Rajapakse is not prepared to accept it as he had made it clear in this *chinthana*. He is very much a part of the *Mahajanaya* and considers himself as the divine instrument to achieve it. Though he was a senior leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party of the former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Rajapakse never associated himself with any major effort she had taken to solve the Tamil problem. When the Devolution Bill under a federal constitution was introduced in Parliament in 2000, he joined the Buddhist demonstrators

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

opposing it. Paying lip service to words like peace, peace process, minority rights and negotiated settlement, Rajapakse has been single-mindedly planning to annihilate the LTTE to achieve his goal.

A report of the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM) made up of the five Nordic countries including Sweden, Finland and Denmark, members of the European Union, which oversees the 2002 ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lanka government and the LTTE, signed



by its head, Major-General Ulf Henricsson, dated 4 June but suppressed by Colombo, exposes the involvement of the Sri Lankan armed forces in the escalating violence and murders in the North-East for which Colombo has been blaming the LTTE. A cautious diplomatic document, the SLMM report, while citing breaches of the ceasefire agreement by both sides, highlights the provocative actions of the military directly or by the paramilitaries under its control. On the targeted assassination of P Vigneswaran, a pro-LTTE politician on 7 April, the SLMM report says: "The cold blooded killing of this prominent member of the Tamil society close to police and defence installations raises serious doubts about the Sri Lankan government's capability to maintain law and order."

Needless to say the police so far has not arrested anyone in connection with this murder, or for that matter any other attack on LTTE supporters since November last when Rajapakse became President. The SLMM has refuted the government's claim that the Karuna group (an LTTE break-away faction opposed to the leadership of Velupillai Pirapaharan) has not been operating from government-controlled areas in the North-East. Its report says: "There are a number of indications that the government is actively supporting the

Karuna group. Known Karuna supporters have been seen moving to and from army camps and it is evident that the security forces and police in some areas are not taking action to prevent armed elements from operating." After an SLMM press release dated 29 April regarding the armed forces' involvement in extra-judicial killings, it has on several occasions been denied access through government-controlled checkpoints. "Security forces on the ground claim that they act upon orders from Col-

He firmly believes the Sinhala Buddhists are the sole rightful heirs to the island nation and the Tamils, who are as much a part of the country as the Sinhalese are, can go to India if they do not like their status as second class citizens in the Dhammadeepa

ombo," the report added.

The SLMM report also indicts the LTTE for the attack on military personnel and accuses it of intensifying child recruitment and child abduction to bolster its forces in breach of its undertaking in Geneva. But it makes it clear that the main responsibility for the escalating violence rests with the Sri Lankan government and military which have collaborated with Tamil paramilitary groups in goading the LTTE into retaliatory action. That the LTTE revels in violence and acts of terrorism as political strategy is well known.

The Karuna faction of the LTTE, now an ally of the government forces, has cadres trained in suicide bombing and similar terrorist acts which bear the stamp of the LTTE. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint which of the recent terrorist acts was the handiwork of the LTTE and the Karuna group.

The 25 April attack on the Army Commander is one such case. Anyone familiar with the heavily guarded and most secured army headquarters in Colombo would know that even a fly cannot enter its fortified precincts without being noticed by those guarding its wrought-iron gates. The sentries are all Sinhalese. Assuming the suicide bomber, dressed as a pregnant woman with explosives strapped to her tummy, was an LTTE cadre, she could not have entered the gates

without the connivance of the armed forces standing guard and loitered inside waiting for the Army Commander to drive past.

While Lieut.-Gen. Sarath Fonseca escaped with injuries, five of his heavily armed bodyguards and three others were killed. Within minutes of the incident in Colombo, there was a coordinated attack by the army, air force and navy on Tamil villages in Trincomalee. The civilian people were unable to run for safety as shells came from the sea and land and bombs were dropped from the air. The Santhosam Children's Home, which cared for more than 40 children orphaned by the 2005 tsunami, suffered a direct hit by a bomb dropped by an air force jet, supplied by Israel. Apart from escalating ethnic strife, this single incident hastened the European Union to proscribe the LTTE.

After the 15 June Claymore explosion in Anuradhapura which claimed 64 civilian lives, the Sri Lankan army, navy and air force launched a similar coordinated attack on civilian targets in the North-East. This time naval troops entered Sri Lanka's biggest Catholic Church in Pesalai in Mannar district where frightened Tamils trying to flee to Tamil Nadu had taken shelter and killed six civilians. Though the Sri Lankan government has denied the attack in the Church by the navy, the Rt Rev. Dr Rappapppu Joseph, Bishop of Mannar, quoting eye-witness accounts, complained to the Vatican through the Apostolic Nuncio in Colombo about the desecration of the church of Our Lady of Victory at Pesalai. Three of those killed in the church were Catholics, two Hindus and one Muslim. Amidst the growing chasm between the Sinhalese and Tamils, Parliament on 20 June tried to observe two minutes' silence for the Sinhalese civilians killed but not for the Tamil civilians killed.

Considering that more than 800 civilians, majority of them Tamils, have been killed in the growing violence of the last few months, it is not an exaggeration to conclude that Sri Lanka is already at war. Both the government and the LTTE are doing this for their own objectives. Complete polarisation on ethnic lines is what both sides want.

In the prevailing circumstances, India has a special responsibility in preventing this mindless blood-letting in Sri Lanka. Unless New Delhi changes its hands-off policy, Tamil Nadu will be flooded with thousands of refugees from across the Palk Strait waiting in Pesalai to cross the narrow strip of sea that separates the two countries.

S. Karuna
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25/6 ✓

Sri Lanka rebels recommit to truce

SIMON GARDNER
COLOMBO, JUNE 20

SRI Lanka's Tamil Tigers on Tuesday recommitted to the island's 2002 ceasefire and said they had told mediator Norway that they will ensure the safety of Nordic truce monitors.

But while both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government have now told Norway that they will honour the truce, many fear it is just a matter of time before rash of attacks and clashes reignite a two-decade civil war.

"We have committed to the ceasefire agreement and Norway's facilitation role and giving diplomatic immunity and protection to the SLMM monitors who are working in the northeast," said S Puleedevan, head of the Tigers' peace secretariat, referring to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

"When it comes to the protection of the SLMM, on the part of the LTTE, we can give a 100 percent security guarantee," he added.

The Tigers said they had sent a letter to Norway to respond to a set of questions asked after the rebels walked out of crunch talks in Oslo earlier this month without meeting the Sri Lankan government delegation.

That in turn came after the Tigers warned the monitors to stay away from navy boats after a close shave in May when the rebels fired at a patrol boat with a monitor aboard. Violence has since soared.

The Tigers did not comment on their previous demand that members of the monitoring mission from European Union nations leave after the EU banned them as terrorists. "We don't want to comment on that since we have just sent the letter to the Norwegians," Puleedevan said.

"The problem is paramilitary groups are colluding with the armed forces. So if the paramilitary groups start targeting the SLMM, then their lives might be in danger," he added. "These groups are a big threat to the ceasefire and the peace process."

Tuesday's announcement comes just a day after the Tigers warned they would resort to any strategy—including suicide bombers—if a conflict that has killed more than 65,000 people resumes all-out, and that the effects would be felt throughout the island. More than 700 people—around half of them civilians—have been killed in a string of ambushes and attacks this year, and the government and rebels are poles apart over the Tigers' demand for a separate homeland for ethnic Tamils in the north and east.

"It is the most positive thing we could expect at this time, even though it is still at the level of words and it has to be seen whether it will be committed to action," said Jehan Perera of non-partisan peace advocacy group the National Peace Council. "At least they have not rejected the Norwegian-facilitated peace process," he added. "Both sides seem to not want it to spiral out of control." —Reuters

Sri Lankan forces repulse LTTE attack on islet

Conflicting casualty claims by troops, Tigers; situation 'under control'

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Heavy fighting broke out between security forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka's north-western Talaimannar islet on Saturday morning. The situation in the islet, which is 18 nautical miles from India, is now "under control by the security forces," the Army said.

According to official figures, 30 Sea Tigers, six sailors and six civilians were killed in the Talaimannar offensive, taking the toll to over 40. Eight sailors are mis-

sing in action. One civilian — who was among those who had sought refuge in a church in the aftermath of the sudden flare-up — was killed and several others injured. The Army and the Tigers blamed each other for the death of the civilian. The Government said "investigations are on."

The security forces and the Tigers blamed each other for the Talaimannar offensive. While the Army said "30 Sea Tigers and six sailors were killed," the LTTE said "12 sailors were killed and only two Sea Tigers were

slightly injured."

The Army said a police post in a fishing village, Pesalai, and the nearby Talaimannar Navy detachment "came under LTTE attack from land and sea around 6.55 a.m." In a release, it said the LTTE used 12 boats in the offensive, eight of which were destroyed by the Navy and three others damaged in a combined counter-attack, supported by artillery fire and MI-24 helicopter gun-ships.

Defence sources said if the LTTE attack had not been re-

pulsed, the Government could have lost control over a part of Talaimannar to the Tigers.

Hours after the attack Colombo reiterated its position that while political issues would be addressed politically, there would be "no compromise" on national security.

In another incident, five LTTE Sea Tigers were nabbed in the outskirts of Colombo following a tip-off by civilians. Police said they were planning to attack naval patrol craft using "magnetic sea mines."

S. Sambandan
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TIGERS BLAMED ■ LTTE rebels deny responsibility, air force bombards areas held by them in the north-east

Landmine blast kills 64 in Sri Lanka

ERANGA JAYAWARDENA
KABITHIGOLLEWA, JUNE 15

A POWERFUL land mine ripped through a packed bus in northern Sri Lanka on Thursday, killing at least 64 people in the worst act of violence since a 2002 cease-fire, the army said. Sri Lanka's air force responded by bombing rebel-held areas in the northeast. The government blamed Tamil Tiger rebels for blowing up the bus crowded with commuters and school children—spokesman Keheleiyi Rambukwella called it “a barbaric act”—but the rebels, who fought for two decades to create a homeland for the country's minority Tamils, denied responsibility.

Thursday's violence came during nearly a year of sporadic fighting that began with last summer's assassination of Sri Lanka's foreign minister. With the cease-fire as shaky as ever and diplomats saying relations between the government and Tigers are at a low point, Sri Lanka appeared once again on the brink of full-scale war.

Rebel commanders met

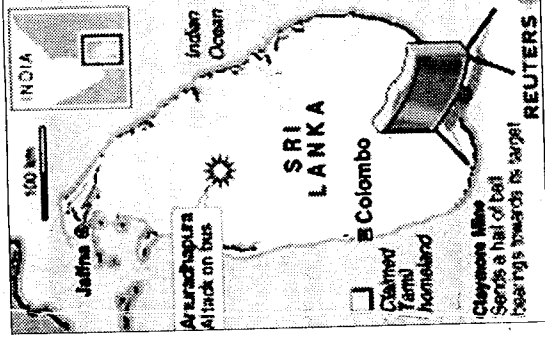


Soldiers patrol near a bus overturned by a landmine blast in Kabithigollewa, 210 km northeast of Colombo on Thursday. AP

quickly to map out their next moves. “Our Central Command is discussing about possible defensive measures we need to take to protect our Tamil people,” said senior rebel leader Seevaratnam Puleedevan. He said the air raids have left “a lot of casualties,” but gave no figures. The explosion was described as “huge” by military spokesman Brig Prasad Samarasinghe, who said it tore through the bus outside this northern town around 8

am. The blast was believed to have been caused by a pair of land mines hanging from a tree, and detonated from a remote position, he said. A doctor at the hospital where the victims were taken, S B Bothota, said 15 schoolchildren were among the 64 killed. Another 78 people were wounded, he said. Hours after the blast, the pro-rebel *Tamil Net* Website said two jets bombed areas in the north of the country. Samarasinghe

inghe confirmed the bombings, saying the air force was taking limited deterrent action. Samarasinghe blamed the Tigers for the blast, saying their “motive is to create terror.” Police said the victims were primarily ethnic Sinhalese. But rebel leader Puleedevan countered the accusation by suggesting the attack could be “the work of forces seeking to create tension between the Sinhalese and the Tamil population.”



Latest surge of violence

- February 22, 2006: Government and rebels meet in Geneva for peace talks
- April 19, 2006: Second round of peace talks postponed as rebels and government argue over transport
- April 25, 2006: Suicide bombing injures government's top military commander
- May 11, 2006: Rebel suicide boats sink a navy patrol craft, killing 17 sailors.
- June 8, 2006: Talks in Norway aimed at reviving the peace collapse after Tigers refuse to meet government officials.

no other choice.

The Tigers now control large parts of the island's north and east, where they have their own de facto state.

A cease-fire four years ago ended large-scale fighting, but it has persisted, intensifying following the assassination last August of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, a killing blamed on the Tigers.

Four months later, the Tigers killed 12 navy sailors—the first major attack in four years—and the situation on the ground has only deteriorated since then, with violence that has left more than 600 soldiers, rebels and civilians dead.

Both sides have blamed the other for the violence, and the Tigers also routinely blame a breakaway rebel faction for attacks on civilians. Diplomatic efforts to quell the violence and get the peace process back on track have not fared much better.

The Tigers pulled out of peace talks in April, and then last week scuttled negotiations by refusing to meet representatives of the government side after arriving in Oslo, the venue for the talks. —AP

inghe confirmed the bombings, saying the air force was taking limited deterrent action. Samarasinghe blamed the Tigers for the blast, saying their “motive is to create terror.” Police said the victims were primarily ethnic Sinhalese. But rebel leader Puleedevan countered the accusation by suggesting the attack could be “the work of forces seeking to create tension between the Sinhalese and the Tamil population.”

“The Liberation Tigers condemn the attack on civilians in strongest possible terms,” Puleedevan was quoted as saying by *TamilNet*. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fought for 20 years to carve out a separate homeland in Sri Lanka's north and east for the country's 3.2 million minority Tamils, who are largely Hindu, saying years of oppression by the majority Sinhalese Buddhists left them

inghe confirmed the bombings, saying the air force was taking limited deterrent action. Samarasinghe blamed the Tigers for the blast, saying their “motive is to create terror.” Police said the victims were primarily ethnic Sinhalese. But rebel leader Puleedevan countered the accusation by suggesting the attack could be “the work of forces seeking to create tension between the Sinhalese and the Tamil population.”

REUTERS

Lanka air force continues strikes on Tamil rebels

MATTHEW ROSENBERG
COLOMBO, JUNE 16

SRI Lankan fighter jets and artillery pounded Tamil Tiger rebels in the country's north and east for the second day on Friday, peace monitors said, even as President Mahinda Rajapakse vowed to press on with peace efforts following a bus bombing that killed 64 people yesterday.

The government said the Tigers were behind Thursday's attack—the worst single act of violence since a 2002 cease-fire—and the rebels countered by insisting the air and artillery strikes near a key rebel stronghold showed the military was on a war footing.

With each side blaming each other for the rising tensions, some 10,000 mourners prayed at a funeral for 61 of the bus bombing's victims, 15 children among them. Buddhist monks and Roman Catholic priests led the funeral. The dead had red paper flowers placed in their open palms as they were buried before dusk.

Throughout the day, air force jets dropped bombs and the army lobbed artillery shells into the area around the northern town of Kilinochchi, said Thorfinnur Omarsson, the spokesman for the Nordic mission monitoring the oft-violated 2002 truce.

Omarsson said that on Thursday and early on Friday Sri Lankan soldiers and sailors had also shelled Tiger bases near the eastern ports of Batticaloa and Trincomalee. Earlier reports indicated the government attacks were limited to rebel-held areas in the north. "We don't know if this is just a limited response or if it might be a move to inflict real damage," Omarsson said.

Tiger leader Seevaratnam Puleedevan said at least eight bombs had been dropped near Kilinochchi on Friday, although he could not provide casualty figures. "I think the Sri Lankan government, by launching the air raids, is showing that they are ready for war," he said.

—Associated Press

17 JUN 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2006 ✓

Why talk to the LTTE? *2. for No. HD-1*

In four years, the peace process in Sri Lanka has weathered several body blows aimed at it by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam — as it went about extracting maximum advantage from four years of no-war. In the changed situation following the European Union ban, the LTTE no longer has use for a process that will not yield any more concessions unless it delivers on its own commitments to the peace process. This is the reason for the ‘Oslo communiqué,’ the statement the Tigers issued on June 9. Stacked with references to itself as a “de facto state” and justifications for the reaffirmation of its “policy of finding a solution to the Tamil national question based on the realisation of its right to self-determination,” the communiqué is a litany of allegations against the Sri Lankan state and complaints against the international community for siding with it. The statement — a kind of ultimatum to Sri Lanka and the countries involved in the peace process — signals the virtual end of the peace process. The LTTE has been working up to this from 2002. The surprise item during this period was the official Oslo announcement of December 5, 2002 in which the terrorist organisation committed itself to exploring a “political solution” to the conflict along federal lines “within a united Sri Lanka.” But it reverted to type by repudiating this commitment within two years of making it. At no point after that did the LTTE provide any justification for the hope that it had given up the demand for a settlement based on self-determination, a code word for secession.

Norway tried to keep up such hopes but this indefatigable mediator is also despairing. It is understandably furious that the Tigers went to Oslo fully aware who would represent the Sri Lankan Government, but waited until the last minute to declare that they would not negotiate with a “third-level” delegation. They also knew that the negotiations, which were to focus on the role and safety of the international ceasefire monitors, would include representatives of some European Union member states who are in the truce committee. Perhaps the LTTE believed it would get more mileage out of such drama. In the process, it has only earned further contempt. Norway has asked for written commitments to the peace process from both sides. But it probably knows by now the risks of dealing with an organisation that believes in accountability to no one. Nothing will change unless the LTTE changes its stripes — an impossibility. If the terrorists think they can have their way by forcing a war on the Sri Lankan state, they should know they cannot win. For the Sri Lankan Government, which enjoys unprecedented international goodwill, the only option is to work towards marginalising the LTTE. For this, it must focus on resolving the contradictions in the Sinhala polity and make tangible progress on the planned constitutional reforms to address the genuine grievances of the Sri Lankan Tamils and other minorities.

13 JUN 2006

THE HINDU

Solution to conflict should be based on "right to self-determination": LTTE

New communique omits references to "federal" model

S. Sambandan 10-09

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Friday "reaffirmed" its position that a solution to the decades-long separatist conflict should be based on the "right to self-determination."

A unilateral communique issued by the LTTE from Oslo on Friday and released to the press on Saturday contained significant omissions from an earlier joint communique by the Government and the LTTE in December 2002 after the third round of negotiations between the two parties. In that earlier statement, it was "agreed to explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka."

The departures from the 2002 document were the omission of the phrases "internal self-determination," and "federal structure

• Says it is the "sole interlocutor" of the "Tamil nation"

• Reflects LTTE's disenchantment with international community's rejection of separatist option

es" as the basis for a solution. Instead, the LTTE's June 9 communique merely said that it "reaffirms its policy of finding a solution to the Tamil national question based on the realisation of its right to self-determination."

'Authentic representative'

The "de-facto state of Tamil Eelam," the release said, exercised "jurisdiction over 70 per cent of the Tamil homeland" and had "control over the seas appurtenant," and had its "own laws" and other structures such as a judiciary, police and administrative apparatus. The LTTE called itself the "authentic representative" and the "sole interlocutor" of the "Tamil nation."

While most of the clauses in the LTTE's lengthy document blamed

monitoring body included members from E.U. nations which had listed the group as a "terrorist organisation" last month.

In a related development, the LTTE's political wing leader Tamiliselvan described the Government's leaving the Oslo talks after the LTTE's objections as a "major political blunder." He charged the Government negotiating team with "displaying crass exhibitionism" and "abandoning all norms of diplomatic protocol" by "making a quick exit."

The LTTE's statement also signals the end of its current stage of engagement with the Sri Lankan Government and pushing towards another start by redefining the terms of conflict resolution.

"It shows that the LTTE is closing the post-2002 phase of the peace process," a political observer told *The Hindu*. "With this political statement, the LTTE has taken the international community and the Sri Lankan Government by surprise," he said.

the Government for the current situation and reflected its recent thrust towards "parity" with the Sri Lankan state, it reflected the LTTE's disenchantment with international community's rejection of the separatist option.

"The international community's insistence that the solution should be found within a united Sri Lanka coupled with the military threat against the LTTE will not only disrupt the power equilibrium but also remove the incentive for the Government to seek a negotiated settlement," the communique said.

The communique was the first official statement by the LTTE after it refused direct talks with the Government in Oslo on issues relating to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), as this ceasefire

FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2006

About time, a ban on LTTE

In the 30 years of its existence, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam brazenly used Europe as an extended backyard for its war against the Sri Lankan state. It grew roots within the large Sri Lankan Tamil communities that had settled in those countries after fleeing the conflict back home, and it exploited them to build itself financially and politically. Europe, with its liberal attitude towards militant 'freedom' struggles in other parts of the world, was permissive and the LTTE flourished. The post-9/11 atmosphere accounts in part for the change in western attitudes. Even so, the European Union was willing to give the LTTE slack. But such has been the murderous group's record in the past five years that it was only a matter of time before Europe had to start taking stock of what the Tigers were doing back in Sri Lanka, and on its soil, and connecting the two. On May 29, the Council of the European Union decided to place the LTTE on the EU list for "the application of specific measures to combat terrorism." These include the freezing of "funds and other financial assets or economic resources" of the LTTE and specified persons associated with it; a ban on the provision of funds, financial assets, and economic resources, and of financial or other related services that directly or indirectly "benefit" the LTTE or specified persons associated with it; and "police and judicial cooperation" between EU member states to implement these anti-terrorist measures. This is a resounding victory for the Sri Lankan democratic process, for the international diplomacy initiated by Lakshman Kadirgamar, the far-sighted Foreign Minister assassinated by the Tigers.

In response, the LTTE has warned that it may take a "hard-line individualist path." But when did this Pol Potist organisation not tread that path? From the start of the February 2002 ceasefire, its game plan was to consolidate as much as possible during this period of no war - towards the goal of Eelam. In his "heroes' day" speech last year, Velupillai Prabhakaran made as much clear. No hope therefore should be attached to the Tigers' agreement to go to Norway on June 8 to discuss the ceasefire. India, out of bitter and indeed calamitous experience, knows that the LTTE is not a viable partner in the effort to find a negotiated federal solution to the conflict within a united Sri Lanka. It is clear that the world is now convinced that an important element in the resolution of this problem is to show the LTTE where it stands and marginalise it - because it will not come into the democratic process. The other equally vital element is for the Sri Lankan state to demonstrate the political will and initiative to resolve the longstanding Tamil question. President Mahinda Rajapakse must now show through bold leadership that he has a vision for a plural, multi-ethnic, and just Sri Lanka that treats its Tamil citizens and those of other minority groups on a par with the Sinhalese.

02 JUN 2006

THE HINDU

European Union bans LTTE

Lankan govt rules out any military crackdown against them

AGENCIES
Colombo, May 30

EUROPEAN UNION (EU) ministers on Monday evening put down the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the EU's list of "terrorist organisations", while the Tamil diaspora was holding worldwide protests, including in several European capitals, against the ban. The decision — widely expected to have an adverse affect on the already tenuous peace process — has been officially approved, agency reports from Brussels said. The EU had, in October last year, imposed a travel ban on the Tamil Tigers.

The Tamil Tiger rebels on Tuesday warned that a European Union ban would shake the island's tottering peace process, but said they remained committed to a truce. The government ruled out any military crackdown against the LTTE following the ban and asked the rebels to 'think afresh' on resuming negotiations.

The European Union putting the rebel outfit down on its list of terrorist groups would not lead to any military adventure by the security forces, a report quoting official sources here said.

12 Lankan workers killed

SUSPECTED TAMIL rebels lined up and shot dead 12 construction workers in an execution-style massacre in Sri Lanka's restive eastern province, the military said on Tuesday.

A total of 14 construction workers from the majority Sinhalese community had been taken away by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels on Monday, military spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe said.

"The 12 bodies were found this afternoon," he said, adding that the victims had been shot through their heads.

AFP, Colombo

which they accuse of helping a band of former comrades to attack them. "This ban is not going to help promote the peace process", S. Puleedevan, head of the Tigers' peace secretariat, said from the northern rebel stronghold of Kilinochchi.

"This is really going to disturb the parity of status of the parties, which is very fundamental for the peace process", he added. "This is really going to shake the fundamentals".

The ban is a diplomatic slap in the face for the rebels, who have sought to project an image abroad as viable leaders of a de facto state they want recognised as a separate homeland for ethnic Tamils in the island's north and east.

The US, Britain, Canada and India have already outlawed the Tigers. Analysts say an EU freeze on assets would hurt the war chest of the Tigers, who have used past trips to Europe during peace talks to raise funds from expatriate Tamils. "We hope this ban will persuade the Tigers to come and talk to the government," said presidential aide Ajith Nivard Cabraal.



A young Tamil boy holds a sign that reads, 'The Tamil's sole representative is the LTTE', at a rally in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Monday. Some 500 ethnic Tamils rallied there, calling for a separate state in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

What you didn't know about LTTE

Below are some facts about the Tamil Tigers:

- The Tamil Tigers guerrillas were founded in the early '70s by a group of Tamils headed by rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.
- Following a 2002 truce, the LTTE runs a de-facto state in chunks of Sri Lanka's north and east. They have their own flag, police, banks, courts and defence units including a naval wing, the Sea Tigers.
- Rebel cadres wear characteristic Tiger-striped camouflage and carry cyanide capsules around their necks to commit suicide to avoid divulging vital information if caught. Defence experts estimate there are 18,000-20,000 fighters and around a third of which are women.
- USA, Britain, India and Canada have already banned the LTTE.
- The Tigers, who pioneered the use of suicide bombing, have been blamed for several killings, including assassinations of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar and many others.
- Intelligence officials say the Tigers are funded mainly by drugs and weapons smuggling in the region, donations from expatriate Tamils.

Stop violence or lose aid: Donors

Tokyo, May 30

SRI LANKA'S key foreign aid donors warned the government and Tamil Tiger rebels on Tuesday that they must take steps to end growing unrest or risk losing international support.

Donors led by Japan pledged 4.5 billion dollars in 2003 as an incentive for the island to end three decades of ethnic conflict, but a ceasefire is increasingly under

threat from mounting violence.

Japan, the European Union, Norway and the US called on both sides "to take immediate steps to reverse the deteriorating situation and put the country back on the road to peace."

"The international community will support such steps; failure to take such steps will diminish international support," said a joint statement after talks in Tokyo.

Yasushi Akashi, Japan's peace

envoy to Sri Lanka, said the donors wanted to employ a "carrot and stick" approach to jumpstart the peace process. "Our message is clear," Akashi said. "If they do a good thing, the international community will respond to it favorably and they can benefit. If they disturb the peace, we will respond severely"

Four previous attempts to broker a peace between the government and the LTTE have collapsed in Sri Lanka.

AFP

Global pressure mounts on LTTEs

Warned of 'deeper isolation' if it did not 'renounce terrorism'

V.S. Sambandan

Colombo, LTTE urged to 'reverse deteriorating situation'

13 Sinhalese civilians killed, Army blames LTTE

COLOMBO: International pressure mounted on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Tuesday with a twin indictment on the rebels and a stern warning of "deeper isolation" if it did not "renounce terrorism and violence."

According to media reports, the European Union on Monday decided to list the LTTE as a terrorist group. The Sri Lankan Government saw the E.U. move as "the latest in a series of deterrent measures by the international community."

In addition, the quartet of international donors backing the Sri Lankan peace process - the U.S., E.U., Japan and Norway - on Tuesday warned the LTTE that it would face "deeper isolation" if it failed to change itself. The co-chairs also wanted the Government to "protect the

rights and security of Tamils" and make the required political changes "to bring about a new system of governance."

"The LTTE must re-enter the negotiating process. It must renounce terrorism and violence. It must show that it is willing to make the political compromises needed for a political solution within a united Sri Lanka. This solution should include democratic rights of all peoples of Sri Lanka. The international community will respond favourably to such actions; failure to do so will lead to further isolation of the LTTE," the co-chairs said in a statement after a meeting in Tokyo on Tuesday.

They also wanted the Government and the LTTE to "take im-

mediate steps to reverse the deteriorating situation and put the country back on the road to peace."

Colombo "must show that it will address the legitimate grievances of the Tamils" and must immediately prevent violence and acts of terrorism in its territory.

Describing their Tokyo meeting as one that was held "at a time when Sri Lanka is on the brink of war," the co-chairs said, "While the situation gives cause for grave concern, the ingredients for a peaceful settlement remain present."

The co-chairs wanted the Sri Lankan Government to "protect the rights and security of Tamils throughout the country and en-

sure that violators are prosecuted." They wanted Colombo to "show that it is ready to make dramatic political changes to bring about a new system of governance which will enhance the rights of all Sri Lankans, including Muslims."

In its reaction to the E.U. decision, Colombo hoped that the decision was a "clear and firm message" that would "provide a fresh impetus and encouragement to the LTTE to think afresh and resume talks with the assistance of Norwegian facilitators."

The Government held the "fervent hope" that the LTTE "will take cognisance of the clearly expressed view of the international community, desist from further acts of violence and engage constructively in the peace process. Colombo said it would "reciprocate" such a constructive spirit "in full measure."

31 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

Choices before the LTTE

It is entirely in keeping with the character of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam that, faced with the real prospect of a ban by the European Union, it has threatened to take "a hard-line individualist path."

For much of the period since the ceasefire agreement was signed in February 2002, the extremist organisation's negotiating stance has been: "negotiate with us on our terms, or else..." Apprehension about the "or else" led the Sri Lankan Government and the international community to adopt a policy of toleration bordering on appeasement. With 'mediator' Norway pushing the limits of tolerance, barbarous acts of terrorism and human rights violations were overlooked for the sake of keeping the peace. But where did all this lead? The LTTE's refusal to attend peace talks after a few rounds; its assassination of political enemies and other acts of terrorism; its continuing abuse of children; and its over-the-top demands for setting up an interim self-governing authority that would function virtually as a separate state, and for having its sea wing acknowledged as a 'navy' — these were enough to tire all but die-hard champions of Tigerism. The European Union's decision, taken in the wake of the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in October 2005, not to receive official LTTE delegations was the first concrete indication that the most permissive section of the international community no longer wanted to carry a flag for the group. In recent weeks, the LTTE's ceasefire violations, renewed claim of sovereignty over the waters, air space, and territory of North-East Sri Lanka, and warning to international ceasefire monitors to stay off Sri Lanka Navy vessels in the North-East have eroded tolerance. Europe is now a heartbeat away from outlawing the LTTE, with the European Parliament resolution calling for a freeze of LTTE assets in member countries.

Is the LTTE's threat just bluff? It is doubtful that the terrorist organisation, although armed to the teeth, retains the politico-military capacity for a sustained military engagement with the Sri Lankan state. For one thing, the Karuna revolt has exposed its vulnerability in eastern Sri Lanka. For another, the Sri Lankan Government has shown the necessary firmness and resoluteness in punishing Tigerism. But what has turned strategically against the LTTE is the international situation. If it is to get out of this hole, it needs to demonstrate a sincerity and commitment to the peace process that will be totally out of character. At the same time, the Sri Lankan Government must refrain from any triumphalism that might provide encouragement to those driving a hard-line Sinhala nationalist agenda. Regardless of how the LTTE behaves, President Mahinda Rajapakse — who has demonstrated sturdy realism in a difficult situation — must lead from the front in crafting a just political settlement based on devolution of power within the framework of keeping Sri Lanka as one country.

27 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

24 MAY 2006

LTTE rejects talks with Rajapaksa

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AGENCE France-Presse
Colombo, May 23

SRI LANKA'S Tiger rebels on Tuesday refused to hold direct talks with President Mahinda Rajapaksa after religious leaders called for a one-on-one meeting to negotiate an end to ethnic bloodshed.

The LTTE said they told a delegation of Buddhist and Christian clergy that any meeting with the government would only be through peace broker Norway and not directly.

The suggestion for direct talks between Rajapaksa and the LTTE's elusive supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran was made during a discussion with the Tiger political wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan in the rebel-held town of Kilinochchi.

"While appreciating your concern for peace and harmony, we cannot by-pass (peace broker) Norway in establishing contacts with the government to initiate a dia-

logue with President Mahinda Rajapaksa as suggested by the inter-religious group," the LTTE quoted Thamilselvan as saying.

It said the delegation of Buddhist and Christian leaders told Thamilselvan that the president was keen to meet with Prabhakaran and discuss a political settlement to the island's drawn out ethnic conflict.

Thamilselvan urged the clergy to encourage the Sri Lankan government to fully implement the February 2002 truce as a confidence building measure between the two sides.

"If it is sincerely interested in making progress in the peace process, it has to ensure full implementation of the ceasefire in so far as the delivery of normalcy to the war-affected civilian Tamil population," the LTTE said.

Thamilselvan said although the ceasefire was no resolution of the political conflict, it would "provide the basic peace dividend to the war-hit Tamil people, which is normalcy

in their day to day life".

The remarks came ahead of a visit to the island by Norway's top peace envoy Erik Solheim who is expected here Friday to try and salvage the faltering peace process. Solheim, who is Norway's International Development Minister, is due to hold talks with Sri Lankan leaders before a crucial meeting of Sri Lanka's international aid donors meeting in Tokyo on May 30.

Donors are to review their involvement in Sri Lanka amid a lack of progress in the peace process and mounting violence in the island's embattled northeast despite the truce.

More than 600 people have been killed in Sri Lanka's troubled regions since December with April listed as the bloodiest month with over 200 deaths, mostly of civilians.

More than 60,000 people have been killed in the drawn out Tamil separatist conflict. Four previous peace attempts have ended in failure.



Mahinda Rajapaksa
Troubled times



Thamilselvan
Talking tough

Tigers say govt killed top operative

Press Trust of India ^{2A5} 'EU pushing us'

COLOMBO, May 22: Tamil Tiger rebels today accused the Sri Lankan military of killing their top intelligence operative in the island's eastern province. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam said Ramanan, their senior most intelligence operative in the province was gunned down by an army sniper yesterday, the *Tamilnet.com* reported.

"A Sri Lanka army sniper targetted the commander while he was inspecting the forward defence line positions of the Tigers in Vavunathivu, Batticaloa," it said. Ramanan held the rank of a colonel and had been sent to the east to take over intelligence work following the unprecedented split in the group in March 2004.

Military officials denied security forces were involved in the attack, and said they suspected that

KILINCHCHI (Sri Lanka), May 22: The European Union's "shocking" move towards blacklisting Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers will push the peace process to a critical stage, the head of the rebels' political wing said in an interview. The EU agreed in principle late Thursday to ban the LTTE as a "terrorist" group, possibly as early as this week, diplomats said. The move is "shocking and surprising," SP Thamil-selvan, 39, the soft-spoken head of the Tigers' political office said. ■ AFP

the breakaway faction led by V Muralitharan, better known as Colonel Karuna, was responsible. Ramanan is one of the highest ranking Tamil Tiger operatives to be killed since the group entered into a truce with government forces in February 2002, *Tamilnet* said.

5 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

LTTE WAR WARNING HAS PANICKY GOVT STOCKING UP ON MUNITIONS

Lanka head okays arms buy

Shamindra Ferdinando (418) in action off the northern coast. The ill-fated craft commanded by Lt. Commander ELP Edirisinghe had been among the craft that were to be upgraded with 30mm cannon.

Navy headquarters four years ago recommended the replacing of 23 mm cannon with 30mm cannon but the project was held up due to irregularities in the selection process.

Mr Rajapakse gave the go ahead for emergency purchases as he appointed a Commission of Inquiry to probe procurement of

arms, ammunition, equipment and services during 2000-2005. The three-member committee will be chaired by Justice Shiranee Thilakawardane.

The military said that emergency purchases were required to meet the growing threat posed by the LTTE. Yesterday's attack on the army forward defence line at Nagarkovil triggered off a one-hour exchange between Tigers and troops, thereby forcing the army to temporarily close the Mahalai entry/exit point.

■ THE ISLAND/ANN

Fresh violence kills three

COLOMBO, May 21: Two anti-personnel mines triggered by suspected Tamil Tiger rebels killed two government soldiers and wounded another in Sri Lanka's north and east today, the military said.

Also, a 12-year-old boy was shot and killed by suspected rebels for apparently refusing to join the group, the military said. The Tigers have been repeatedly condemned by the international community for forced conscription of child

soldiers. The first mine explosion targeted a military foot patrol in Vavuniya, the last garrison town before Tamil Tiger-controlled territory in northern Sri Lanka, killing one soldier and wounding another, military spokesman Brig. Prasad Samarasinghe said. Vavuniya is 230 kilometres north of the capital, Colombo. The second explosion occurred two hours later in eastern Sri Lanka, the hot bed of recent violence. ■ AP

11-11 1915 S. Balasingham EU ban may lead to all-out war, warn Tamil Tigers

Colombo: Sri Lanka risks being propelled back into civil war if the European Union declares the Tamil Tiger rebel group a terrorist organisation, a top guerrilla leader warned on Thursday.

A fragile 2002 cease-fire in this island nation between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has already been rocked by an upsurge in violence that has killed at least 271 people since April, according to the international monitors, and led to a break down in peace talks.

"The more the international community alienates the LTTE, the more the LTTE will be compelled to tread a hard-line individualist path," Tamil Tigers chief negotiator Anton Balasingham told the pro-rebel TamilNet Web site. He was referring to the acronym of the group's name, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

Balasingham's comments come after both a US envoy and the Sri Lankan foreign minister called on the EU to declare the Tigers a terrorist group. The US, Britain and India already list it as a terrorist organisation.

Last year, the EU announced that representatives of the Tamil Tigers will be refused

entry into member states until the bloc considers whether to add the guerrillas to its list of terrorist organisations.

"Emboldened by international support ... the Sinhala hard-line elements will undoubtedly take steps to further escalate the violence and precipitate a war in which they hope to destroy the LTTE," Balasingham said. "If this happens, the LTTE will be compelled to resist," Balasingham said, adding that an EU ban on the group "is not going to help bring about peace, (but) will only serve to exacerbate the conditions of war." Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera on Thursday said the Tamil Tigers must be "listed as a terrorist organisation" internationally unless they return to peace talks with the government.

He made the comment after meeting UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Tokyo. "Now the time has come for the international community to ... tell them enough is enough," he said. Samaraweera is on a five-day visit to Japan, which has tried to mediate in the peace process. AP



19 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

A war of diminishing returns

R. Hariharan

ON MAY 11, 2006, on the eve of Vesak day (Buddha Purnima), the biggest festival day of the nation, Sri Lanka escaped a terrible ethnic flare up. Only the day before, a Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) troopship *mv Pearl Cruise*, carrying 710 military men and moving in a naval convoy off Point Pedro on the Jaffna coast, escaped destruction when boats of the Sea Tigers, the naval arm of the LTTE, surrounded it. The LTTE could have sunk the ship, destining all the Sri Lanka Armed Forces (SLAF) men to a watery grave. Luckily for them and Sri Lanka, the ship had on board a monitor from the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) and an Indian Coast Guard ship appeared on the horizon. Perhaps these complications and another naval engagement at sea a little distance away discouraged the Sea Tigers from going ahead with their attack. However, in the other engagement the Sea Tigers sank an SLN fast attack craft. Its crew of 17 sailors are reported missing. Another fast attack craft damaged in the operations reportedly sank later. The Sri Lanka Navy responded swiftly with guns blazing both from sea and air. They claim to have sunk five LTTE boats, sending an unknown number of LTTE cadres to their death. The Sri Lanka Air Force used this window of opportunity to carry out air strikes on targets in the Iranamadu area (Iranamadu airfield area houses LTTE's fledgling air arm, the Air Tigers).

Of course, Sea Tiger operations are nothing new. During this year, they had three successful operations against the Navy and two unsuccessful ones. But qualitatively, their attack on *mv Pearl Cruiser* is different because it was premeditated. The LTTE had earlier warned the SLMM not to send its Scandinavian monitors in the SLN craft — and that is a dangerous trend if the peace process is to be revived. The Sri Lankan Government had been careful in not carrying out retaliatory military attacks on the LTTE till the Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, narrowly survived a LTTE suicide bomber's attempt to kill him on April 25, 2006, though it

The LTTE's fight now stands reduced to a turf war to establish its rights over the northeast. Its continued escalation of violence means increased loss of international sympathy for Sri Lankan Tamils.

killed 11 others. But the attack on Gen. Fonseka, a watershed event, has given the Sri Lankan Government a legitimate reason to take offensive action as part of "defensive measures." Immediately after the attack on their chief, the armed forces bombarded LTTE positions in coastal areas of Muthur East in Trincomalee from the air, land, and sea. It is significant that Karuna launched his offensive against LTTE positions in the same area a few days earlier. While LTTE casualties are not known, the Tamil population bore the brunt of the attack. A few thousand Tamils living in the area fled as refugees. In the North, the SLAF imposed a curfew in Jaffna to move troops to the Nagarkovil salient on the northeast.

Thus the singular achievement of the LTTE's attack on the SLAF Chief was giving legitimacy to the Government to use retaliatory force even as the ceasefire rested on its last legs. Added to this, the attack on the Navy troopship had two other negative fallouts for the LTTE. After the attack on *mv Pearl Cruiser*, the SLMM, while strongly condemning the LTTE's act as "a gross violation of the ceasefire," gave a firm ruling on two counts: (1) the sea surrounding Sri Lanka is a Government Controlled Area in line with international law; and (2) the LTTE, as a non-state actor, cannot rule open sea waters or airspace. The LTTE has, therefore, no rights at sea. This is the first time the SLMM has come out categorically on the twin issues of the LTTE's rights to air and sea spaces of areas under its control as well as its status as a non-state actor. As expected, the LTTE political wing head, S.P. Tamilselvan, registered his strong objection to both the

rulings. He also claimed that the LTTE enjoyed 'sovereignty' over land, sea, and air in parts of the 'Tamil Homeland' it had seized by force of arms.

During the four years of the ceasefire, the LTTE had used the semantic ambiguity of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) regarding its rights on sea to claim sovereignty over the seas in the northeast. Clause 1.3 of the CFA permits the SLAF "to perform their legitimate task of safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka without engaging in offensive operations against the LTTE." As this clause impinged on the primary role of the Sri Lanka Navy, the issue of LTTE rights on sea came to the fore in March and June 2003, barely a year after the signing of the CFA, when the Navy with the support of the Indian Navy sank two LTTE ships off the northeast coast of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Navy had targeted the two LTTE vessels believed to be bringing in military hardware. At that time, the peace talks between the Government and the LTTE were in progress and both sides were on talking terms. They asked the SLMM to work out modalities to prevent such clashes at sea. The SLMM, then headed by Norway, came out with a set of proposals to carve out separate areas for the Sea Tigers, for training and live firing. It also suggested recognition of Sea Tigers as a 'de facto naval unit.' No detection or inspection of Sea Tigers vessels was to be permitted for the Navy in the designated areas without the presence of SLMM monitors. The ruling raised a lot of eyebrows in Sri Lanka as well as India because it directly interfered with the sovereignty of a legally constituted nation.

S. Lanka

19/5

This ruling also gave licence to the LTTE to carry out its activities, as it desired.

The LTTE exploited the anomalous situation to strengthen itself and brought in huge shipments of military hardware and supplies even as the peace process was losing steam, thanks to the internal schism of Sri Lanka politics. On the other hand, the armed forces were fuming in inaction, although the LTTE systematically culled military and civil intelligence operatives with impunity. The government of that time soft-pedalled the whole issue, perhaps in the belief that it could jeopardise the peace talks. It continued to restrain the SLAF from taking retaliatory action even as the tally of the LTTE's CFA violations mounted under the meticulous book keeping of the SLMM, which accounted for every one of them. The SLMM did nothing beyond periodically issuing statements asking both sides to observe the CFA norms. These were mostly addressed to the Government because they were less prickly about criticism. This 'umpiring' attitude forms the basis of Norwegian mediation and perhaps it is required to encourage both sides to make progress in the talks. However, translated to monitoring, the same philosophy undermined the confidence of the Government in the SLMM. Large sections of the public, government, political parties and the media were also not happy with the way Norway was handling the mediation and monitoring processes.

The issue of Norwegian mediation and monitoring was a prominent issue in the 2005 presidential election. The SLFP Presidential aspirant, Mahinda Rajapakse, vowed to change them. On his election as President, Mr. Rajapakse managed to take away the responsibility of monitoring from Norway, and now a Swedish general heads the SLMM. It is clear the LTTE had been using the international objections to the resumption of Sri Lankan operations against it to its own advantage. Ever since Karuna broke away, the Tigers have been escalating the scale and level of violence bringing enormous pressure on President Rajapakse, to ensure that Karuna is removed from the scene. Thus for the Tamil people at large, LTTE actions have downgraded the quest for Tamil rights to govern themselves to the one point agenda of removing Karuna from a position of strength in the east.

In short, the LTTE's fight now stands reduced to a turf war to establish its rights over the northeast. Its continued escalation of violence means increased loss of international sympathy for Sri Lankan Tamils, particularly from major powers, so essential if their struggle for democratic rights is to succeed. The net result is a decisive shift of global attention from sympathy for the Tamil cause to curbing the LTTE and pressuring it to come to the table to discuss peace. It is going to be more difficult for the Tigers to do whatever they propose to do in the coming months.

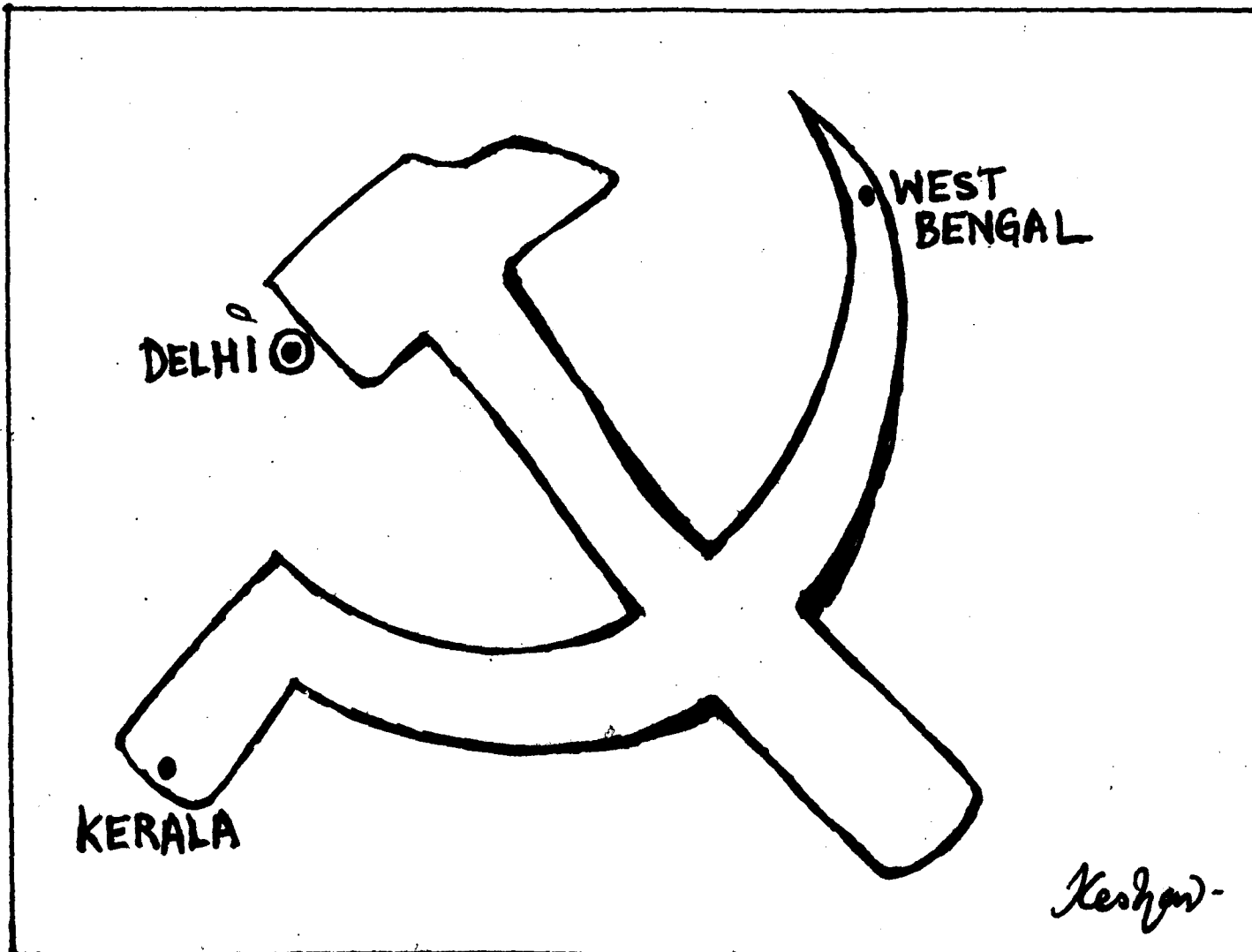
Now that the President has announced his resolve to take strong retaliatory action with all the forces at his command, while continuing to maintain the ceasefire, the LTTE has painted itself into a corner. We can expect more clashes in the coming weeks and the population is going to face the fallout of such violence.

LTTE actions have given a lease of life to Sinhala hardliners. It has once again put Sri Lanka's Tamil population at risk; and those living in LTTE-controlled areas in even greater peril. Already the glare of publicity surrounding the LTTE actions has swept aside the incidents of human rights violations against Sri Lankan Tamils. Even if the patchwork ceasefire continues, the Tamils and their cause will continue to suffer.

The BBC quoted a peace monitor to the effect that the SLMM was monitoring war rather than peace. In any case, if this is called ceasefire, then what is war? The tragedy is it is a fight for LTTE turf and nothing more. It is a war of diminishing returns.

(Colonel R. Hariharan, a retired military intelligence specialist in counter-insurgency, served as head of intelligence with the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka. E-Mail: colhari@yahoo.com)

CARTOONSCAPE



Violence Won't Work

LTTE must evolve into
a political entity

William H Avery

Sri Lanka's foreign minister Mangala Samaraweera was in New Delhi last week, seeking India's support in keeping the island's fragile ceasefire intact after months of spiralling violence. If Samaraweera was hoping to come away from his visit with concrete pledges of military support, he will have been disappointed. The official line from the prime minister's office went no further than expressing "India's interest in the continued stability and prosperity of Sri Lanka".

With the IPKF India learned the hard way that it cannot solve Sri Lanka's problems. But India does have something to offer its neighbour, something far more valuable than military assistance: Leadership by example. Looking across the Palk Strait, Sri Lankans can see a beacon of hope. In India, they have a shining example of the peace and prosperity that a multi-ethnic, multi-religious democracy can create for its citizens. Sri Lanka is at a critical juncture, and the stakes are enormous: Nothing less than the lives and livelihoods of the nation's 20 million people. If the Sri Lankan government and LTTE are to find a framework for peaceful coexistence — if they are to give their people the peace and prosperity that Indians enjoy — both sides will first need to accept three fundamental principles.

The first principle is that there is no military solution to this conflict. This ought to be clear to both sides, having spent two decades fighting each other to a stalemate. The Sri Lankan government, for its part, seems to accept that a political solution is called for. The LTTE, however, appears to still harbour a belief that warfare will make its Tamil homeland a reality. Recent weeks have seen the LTTE attack a Sri Lankan naval convoy off the coast of Jaffna and detonate a suicide bomb at army headquarters in Colombo, the latest incidents

in a campaign of violence that stretches back to last December. If a political solution to Sri Lanka's conflict is to be found, the LTTE will have to accept that such tactics are more befitting of a ragtag band of terrorists than would-be leaders of the Tamil people. Which image does the LTTE want to convey?

The second is that the costs to both sides of the status quo are high. In economic terms, uncertainty about Sri Lanka's stability has cost both foreign and direct investment. The nation as a whole should be growing at least as fast as India; yet Sri Lanka's economic growth since 2003 has trailed India's by from 1 per cent to 3 per cent per year. This is in spite of Sri Lanka having opened its economy to foreign invest-



ment a full 14 years before India. In the areas of the country controlled by the LTTE, the economic picture is particularly bleak. The majority of the people there live on subsistence farming, and trade with the outside world (apart from LTTE-controlled smuggling) is not a significant part of the economy. Indeed, around 500,000 Sri Lankan civilians living in isolation in the north and east of the country are the forgotten victims of the LTTE. While other Sri Lankans and South Asians enjoy ever increasing levels of prosperity as part of the global economy, the Tamils living under the yoke of the LTTE are stuck in a time warp, back in a time when South Asians lived off the

land in a hard-scrabble existence. When will the LTTE realise the cost its struggle is imposing on the Tamil people?

Thirdly, both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government must realise that they can achieve much more for their people together than they ever could separately. Sri Lanka is not a small country. Yet it represents less than 2 per cent of the population of South Asia, and is dwarfed by India's 1.1 billion souls. Sri Lanka's best hope for sustained economic growth is to attach itself to the larger Indian economy; Sri Lanka can only do so if it is, like India, a multi-ethnic, multi-religious democracy. The Sri Lankan government understands the necessity of closer economic integration with India; this is the rationale behind its effort to enter into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with New Delhi. The LTTE needs to understand too that it cannot go it alone. Scale matters in South Asia, and that the odds of success for all people of Sri Lanka are greatest if they pool their resources and abilities. Will the LTTE continue to sulk in impoverished isolation or join with the rest of Sri Lanka in building a vibrant, diverse and prosperous nation?

It is important to remember that the Tamil people have legitimate complaints about the way the Sri Lankan government treated them in the past; Sri Lanka's post-independence history is a shameful record of systematic discrimination, punctuated by gross human rights abuses, against the Tamil people. But the outside world must not confuse these legitimate grievances with the illegitimate actions of the LTTE, brutal terrorists who have created their own version of the Taliban's Afghanistan within Sri Lanka's borders. They have made their point. Now these terrorists urgently need to evolve into a political entity that understands compromise can take them and the Tamil people much farther than violence ever could. Once this happens, there is no limit to what a unified Sri Lanka can achieve. Its people need look no further than India to see that.

The writer is a former US diplomat.

16 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rajapakse renews call for talks to end conflict

President says issue should not be internationalised further

V.S. Sambandan

S. Lanka
COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse is not in favour of "further internationalisation" of the ethnic conflict, and expressed confidence that a solution could be worked out if the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) negotiates with his Government, a newspaper interview said.

In an interview to the *Sunday Times*, Mr. Rajapakse expressed his "personal view that the ethnic conflict issue should not have been internationalised."

"We should have treated it as a domestic issue and resolved it ourselves. As for me, I do not want to internationalise it any further," Mr. Rajapakse was quoted as telling the newspaper in an interview.

In the interview, the President said his consistent message to the LTTE is "to cease violence." The international community, he said "must also pressurise the LTTE to do this."

107-12
The President's interview was held on Thursday after the LTTE's attack on a naval convoy in Sri Lanka's north-eastern waters, destroying a naval fast attack craft.

Negotiations with his Government were the way to solve the conflict, the President said. "I am here with a clean sheet. I do not carry any baggage. I do understand the problems of the Tamil-speaking people. There is nothing that we cannot resolve. Bring it to the table, sit and discuss it with me."

Striking a note of confidence, Mr. Rajapakse said he had "remained transparent" on "whatever action" he had taken with regard to the ethnic issue. "There are no hidden agendas or secret agreements. Be it with the people of the south, north or east, I have remained very open," he said.

Mr. Rajapakse described the April 25 failed bid by an LTTE suicide bomber to assassinate the Commander of the Sri Lanka

Army, Sarath Fonseka as "a serious incident that shocked the nation."

Break for mission

Meanwhile, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in a statement on Sunday announced a "temporary break from naval monitoring in the northern and eastern waters of Sri Lanka due to the incident at sea on May 11."

However, the Nordic monitoring body "will go through its routines of naval monitoring as part of SLMM's procedures when such incidents occur" and the "intention of SLMM is to recommence naval monitoring as soon as possible."

Eight killed

At least eight Tamil persons, including a baby were killed by "unidentified gunmen," according to reports from northern Sri Lanka. The LTTE has blamed the killing on "Sri Lankan navy personnel."

15 MAY 2008

THE HINDU

Tigers warn Lanka navy of more attacks

11-10 1995 S. Kumar
Colombo: Tamil rebels warned on Friday they would attack Sri Lankan navy vessels that approach coastal areas under their control, a day after they sank a patrol boat in a major sea battle that killed dozens and pushed the country closer to all-out war.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, also issued a final warning to European cease-fire monitors not to board such vessels.

The warning, posted on the rebel web site, followed an attack on a navy patrol boat in northern Sri Lanka that left about 50 insurgents and 17 sailors dead or missing in a sharp escalation of violence.

The Lankan navy's activities off the coast of Tamil Tiger-held areas is "disrupting the fishing activities of the people. It is also disturbing the LTTE exercises," the rebels said in a letter to the monitors.

"If (the) Sri Lankan navy disrupts our activities we will definitely retaliate," it said.

Accusing the navy of using the monitors as "as human shields in order to continue with these disruptions," the rebels issued a stark warning to the monitors.

"We urge you for the last time not to be on board Sri Lankan naval vessels until further notice from us. If you choose to ignore our warning and request, we are not responsible for the consequences," the rebels said.

Later on Friday, the head of the rebel political wing, S P Thamilselvan, met chief truce monitor Ulf Henricsson in the rebel stronghold of Kilinochchi.

Afterward, Thamilselvan criticised mission officials for calling Thursday's attack a violation of the cease-fire accord and demanded an explanation. "Nobody has the right to pass judgment on the sov-

ereign rights of our access to the adjacent sea and air space of our homeland," pro-rebel TamilNet web site quoted Thamilselvan as saying.

Earlier, both the government and the monitors accused the Tigers of violating the country's 2002 cease-fire accord with their attack that

WAR FEAR



Security has been tightened in the capital, Colombo, where tens of thousands of Buddhists prepared to celebrate the birth anniversary of Buddha

sank a navy patrol boat off the northern coast on Thursday.

Government troops retaliated, sinking five rebel boats, damaging three others and launching airstrikes on guerrilla-held territory, putting the severest strain yet on the truce that halted two decades of warfare. "This is a very serious attack (by the Tigers), a blatant violation of the cease-fire agreement," government spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said.

The incident prompted the police to tighten security in the capital Colombo, where tens of thousands of Buddhists prepared to celebrate the birth of the Buddha, the faith's founder. AP

50 TIGERS DEAD, 17 SAILORS LOST

Sea battle pushes Lanka to the brink

Associated Press

COLOMBO, May 12: Some 50 Tamil Tiger rebels were killed and 17 Sri Lankan sailors were lost, after a sea battle yesterday instigated by the Tamil Tigers left the country on the brink of civil war.

The rebels sank a navy patrol boat off the northern coast as it escorted a troop transport carrying more than 700 soldiers. In retaliation, the navy downed five rebel vessels and the air force launched airstrikes on guerrilla-held territory.

The escalation in violence could mark the return to civil war, as a 2002 cease-fire that stopped almost two decades of fighting appears increasingly

unlikely to last. "This is a very serious attack (by the Tigers), a blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement," government spokesman Mr. Keheliya Rambukwella said.

The downed patrol boat was part of a convoy escorting a troop carrier that was attacked by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels, navy spokesman Commander DKP Dassanayake said.

"About 15 LTTE boats including suicide boats attacked one of our vessels escorting Pearl Cruiser ship transporting 710 soldiers," Mr. Dassanayake said. "Navy fast-attack boats escorting the vessel engaged the Tiger boats and one of them was destroyed by a suicide boat," he said.

There were 15 sailors and two officers on board the boat. The Sri Lankan military website said the men were lost. "In the fire fight navy ensured the safety of the passenger craft and suffered the loss of one Dvora (craft) with two officers and 15 sailors on board," said the website. The website did not elaborate, but the sailors were earlier reported missing.

At least 50 Tiger guerrillas were on the sunken rebel boats and all were believed dead, Mr. Dassanayake said.

But, a pro-rebel website quoted unnamed rebel sources as saying that they lost only for guerrillas in the battle.

No independent verification was immediately possible.

13 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

Lanka army hand in killings'

S Lanka *Apr 10* *12/5*

Vavuniya (Sri Lanka): International truce monitors said on Thursday they believe Sri Lankan troops are involved in killing ethnic Tamil civilians in the island's north, contrary to government denials.

The unarmed Nordic Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) said probable Tamil Tiger rebel attacks on the military have been followed by disappearances and open killings of ethnic Tamil civilians.

"We have very strong indications that at least part of the government troops have been involved in these killings," Jouni Suninen, the Finnish ex-army officer who heads the monitors' northern Vavuniya office, said.

"The pattern is clear," he added. In one case, a civilian was killed 60 metres from an army checkpoint. The soldiers told the monitors they heard nothing.

Suninen said at least 40 people have been killed in the last month by suspected rebels, soldiers or associated groups around Vavuniya, just beyond the southern border of



Dubious protectors

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) territory.

The government denies any involvement in civilian killings, which come amid fears that a low intensity conflict raging despite a 2002 truce could escalate into an all-out return to a two-decade civil war that killed over 64,000 people.

The Tigers have pulled out of peace talks indefinitely and have warned the island is moving towards the fringes of war.

"Our troops are not involved in anything like that," said army spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe. "They are disciplined."

For the first time, the monitoring mission's field staff were authorised to speak on the record about what they had found. They say publicity is the only weapon they have.

Previously, all media comment from the SLMM—which has 60 unarmed monitors from Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland—has come from its Colombo headquarters.

Driving along a road only a couple of miles from the border in his white jeep, Finnish homicide policeman Jukka Heiskanen points out where three suspected Tiger fragmentation mine ambushes hit military patrols.

Some believe the Tigers deliberately wanted to inflame tensions and provoke retaliation to win sympathy in their struggle for a separate homeland for ethnic Tamils. REUTERS

12 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Lanka Prez calls for immediate talks

Colombo: Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse said his tropical island has seen enough violence, and called for immediate peace talks with Tamil Tiger rebels.

"Enough is enough," Rajapakse told The Associated Press in an interview on Tuesday, as spiraling violence threatened to derail a ceasefire with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, blamed for last week's suicide bombing by a pregnant woman that targeted the top army general.

"My religion—Buddhism—teaches me how to be patient," said Rajapakse, 60. "They tried to kill my general by using a pregnant woman. This was a barbaric act, but even after all these, my government is willing to have peace talks." The suicide bomber last Tuesday managed to get inside Colombo's highly fortified military headquarters and blow herself up. The blast killed 11 people, but Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka, the target, survived with abdominal injuries.

"No government, in the East or the West, could have tolerated that," Rajapakse said, justifying the retaliatory attacks by his air force.

"We had to target LTTE bases," Rajapakse said of two days of bombing of the rebels' naval wing, the Sea Tigers, in the country's northeast. The rebels say those attacks killed 11 people and displaced thousands.

About 150 people died in April in ever-increasing violence, including 79 members of Sri Lankan government forces killed by the rebels, who want a separate homeland for the country's 3.2 million Tamil minority. Most of the coun-

try—including Rajapakse and many business and political leaders—are part of the 14-million Sinhalese majority.

Despite the spike in killings, both sides say they remain committed to the peace process and have told the Norwegian-led peace monitors they want to meet soon for talks in Geneva aimed at shoring up the ceasefire and finding a political solution to the conflict.

The rebels have given a number of reasons to hold off on immediate talks, including fears over how they would travel for internal meetings before going to Geneva. But Rajapakse, whose security has been tightened dramatically since the suicide attack, and who now lives within multiple layers of heavily armed commandos, said talks were needed immediately. "We need to forget the past and start a new beginning," he said in an interview at his office.

The government and the rebels fought a bitter war for almost two decades, leaving 65,000 people dead, until a 2002 Norwegian-brokered truce halted the fighting. Trouble began quickly, though, with talks breaking down in April 2003 over rebel demands for autonomy.

ONE HUNDRED

04 MAY 2006

Lankan Navy says attacked by rebel Sea Tigers

REUTERS

COLOMBO, MAY 1

SRI Lanka's Navy said it came under attack from the Tamil Tigers' sea wing on Monday and elsewhere at least seven persons were killed in violence blamed on the rebels amid rising fears of a return to civil war.

The Navy said five armed Sea Tiger boats, including two suicide craft, approached one of its vessels in waters off Trincomalee on the northeastern coast. When the navy tried to investigate, it was attacked. "They have opened fire and attacked our Dvora," said Navy spokesman DKP Dasanayake, referring to the Israeli-built



A bomb wrecked a restaurant in Trincomalee on Monday. AP

Dvora fast-attack craft. "We retaliated in self-defence." Five sailors were wounded in the exchange, Dasanayake said, adding that he did not know about Tiger casualties.

There was no immediate comment from the LTTE headquarters. But the pro-rebel *Tamilnet* Website said the previous night a Sea Tiger transport in the same area had to defend itself against artillery fire from shore. No casualties were reported.

Near Trincomalee town, a volatile mix of ethnic majority Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, one sailor and four civilians were killed in a suspected rebel claymore fragmentation mine attack on a naval foot patrol, the Army said.

After a week in which Sri Lanka came to the brink of civil war faster than anyone thought possible, analysts and diplomats say that, while both sides say they want peace, rising vio-

lence could lead to open conflict.

The government halted the air strikes on Tamil Tiger rebel areas that followed a suspected rebel suicide attack on the Army headquarters, but attacks against troops continue.

The only significant good news, diplomats and analysts say, is the absence of new air strikes or attacks in the increasingly jittery Colombo, which would shatter confidence in the island's \$20 billion economy.

"It is escalating," said Helen Olafsdottir, spokeswoman for the Nordic-staffed truce monitoring mission. "Both sides seem to be breaching the ceasefire agreement. But most people who suffer are civilians."

98-11
1/5

20 killed as Tiger rebel factions clash in Lanka

S. Lanka

PETER APPS

COLOMBO, APRIL 30

SRI Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels raided camps belonging to renegade ex-rebels on Sunday and killed 20, a Tiger official said, as fears of a return to war ran high.

The past three weeks have been the bloodiest since a 2002 ceasefire with more than 120 people, possibly many more, killed in suspected Tiger attacks on the military, ethnic riots, government air strikes and murders of civilians on both sides.

The rebels say the government uses fighters led by former Tiger eastern commander Karuna Amman as "Army-backed paramilitaries" to attack the mainstream Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)—a charge the government denies.

"It is a very severe blow for the paramilitary groups and for the Sri Lankan Army,"



Suspected Karuna fighter attended to at a hospital in Polonnaruwa on Sunday. AP

head of the Tiger peace secretariat S Puleedevan said. He said the camps were in Army-controlled areas. "We have burnt the camps and a lot of arms and ammunition provided by the Sri Lankan Army," he added.

He said the rebels had come under artillery fire from nearby Army camps during the attack, but were withdraw-

ing back behind their own lines with only one Tiger fighter wounded. Twenty Karuna fighters were killed and 15 wounded, he said.

A Karuna aide confirmed the attack but disputed figures, telling that only five had been killed and seven wounded.

The Army denied there had been any shelling, and said all they knew was there had been fighting between Tiger and Karuna forces in jungle areas not really controlled by either side. They have always denied knowing where the Karuna camps were, but Nordic truce monitors said the Army, at best, turns a blind eye.

Peace talks due to take place in Switzerland have been indefinitely postponed because of wrangling over the transport of eastern rebel leaders to their headquarters for a pre-talks meeting. —Reuters

01 MAY 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

LTTE attacks army, breakaway faction

P.K. Balachandran
Colombo, April 30

CHANCES OF talks between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE have receded significantly after the LTTE attacked camps of the rival Karuna group in eastern Sri Lanka early on Sunday.

The LTTE claimed it had killed 20 of Karuna's men while the Sri Lankan Intelligence put the toll at 10. They also said that the Tigers lost eight of its fighters in the raid. The LTTE has accused the Sri Lankan forces of backing the breakaway Karuna group.

The pro-LTTE Tamilnet website said that LTTE's Elite Commandoes raided Karuna's camps at Kasankulam, along the Batticaloa-Polannaruwa border districts at just after midnight.

Tamils feel that Sunday's attack was meant to show that despite the government's assurances that it would disarm those who carried arms illegally in areas controlled by it, Karuna's

group still existed, and that its camps were "surrounded by Sri Lankan army camps."

Following Sunday's incident, political observers in Colombo feel that chances of a government-LTTE meeting in Geneva have become very dim.

"The raid shows that Karuna does have camps in an area dominated by the Sri Lankan army, and the LTTE will use this to stall the second round of talks," a senior Tamil journalist said.

But, the government is still keen on holding the talks. The government has said it would not let the issue of transport to hamper the talks.

Army chief attack

Sri Lankan army chief Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, critically injured in an LTTE suicide bomb attack in Colombo on April 25, had not used the bullet proof BMW provided by the president, the *Sunday Times* has revealed.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

01 MAY 2006

Sri Lanka fast sliding towards turmoil

Jai Taraporevala | TNN

NEWS ANALYSIS

The threat issued by the head of the political wing of the LTTE, SP Thamilselvan, of a resumption in the armed struggle unless the current impasse is soon broken underscores the twin track approach which the Tigers will continue to adopt. On the one hand, such attacks as this week's suicide strikes in the military complex in Colombo are designed as a warning signal and a means of gauging the government's commitment to the peace process.

The LTTE is increasingly becoming emboldened to undermine the 2002 ceasefire agreement since it is under less international pressure than it was in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Besides, the Tigers have used the past four years to reorganise their cadre-base and buttress their military positions. This has enabled them to militarily step-up the pressure on the security forces.

Through its recent spate of attacks, the LTTE is also underlining the credibility of its threat to take unilateral steps to declare self-rule



for Tamils if the government insists on a settlement based on the unitary form of administration.

At the same time, the Tigers will leave the door open for negotiations because they lack the requisite firepower to gain their political goals solely through the armed struggle.

In addition, by holding out the possibility of restarting talks with the Rajapakse administration (if certain conditions are met), the LTTE is emphasising the significance it attaches to certain issues relating to confidence-building measures. These include an end to army support for the Colonel Karuna-led rebel faction in eastern Sri Lanka,

greater protection for LTTE officials travelling in government held areas, more freedom of movement for Tamils and an inflow of aid to the Tamil provinces.

The government, which has further raised tensions through its airstrikes, will not yield substantive ground on these issues in the face of the rising militancy of the LTTE. This is partly because the government will not want to appear weak or undermine its potential negotiating leverage and partly since it remains suspicious of the LTTE's eventual goal of establishing a Tamil homeland through the merger of the northern and eastern regions.

The government will therefore insist that progress in future negotiations will hinge on the LTTE demonstrating flexibility on widening the powers of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, stricter curbs on the movement of the Sea Tigers and tighter checks on the illegal stockpiling of weapons. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, Sri Lanka is set to witness greater instability in the coming months.

28 APR 2008

Tame the Tiger

28 APR 2009
Attack on army chief is blow to peace in Lanka

The heinous attack on Sri Lankan army chief Sarath Fonseka at a hospital in Colombo has pushed the island nation to the brink of war. Colombo has already launched air strikes on 'selected targets' in areas under LTTE control as a retaliatory measure. Despite President Mahinda Rajapakse's announcement that the ceasefire agreement of 2002 will hold, there is concern that the tenuous peace process between Colombo and LTTE is under threat. The suicide attack on Tuesday appears to be the handiwork of LTTE, even though the Tamil terror group has denied any involvement. LTTE has a history of engaging in brinkmanship. In all probability, the attack on Fonseka was intended to provoke Colombo ahead of the peace talks in Geneva. Any act of violence on the part of Sri Lankan armed forces, even if it is retaliatory, will be used by LTTE to drum up support in circles sympathetic to the Tamil cause. Colombo should not walk into the trap. The impasse in the talks is largely due to LTTE's refusal to engage constructively with the peace process. It is high time they realise that the best option for Tamils is a federal Sri Lanka that can protect the political and cultural concerns of various minorities. Sinhalese civil society should also lend a helping hand if the wounds of the violent decades are to heal and a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka is to survive.

There is a paucity of leadership within the Tamil community in Sri Lanka that can challenge the consensus manufactured by LTTE. This leadership drought is a fallout of LTTE's politics to destroy views and opinion that are at variance with those held by its supreme leader, Prabhakaran. Over the years, politicians and academics who resisted LTTE's hegemony have been killed. In an atmosphere of fear and terror, it is unlikely that correctives to LTTE's absolutist position on a Tamil homeland will emerge from within the community. However, there are sections among the political class in Tamil Nadu which can engage with LTTE. Leaders like Karunanidhi and Vaiko have been vocal about their sympathies for the plight of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. They should impress upon LTTE leadership the need to be realistic and conciliatory about its goals. They should follow the example of CPM leader Sitaram Yechury who used his good offices with Nepal's Maoists and the Seven Party Alliance to work for peace.

28 APR 2009

THE TIMES OF INDIA

হিংসার বৃত্তে

শ্রী লঙ্কায় গত চার বছরের ভঙ্গুর যুদ্ধবিরতি ভাঙিয়া পড়ার উপক্রম। রাজধানী কলম্বোয় সেনাপ্রধানের উপর যে আত্মঘাতী মানববোমার হামলা হইয়াছে, তাহা স্পষ্টতই তামিল গেরিলাদের কাজ। সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে জবাবি হামলায় ত্রিনকোমালির গেরিলা ঘাঁটিতে জল ও আকাশপথে প্রত্যাঘাত হানিয়াছে সরকারি বাহিনী। এই সংঘর্ষকে অবশ্য এখনই যুদ্ধবিরতির অবসান বলিয়া গণ্য করিতে সরকার নারাজ। আক্রান্ত হইলে প্রতি-আক্রমণের অধিকার যে সরকারের আছে, তাহা মনে করাইয়া দেওয়া হইয়াছে। সরকারের আশা, গেরিলারা শীঘ্রই শান্তি-আলোচনায় ফিরিবে। আর গেরিলারা তো কলম্বোয় আত্মঘাতী হামলার দায় লইতেই অস্বীকৃত। অস্বীকার করিলেও ইহা যে এল টি টি ই-রই কাজ, তাহাতে বিন্দুমাত্র সংশয় নাই। শ্রীলঙ্কায় এল টি টি ই ছাড়া আর কোনও জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী নাই, অন্যান্য তামিল জঙ্গি উপদলকে তো এল টি টি ই-ই নিকাশ করিয়া দিয়াছে। আর সিংহলি উগ্রপন্থীরা মূলত বৌদ্ধ শ্রমণদের দ্বারা নিয়ন্ত্রিত, তাহাদের আন্বেয়াজ বা বিস্ফোরণ ব্যবহারের প্রশ্নই ওঠে না। তবু এল টি টি ই-র মুখপাত্র বলিয়াছেন, এখনও তাঁহারা যুদ্ধবিরতির মধ্যেই রহিয়াছেন। অথচ মাঝেমাঝেই টহলদার সেনাবাহিনীর উপর, সরকারের মন্ত্রী ও নেতাদের লক্ষ করিয়া গেরিলা আক্রমণ নামিয়া আসিতেছে।

যুদ্ধবিরতি তাই অন্তিম ভঙ্গুর। গত দুই সপ্তাহে উভয় পক্ষে মোট ১১০ জনের প্রাণহানি ঘটিয়াছে। ইহা যুদ্ধবিরতির চার বছরে একটি রেকর্ড। যুদ্ধবিরতির লক্ষ্য ছিল, নরওয়ারের মধ্যস্থতায় ক্রমে একটি গ্রহণযোগ্য মীমাংসাসূত্রে উপনীত হওয়া। কিন্তু যত দিন গিয়াছে, ততই দরকষাকষি এমন একটা দুর্লভ্য দেওয়ালের সম্মুখীন হইয়াছে যে শান্তি-আলোচনায় কোনও উল্লেখযোগ্য অগ্রগতিই হইতে পারে নাই। আলোচনা আটকাইয়া রহিয়াছে স্বায়ত্তশাসনের প্রশ্নে। সরকার তামিলপ্রধান প্রদেশগুলিকে যতটা স্বশাসন দিতে রাজি, তামিলদের দাবি তাহার চেয়েও অতিরিক্ত কিছু। ফলে অচলাবস্থা ঘুচিতেছে না। কোনও পক্ষই অস্ত্র সংবরণ করে নাই, নিজ-নিজ প্রভাবাধীন অঞ্চলের উপর দখলও কেহ শিথিল করে নাই। এই অবস্থায় যুদ্ধবিরতির মধ্যেই যুদ্ধারম্ভের উপাদান মজুত থাকে। সামান্য ছুতায় উত্তেজনা সৃষ্টি হয়, এমনকী গুজব বা জনশ্রুতির ভিত্তিতেও তুলকালাম লড়াই বাধিয়া যাইতে পারে। যুদ্ধবিরতি তাই অনন্ত কাল চলিতে থাকা ঠিক নয়। চলিলে তাহার উপর নজরদারি ও তদারকি চালাইবার জন্য আন্তর্জাতিক বাহিনীও মজুত থাকা উচিত। শ্রীলঙ্কায় সে ধরনের কোনও বন্দোবস্ত হয় নাই। এখানে যুদ্ধবিরতি টিকিয়া আছে কেবল যুযুধান দুই পক্ষের শুভেচ্ছা ও শুভবুদ্ধির মেয়াদের উপর। ইহা আদৌ যুদ্ধবিরতি নিশ্চিত করার কোনও রক্ষকবচন নয়।

ইতিমধ্যেই গত কয়েক দশকের জাতিবৈর দ্বীপরাষ্ট্রে ৬৪ হাজার মানুষের প্রাণসংহার করিয়াছে। মাইন বিস্ফোরণে পঙ্গু হইয়াছেন অগণিত মানুষ। এল টি টি ই অন্যান্য তামিল জঙ্গি সংগঠনকে আত্মসাৎ কিংবা ধ্বংস করিয়া দিলেও দীর্ঘ কাল গেরিলা অস্তিত্বে স্থিত থাকার প্লানি সংগঠনের মধ্যে বিভাজন ঘটাইয়া তাহাকে কিছুটা দুর্বলও করিয়াছে। ভেলুপিলাই প্রভাকরণের কর্তৃত্ব অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া স্বাতন্ত্র্যের পতাকা ওড়ানো বিক্ষুব্ধ তামিল গোষ্ঠীকে সরকার মদত দিতেছে, এই অজুহাতে গেরিলা নেতৃত্ব জেনিভায় চলতি সপ্তাহে অনুষ্ঠিত শান্তি-আলোচনায় অংশগ্রহণ করে নাই। আসলে সম্ভ্রাসবাদের আর বাজার নাই। বিশ্বব্যাপী সম্ভ্রাসবাদীরা নিন্দিত হইতেছে, তাহাদের অর্থ, অস্ত্র ও রসদ সরবরাহের উৎসগুলি বন্ধ করিয়া দেওয়া হইতেছে। তাই এল টি টি ই শান্তির পক্ষে আপন হৃদয়পরিবর্তনের আভাস দেয়। কিন্তু ভিতরে-ভিতরে প্রভাকরণ ও তাঁহার ঘনিষ্ঠরা এখনও সমস্ত স্বতন্ত্র তামিল স্বদেশের স্বপ্ন লালন করেন। তাহাতে আপাতদৃষ্টিতে দৃষণীয় কিছু নাই। কিন্তু সেই স্বপ্ন সাকার করিতে জাতিদাঙ্গার আশ্রয় লওয়া, সিংহলি বনাম তামিল দ্বন্দ্বকে বিপুল রক্তক্ষয় ও নরমেধে ডুবাইয়া দেওয়া নিঃসন্দেহে অনভিপ্রেত। সরকারের তরফে তামিল জাতিসত্তার প্রতি যে বৈষম্য ও বঞ্চনা অনুশীলন করা হয়, তাহার দীর্ঘমেয়াদি পরিণামেই তামিল বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদের জন্ম। তবু শান্তিপূর্ণ পদ্ধতিতে সর্বাধিক স্বশাসনের জন্য দরকষাকষির মধ্যেই শ্রীলঙ্কার ভবিষ্যৎ প্রগতি নিহিত আছে।

27 Apr 2006

LTTTE vows revenge after Trincomalee strikes

AGENCIES

Colombo, April 26

ESCALATING VIOLENCE between Sri Lankan forces and Tamil rebels left at least 18 civilians dead and 15,000 Tamil villagers fleeing for their lives, reports from both sides said on Wednesday. The Tamil Tigers have vowed reprisals after Wednesday's attacks.

Three people died and 13 were wounded when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fired mortar bombs against a naval detachment in the Muttur area of Trincomalee district, defence ministry spokesman Prasad Samarasinghe said.

He denied earlier military reports

which said the civilians were killed when an Israeli-built Kfir jet accidentally dropped a bomb on Muttur jetty while attacking suspected Tamil Tiger positions in the northeast.

The pro-rebel Tamilnet website reported 12 civilians died when government warplanes struck the rebel-held Sampur area late on Tuesday in retaliation for a suicide bombing that killed 10 and wounded 30, including the army chief.

Police said three Tamil civilians were hacked to death in the Trincomalee district on Wednesday. It was not clear if the military air strikes caused other damage,

but Tamilnet said 15,000 villagers were fleeing their homes. The military launched the bombardments after a woman pretending to be pregnant blew herself up at army headquarters in the capital.

Military spokesman Brig Prasad Samarasinghe said the latest strikes came after the rebels fired on naval patrol craft off the eastern port of Trincomalee for a second day. S. Puleedevan,

head of the Tigers' peace secretariat described the situation in Trincomalee "war-like", and said "if the military attacks continue, the LTTE will be forced to take military defensive action."

The army said it had closed borders with rebel territory. Some aid workers helping rebuild after the 2004 tsunami said they were evacuating from the north and east.

United Nations agencies stayed where they were, but cancelled transport.

Wednesday's attacks were the first official military action since a 2002 ceasefire halted the two-decade-old civil war and raised hopes of a lasting peace. They followed a string of suspected LTTE attacks on the military and ethnic riots against Tamils.

Colombo's stock market ended down more than four percent on Wednesday as investors feared a return to full-scale war.

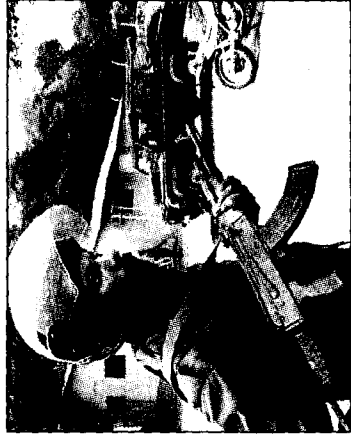
18 DEAD
IN ATTACKS

2006 27 Apr
S. Kumar
13

Air strikes on LTTE pockets

Tigers Accuse Govt Of Violating Truce, Deny Role In Bid On Army Chief

S. Lanka 27/1



A soldier guards the hospital where army chief Sarath Fonseka is being treated

Colombo: Sri Lanka's air force resumed strikes against suspected Tamil Tiger positions on Wednesday, a day after a suicide bombing killed ten people and wounded the army chief.

Air attacks were carried out in the north-eastern district of Trincomalee where the military bombed a cluster of boats of the LTTE on Tuesday night. A police official said the attacks resumed on Wednesday morning after a break overnight. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Meanwhile, a Tamil website

has reported that the LTTE's Trincomalee district leader S Eilian has asked the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) to "clarify" if the military has launched a "full-scale war, violating the ceasefire agreement". It said there had been "severe damage" to life and property in the rebel-held areas, but gave no details.

Palitha Kohona, a top officer coordinating the government's peace initiative, said the rebels had fired a few shells at military facilities in Trincomalee after Tuesday's attempt on the life of army chief Sarath Fonseka. "It

was unforgivable that the LTTE carried out a suicide bombing in Colombo, killing ten people and wounding the army commander. The air force and naval action is to deter and contain the LTTE from carrying out further provocative attacks," he said.

Asked if the air strikes meant that the four-year ceasefire between Colombo and the Tamil Tigers had effectively ended, Kohona said the government remained committed to the Norwegian-brokered peace process and expected the LTTE to return to peace talks. AGENCIES

Sri Lanka defends air strikes

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan Government on Wednesday said it had the "right to self-defence" and asserted that "co-ordinated operations" by its armed forces, including air strikes on "selected targets" in areas controlled by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), "will continue" as long as rebel attacks take place.

According to unofficial figures, at least 12 persons were reported killed in the rebel-held areas of eastern Trincomalee district after the Government launched its "deterrent strikes" on Tuesday, hours after its Army chief, Sarath Fonseka, survived a suicide bomb attack in Colombo.

The Government said the strikes were launched after the LTTE attacked the Navy in the eastern Trincomalee district and were meant to "deter" further attacks. Keheliya Rambukwella, the spokesperson on security affairs, said the air strikes on Tuesday evening and early Wednesday morning were on "selected targets after confirmed information."

Fonseka out of danger

The condition of the Army Commander, Lt. Gen. Fonseka, was stable and out of danger, the Army said. "The Commander has regained consciousness, but nobody is allowed to visit him," the military spokesperson, Prasad Samarasinghe, said.

He said he had no information on the casualties in the area of operation as it was under LTTE control. According to the TamilNet, at least 12 bodies of Tamil civilians were recovered from the area.

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Whither Sri Lanka's peace process?

V.S. Sambandan

SRI LANKA's faltering peace process suffered another blow on April 25 when a woman suicide bomber of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) blew herself up inside the Army headquarters in Colombo. She failed in her mission to kill the Commander of the Sri Lanka Army, Sarath Fonseka, but what she did was to alter the nature of the engagement between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE.

The *modus operandi* adopted by the LTTE in its latest assassination bid — deploying a woman suicide bomber on a day marked for maternity care in the Army Hospital — shows the repulsive extent its war against the state has descended to. Two events of Tuesday mark a complete difference from the past four-odd years of a tenuous peace in Sri Lanka: the afternoon assassination attempt on Lt. Gen. Fonseka and the evening “deterrent strikes” by the Air Force and other wings of the armed forces.

Both carry clear signals from the Tigers and the Government. These need careful interpretation to even hazard a guess as to what is in store for South Asia's bloodiest internal conflict — whether the situation will spiral out of control or ultimately veer back to the path of negotiations. The “deterrent strikes” by the Sri Lanka Air Force, in the face of what the Government termed fresh LTTE attacks on the Sri Lanka Navy in the sensitive eastern Trincomalee district, mark a departure from the state's rules of engagement with the LTTE. So far the state was seen as “weak” in its responses to the LTTE's killings and “provocative attacks.”

At stake in this new phase of engagement between the state and the rebels are issues that are both conceptual — the equation between the Government and a group that claims to be the “sole representative” of the Tamils and is bent

Will the situation spiral out of control or will it ultimately veer back to the path of negotiations? The international community could help determine what happens.

on carving out a separate state — and humanitarian — where civilians and foot soldiers are often the first casualties in what is essentially a conflict that requires a political solution.

The LTTE's selection of the target for the latest suicide-bombing mission — the Army Commander — is central to its game plan. Not only is Lt. Gen. Fonseka the Army chief, he has battlefield experience in the northern theatre, has opposed the LTTE's demand for dismantling the northern High Security Zones even before he assumed office, and has worked on strengthening the Army since he took over in December 2005. To that extent, the assassination attempt is seen as both a ‘first strike’ and a ‘pre-emptive one.’

The LTTE has been spoiling for a fight for long, trying to provoke the Government into a retaliation of sorts, which it could then play up at international fora to its advantage. This, while unilaterally suspending the Geneva negotiations to discuss the ceasefire agreement, points to a scenario in which the LTTE pushes the state over the brink, resorts to ground offensives, alters the demarcation lines between Government and rebel-held Sri Lanka, and then offers to negotiate. In short, the LTTE's game plan is to stay away from negotiations till it sees itself as being able to talk from a position of military strength. Its actions are largely unidirectional — towards fulfilling the agenda of separation through military means.

In the near term, the string of recent events —

the LTTE's provocative strikes over the past couple of weeks, the attempted assassination of the Army chief, and the Sri Lankan Government's military response — is also to be seen against the backdrop of the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu. By timing its pullout from the Geneva talks and then launching military offensives to synchronise with the democratic process in Tamil Nadu, the LTTE's unspoken agenda is to also propel the Sri Lankan Tamils issue into the Indian political discourse.

What requires more understanding is the Sri Lankan Government's military action after the assassination attempt on April 25. According to the Government, the Navy came under LTTE fire in the eastern Trincomalee district hours after the assassination attempt, and its air strikes, supported by the army and the navy, were to “deter” further rebel attacks. Herein is the containment agenda of any engagement between a state and a militarised opponent. The Sri Lankan Government spokesman has gone on record to state: “We have the right of self-defence to guard our security forces and our military camps.”

There is also a key political outcome from these actions by the state. For long, hardliners in the south had been pushing for a military offensive against the LTTE. The air strikes have the potential impact of satisfying hardliners and sections of the security forces that feel enfeebled by continued LTTE attacks. Clearly, containment — of both the LTTE attacks and hardline

southern rhetoric — is a key state objective directing the present phase of the unfolding military action.

One lesson from the engagements between successive governments in Colombo and the LTTE is that there is no military solution to the conflict. Hence, there is bound to be more pressure on both parties to resume talks and move towards a negotiated settlement.

The political deadlocks over the past decades can be divided into two phases. The pre-Chandrika Kumaratunga-Ranil Wickremesinghe period, in which Sri Lankan governments of the day saw the Tamil power-sharing demands as something that could not be met, and the Kumaratunga-decade when the LTTE, which had by then projected itself as the “sole representative,” rejected the federalist packages.

It is on this issue that the Mahinda Rajapakse presidency will have to face its ultimate political test. Elected on a unitarist manifesto, President Rajapakse has now made it clear that he is for “maximum devolution.”

A further elaboration of his political model for conflict resolution could significantly alter the internal dynamics that have been set off by the new terms of engagement between the state and the LTTE, and the international view of Sri Lankan affairs.

An unanswered question remains: How long will the current militarised mode continue? Much will depend on how effectively the state manages the military containment exercise and how fast it pushes forward a political solution — even if it is to be a unilateral offer.

For, the LTTE is most likely to strike at the state again. The assassination attempt on Lt. Gen. Fonseka is the clearest indication that rebels' theatre of operations has expanded from the North-East. It also foretells the possibility of a string of offensives aimed at stretching the state's military apparatus.

So far, decisive battles between the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE have been in the northern theatre — Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi, and Elephant Pass. All of these are now under LTTE control. This time round, the LTTE has the disadvantage of being weakened in the East. Hence, the possibility of the LTTE changing the nature of its military operations, with more emphasis on non-conventional strikes, is not to be ruled out.

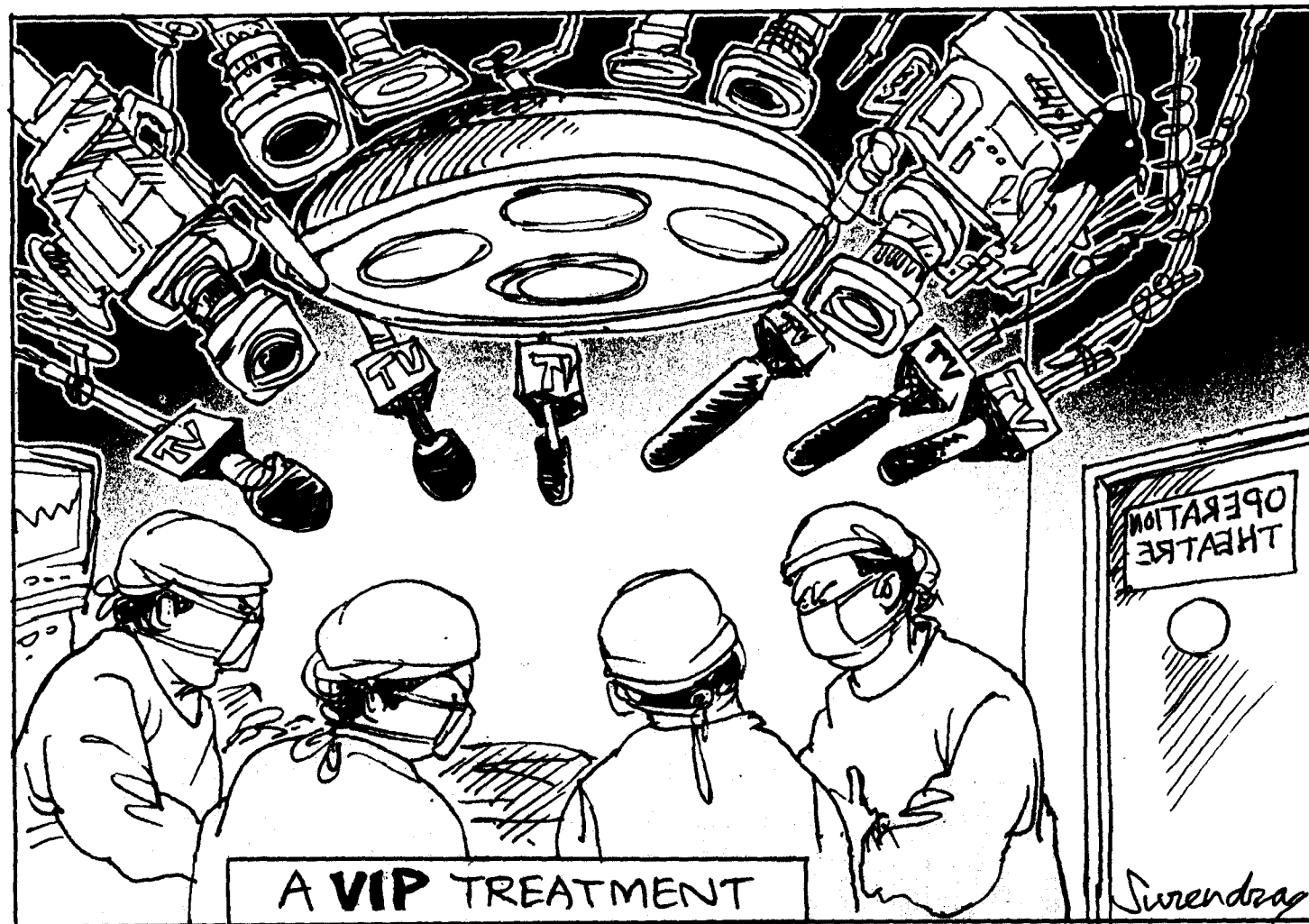
The global mood of zero-tolerance of terrorism and the international bans on the LTTE should make it evident that its project of beating the state into submission will have no takers. The present phase also offers the international community the opportunity to press for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The role of the international community to ensure that matters do not go out of hand gains more relevance now.

Now that the terms of military engagement between the Government and the Tigers have changed, the way out will largely be determined by the manner in which the political engagement is taken forward. For the international community, the key to this will be the manner in which the Government puts forward its solution for restructuring the Sri Lankan state from its present unitarist mould.

The major legacy of Ms. Kumaratunga's 11 years in office is that she had made unhesitant moves towards a federal Sri Lanka. By its successive acts, the LTTE pushed federalism out of the political parameters for a solution, making it more distant a political objective than it was a few years ago.

The past decades of bloodletting stem from two divergent positions — the state's entrenched unitarist position and the rebels' violent intransigence on separatism. The way out, hence, would be to halt the violence and return to the negotiating table to work out a solution that meets the aspirations of the minorities and allays the apprehensions of the majority.

CARTOONSCAPE



THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2006

Outrageous attack

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has once again shown that it is not interested in a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Sri Lanka. If anything, the LTTE suicide attack on the Sri Lankan Army commander is further evidence that it actually fears the prospect of such a settlement — fears for its own survival and future in a North-East Sri Lanka that has made its peace with the rest of the country. This is why it is reluctant to participate in peace talks and instead repeatedly attempts to provoke the Sri Lankan Government into a military response that will shatter the four-year-old truce. The LTTE hopes to then portray the Sri Lankan Government as a military machine that mercilessly crushes Tamil aspirations. Holed up in the Vanni, the LTTE leadership believes the international community will ignore its ruthless terrorist record, its recruitment of child soldiers, and its intolerance of dissent and democracy, and, above all, recognise it as a legitimate force fighting for Tamil rights. Winning legitimacy would help the LTTE cover considerable distance on the road to an independent Tamil Eelam where it wants to establish a self-serving rule over the Tamils. Thus does the LTTE hope to secure its future. This was the reasoning behind the LTTE assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar in August 2005; behind all its attacks on the Sri Lankan military that have claimed the lives of more than a hundred soldiers and sailors since last November; and behind its attempt to foment anti-Tamil ethnic violence in Trincomalee earlier this month. With each incident, the LTTE's motives only stand exposed further.

As the response to the latest developments indicates, the world recognises the LTTE for what it is — a ruthless terrorist organisation. But the question has to be asked if the dozen or so countries, including the United States, that are directly or indirectly involved in the Norway-facilitated peace process are putting enough pressure on the LTTE to stay the peace course and negotiate a settlement. But for the Sri Lankan Government's exemplary restraint in the shadow war unleashed by the LTTE, the truce, which exists only on paper now, would have given way to full-scale hostilities months ago. President Mahinda Rajapakse cannot be blamed if his patience is now wearing a little thin. Following the latest provocation, he ordered air and naval strikes in North-East Sri Lanka. President Rajapakse evidently wanted to send a message that he will not remain a silent onlooker as a terrorist group tries to take out the country's army chief. Still, restraint is the Government's best weapon against the LTTE. The people of Sri Lanka — Tamil and Sinhalese — do not want a war, but this could well be the outcome if the tit-for-tat attacks continue. The Government's reiteration of its "complete adherence" to the ceasefire agreement gives some hope that war can yet be avoided. But whether the peace process can survive — and move forward — depends to a large extent on what moves the LTTE is planning next and if the international community can influence this in any positive way.

Norway, U.S. condemn Colombo blast

Oslo optimistic of early end to violence in Sri Lanka

30-16 279

OSLO: The main mediator in the Sri Lankan conflict, Erik Solheim of Norway, on Wednesday condemned the flare-up of violence on the war-torn island but said he was optimistic that it would end shortly.

"The developments yesterday [Tuesday] are of course absolutely regrettable. We regret in the strongest terms the suicide [bombing] attempt on the [army] chief Sarath Fonseka and we call upon both the LTTE and the Government to show the maximum restraint now," Mr. Solheim told AFP in Oslo.

"We are working with the parties on an hour-to-hour basis to do whatever possible to bring them back to the negotiating ta-

ble in Geneva as soon as possible and to put a stop to this violence," he said.

Mr. Solheim said he did not believe the violence signified the end of a ceasefire in place since February 2002.

"Definitely not. Both parties have committed to us that they are still committed to the ceasefire. They have done it publicly and they have done it in all informal conversations with us. So definitely they're committed to the ceasefire," he said.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has condemned the blast and urged the Government and Tamil leaders to resume peace talks.

"No cause can justify such

acts of violence," Mr. Annan said in a statement and expressed his condolences to the families of the bereaved and the Government.

Unacceptable, says U.S.

Condemning the blast, U.S. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters at a briefing that the attack was "an unacceptable act of terror, a clear provocation and an escalation of violence."

He expressed the United States' sympathy to the victims and said Washington would continue to work with those trying to end the conflict peacefully. — AFP, PTI, AP



Three-year-old Akram Rusni lies on a hospital bed in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, on Wednesday. Akram's parents were killed in a motor attack in Muttur blamed on Tamil Tigers. — PHOTO : AP

Sri Lankan Army Chief injured in attack

Eight killed as woman suicide bomber blows herself up; Air Force launches deterrent sorties

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Commander of the Sri Lanka Army, Sarath Fonseka, survived an assassination attempt by a suspected LTTE woman suicide bomber inside the Army Headquarters in Colombo on Tuesday afternoon. At least eight persons, including civilians, were killed and 29 others injured in the attack, the Army said.

Hours after the attack, Colombo witnessed near normality, but the situation was reportedly tense in the rebel-controlled

eastern Trincomalee district. According to reports reaching Colombo from the east, the fighter jets of the Sri Lankan Air Force flew sorties over the rebel-held parts of Trincomalee district on Tuesday evening. A senior Government Minister described the sorties as a "deterrent against further rebel attacks."

In an official statement, the Government said, "following the suicide bomb attack on the Army Commander this afternoon, the LTTE positioned in the Sampur area [in the eastern Trincomalee

district] launched an attack on the Navy in Trincomalee. The security forces have carried out an operation to deter further attacks by the LTTE."

"According to our Trincomalee MP, aerial bombardments were carried out over a rebel-controlled area. We do not have any information on casualties," Suresh Premachandran, the Parliamentary Co-ordinator of the LTTE-backed Tamil National Alliance (TNA), said.

According to an Army source, the attempted assassination was executed by the woman suicide

bomber who gained access into the tightly guarded Army Headquarters complex in the heart of Colombo "as today was a day marked for pregnant wives of soldiers."

"She was near the Army hospital when she jumped on the car in which the Army Commander was travelling, around 1.30 p.m. An alert motorcycle outrider who noticed her suspicious movements, tried to push her away thereby minimising the damage to a certain extent," the source said.

Lt. Gen. Fonseka was rushed

to the National Hospital, Colombo, in a critical condition.

After hours of surgery, the shrapnel were removed from his body.

"The condition of the Army Commander is stable," an Army spokesperson said on Tuesday night.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission "strongly condemned" the suicide attack as "yet another serious blow to the Ceasefire Agreement and the peace process," which "is likely to have very negative effect on the relationship between the Government

and the LTTE and could jeopardise any possibility of future talks."

It said the armed forces "have shown restraint and refrained from massive retaliation" in the face of "countless attacks in the last few weeks" and sincerely urged the Government to equally refrain from any retaliatory actions at this stage and remain committed to the peace process.

Colombo vows to counter attacks: Page 16

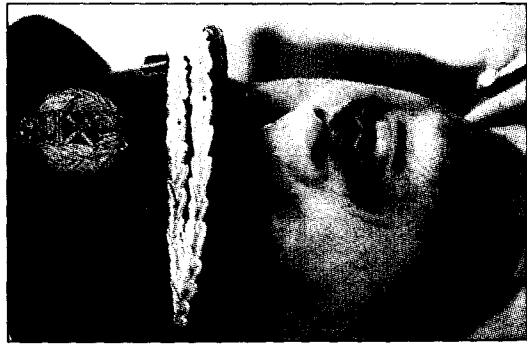
Military Chief Critical, Eight Killed As Woman Blows Herself Up Inside Army HQ

'Pregnant' bomber aborts Lanka peace

S. de Silva
Colombo: Eight people were killed and 27 others wounded when a female suicide bomber, believed to be a Tamil Tiger rebel and pretending to be pregnant to conceal explosives, set off a bomb in front of a car taking Sri Lanka's top military general inside the army headquarters on Tuesday. Lt. Gen. Sarath Fonseka, who was the target, suffered serious abdominal injuries.

Military spokesman Brig Prasad Samarasinghe said a team of ten surgeons was attending to Lt Gen Fonseka. "He is not out of danger, we are operating on him now," said Dr Hector Weerasinghe of Colombo's National Hospital.

Fonseka, a battle-hardened soldier with 35 years in the infantry, was appointed to the top post after President Mahinda Rajapakse took



Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka

office in November. The victims included civilians who were visiting the army headquarters complex in Colombo to meet relatives.

The attack is certain to put further pressure on the country's four-year-old ceasefire, which has been threatened by rising violence that has killed at least 89 people this month, 43 of them soldiers or policemen.

The woman reportedly entered the area by presenting a fake identification and saying she had an appointment for a pregnancy examination at the army hospital located inside the complex.

"I saw a fireball as I came out of my saloon," said S A Weerasinghe, who works in the military saloon located inside the sprawling complex. Top Sri Lankan military officials work in the head-

quarters, which is protected by fences and troops guarding all entry points.

No outfit has claimed responsibility for the blast. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rarely takes responsibility for such attacks although it has a deadly suicide bombers' team called Black Tigers.

The first suicide attack by the guerrillas was in July 1987, when a person called Captain Miller drove a truckload of explosives into a military camp, killing 40 soldiers. Since then, 240 other rebels have blown themselves up in attacks that have killed Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and dozens of others.

In an earlier violence late on

Monday, suspected rebels in a hijacked bus and opened fire on soldiers when their vehicle was blocked at a checkpoint in northern Sri Lanka, drawing return fire that killed the driver of the bus. The passengers on the bus—believed to be three or four Tamil Tiger rebels—escaped following the brief gunbattle in Jaffna.

Last week, the rebels backed out of peace talks scheduled to start on Monday in Geneva, citing attacks on ethnic Tamil civilians and other disputes with the government.

The Tamil Tigers are demanding a separate Tamil homeland and have accused the Sinhalese-dominated government of discrimination. A Norwegian-brokered ceasefire halted the war in 2002. AGENCIES

Civil war cloud over Lanka

S. Seneviratne
Colombo, April 23 (Reuters): Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers kidnapped and killed six ethnic Sinhalese farmers, police and the army said today, raising fears of communal violence that could lead to renewed civil war.

The murders took place in the northeastern district of Trincomalee, where Sinhalese residents attacked Tamil villages last week in anger over mine attacks the army blamed on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"The farmers were working in their paddy fields when they were taken and shot," said military spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe. "This shows the LTTE is trying to create a backlash among communities," he said.

The Tigers, who have been fighting for a separate state for minority Tamils in Sri

Lanka north and east, have pulled out of peace talks with the government meant to open on Monday in Geneva.

Analysts said the talks were the best hope of defusing a cycle of rising violence that is straining a 2002 Norwegian-brokered truce to the breaking point.

The news of the abductions and murders coincided with three rebel attacks on Lankan troops and the police.

Security forces sustained minor injuries in the attacks, but the army said three Tiger fighters were killed when troops returned fire.

"During the last 24 hours, three LTTE cadre died due to confrontations and the army recovered a large number of arms, ammunition, claymore mines and explosives," army spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe told reporters.

Mine attacks and political murders have become daily events in the past two weeks, killing nearly 100.

Hopes were pinned on the talks set for April 24-25 in Geneva to defuse the situation, but the Tigers pulled out because of a dispute over how to transport commanders to their northern headquarters for prior consultations.

It was too late for the Geneva talks to go ahead as scheduled, said Palitha Kohona, who heads the government's body for coordinating peace.

"Tomorrow is not possible anymore," he said. But Kohona hoped the rebels would agree to a new, Norwegian-brokered proposal of a 10-seater civilian helicopter for the transport of commanders for internal meetings the LTTE says must take place before they can come to talks.



Soldiers search for mines on a highway in Trincomalee. (Reuters)

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Colombo for sanctions on LTTE

20/9
V.S. Sambandan

S. Sambandan
COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Sunday called upon the international community, particularly Norway and the European Union, to exert more pressure including "sanctions" on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"We expect the E.U. to go ahead with its threatened sanction, which is the listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation if the LTTE continues to behave in this appalling manner and continues with its wave of violence and terrorism and contin-

The call was against the backdrop of the standoff over the LTTE's demand for transportation of its eastern leaders to Kilinochchi

ues to offer flimsy excuses for not coming to Geneva for the talks," Palitha Kohona, Secretary General of the Secretariat for Co-ordinating the Peace Proc-

ess, told a press conference on Sunday.

The Government's call was against the backdrop of the continued standoff over the LTTE's demand for transportation of its eastern leaders to Kilinochchi.

The rebel-held east and north is separated by Government territory and the LTTE would require permission to travel between the two regions.

Continued violence

At least eight persons were killed and nine injured in separate incidents in the north-east

since Saturday. The dead include five soldiers and three LTTE cadres, the army spokesman said.

Chief of Defence Staff Daya Sandagiri in a statement said "brutal LTTE violence and terrorism" since December 5 last year had claimed the lives of 121 security forces personnel. These include 64 army personnel, 36 sailors of the navy, four airmen from the air force, 10 policemen and seven home guards. In addition, 244 armed service and police personnel were wounded in the LTTE violence, he said.

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THE HINDU

Tigers not to attend Geneva peace talks

AGENCIES

COLOMBO, APRIL 20

TAMIL Tiger rebels on Thursday told Norwegian peace envoy Jon Hanssen-Bauer they are indefinitely postponing their rescheduled April 24 talks with the Sri Lankan government at Geneva on saving the battered 2002 ceasefire. No new date has been announced.

"Until a stable and conducive environment is created, we will not be able to attend the talks," the LTTE's *Nitharsanam* website quoted the group's political wing leader SP Thamilselvan as saying. "Until the government implements what was agreed to in Geneva in February, including the disarming of para-militaries, the violence will not stop."

Hanssen-Bauer travelled to the rebel-held Kilinochchi today for talks with the Tigers on saving the ceasefire that has come under renewed pressure following a surge in violence. But he failed to secure meet-

ings either with President Mahinda Rajapakse or reclusive Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, and some diplomats increasingly say that neither side is really serious about moving the peace process forward.

The Tigers had already said they were provisionally pulling out of the talks due to problems in transporting eastern rebel leaders to a pre-talks meeting. The government eventually offered private helicopters to transport rebel commanders, but Thamilselvan said this too was unacceptable.

Analysts say that what the Tigers really want is for the government to disarm or rein in the Karuna group of renegade ex-rebels, who have been attacking the Tigers in the east. With Karuna seen strengthening the army's hand if war restarts, analysts say that is extremely unlikely.

Meanwhile, an Army spokesman said on Thursday that a Tiger rebel had tried to attack an Army post in Trincomalee but was shot and killed by troops.

INDIAN EXPRESS

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006

Tiger tantrums

It should surprise no one that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam called off its participation in the second round of the Geneva talks with the Sri Lankan Government. The LTTE is under more international pressure than at any time before to give substance to the peace process. It made participation in Geneva II conditional on the Government disarming Karuna, a former LTTE military commander who has broken away and is a powerful threat to the organisation in the East. But the international backers of the four-year-old process made it clear that the talks could no longer be held hostage to this issue. The pressure on the Tigers has increased after Canada, home to the largest chunk of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, banned the group. Fearing it might be forced to commit itself to a more substantive peace process than what has gone on until now, the LTTE avoided going to Switzerland. First it tried escalating the violence in the North-East. When that did not work, it found a pretext in the transport arrangements of its cadres. Here is a terrorist group that expects the state it is fighting to arrange military helicopters for ferrying its cadres to a pre-talks strategy meeting. It takes umbrage when that is refused; rejects Sri Lankan Navy transport; wants to travel in its own boats; agrees to go by a civilian vessel with an international ceasefire monitor on board; and then pulls out of the talks on account of a Navy escort to this vessel.

As the international monitors of the ceasefire and the Sri Lankan Government have explained, the naval escort was written into the agreement for the cadres' journey from eastern Sri Lanka to the North by the civilian boat. If the LTTE tantrum is aimed at making the point that it owns the seas around North-East Sri Lanka, and that it will not accept the authority of the Sri Lankan Government in these waters, it is time to reiterate that it has no jurisdiction over the waters around North-East Sri Lanka. For reasons now well-known, the Sri Lankan Government ceded to the LTTE *de facto* independent control over substantial territory in the North-East. Getting the peace process to acknowledge a maritime boundary would complete this picture for the LTTE. But this can never happen. The international community will not recognise a terrorist group with boats as a naval force. In the whole transport drama, the Sri Lankan Government was well within its rights in reaffirming its control over the North-East seas. It can be argued that all the time and energy expended on this issue could have been saved had the Government gone by established practice and provided air transport to the Tigers right at the beginning. But then the LTTE might have found some other excuse for not attending the talks. The international community needs to tighten the screws, making it clear that the extremist organisation has no option but a negotiated political solution to the conflict within an undivided Sri Lanka.

Colombo hopeful of talks schedule

V.S. Sambandan

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COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Wednesday said it remained hopeful that the second round of ceasefire talks in Geneva later this month would be held. The Government's position is against the backdrop of the recent spiralling violence in the north-east and a stand-off between Colombo and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"As far as the Government is concerned, we are optimistic that the talks will go on," Keheliya Rambukwella, Minister and Colombo's recently appointed spokesperson on the security situation, told a press conference on Wednesday.

Commitments

"On the part of the Government, we have done everything possible in order to resolve this conflict and to keep our commitments fully and totally," he said. Norwegian Special Envoy for

the peace process Jon Hanssen-Bauer held meetings in Colombo to break the standoff.

He is scheduled to meet LTTE's political wing leader S.P. Tamilselvan in Kilinochchi on Thursday.

Referring to the stand-off on the transportation of LTTE cadres in east and north, Mr. Rambukwella said Colombo had agreed to a proposal to permit the LTTE to fly in "private helicopters."

On the violence, he said the Government had exercised "extra patience" to ensure that the peace process was not derailed.

Army denies charges:

Military spokesperson Prasad Samarasinghe denied media reports linking the killing of five youths in the northern Jaffna peninsula on Tuesday night to the security forces. The killing was reported in the TamilNet website, which blamed soldiers. Brig. Samarasinghe denied the report.

20 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Lanka blast kills 4, injures peace

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, April 15. — Serious doubts were expressed today by Sri Lanka and Tamil Tigers on whether the Swiss talks to save their troubled truce would take place, as a powerful landmine blast killed four soldiers and the rebels cancelled an internal meeting protesting Navy ship escorts to their cadre.

Four soldiers were killed and 12 others wounded when the landmine, planted in a two-wheel hand-tractor, exploded as a bus transporting troops went by at Mundimurippu in the northern district of Vavuniya. The attack came hours after troops detected four powerful Claymore mines at two locations.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) scrapped an internal meeting protesting the presence of a Naval ship escorting their cadre who were going by sea to the northern stronghold of Kilinochi. The eight-day meeting between LTTE's top leadership and field commanders was earlier described by the Tigers as crucial for the Geneva talks, which was rescheduled yesterday to 24 April by Norwegian peace brokers.

Slamming the Tigers's

decision to pull out of the transport agreement, the head of government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP), Mr Palitha Kohona said: "There is a serious doubt if the LTTE wants to go to Geneva." He said the Scandinavian mediators had planned to transport the field commanders in a ferry accompanied by Sri Lankan naval escorts, adding the government imposed no new conditions on them.

But on their part, the LTTE said: "We wish to emphasise that today's incident has put into question our decision and subsequent efforts to go to Geneva and that the actions of the government of Sri Lanka and Sri Lankan military is the reason for this unfortunate situation."

In a statement, the Tigers said, "excessive interference" by Navy in their commanders' transport was in total contradiction to prior agreement with truce monitors.

"These have angered and disappointed our leadership and... made it impossible for our leadership to meet and discuss issues prior to the Geneva talks," they said.

Mr Kohona, however,

said the Naval escort was not a condition imposed by Colombo, but part of the deal the Tigers themselves had agreed with the Scandinavian truce monitors.

The top Colombo official, who suggested that Tigers may not go to Geneva, added that the government was keen to go ahead with the negotiations.

He said there had been "great provocation" by the Tigers by escalating attacks against government forces and civilians in the past week, yet Colombo agreed to go to Geneva to talk.

The military found four powerful Claymore mines in the island's north and the east and arrested one man who had set up one set of bombs in the north.

Curfew was lifted, meanwhile, in the north-eastern port town of Trincomalee after three people were killed in mob violence overnight. The new dates for Geneva talks is five days later than originally scheduled and has been shortened to two days instead of three as was earlier planned.

After the new dates were announced, the rebels had said they wanted more time to discuss security situation in the island's restive east with field commanders.

LTTE calls for postponement of Geneva talks

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S. Kumar
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Stalemate on sea passage ends

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Thursday called for a postponement of the April 19 Geneva talks. The request was made by its political wing leader S. P. Tamilselvan at a press conference in Kilinochchi on Thursday.

"The Tigers have requested the facilitators to suggest a new date for the talks in Geneva," the TamilNet quoted Mr. Tamilselvan as saying.

The report also said the Colombo-LTTE stalemate on sea passage for the Tigers' eastern commanders ended on Thursday following a suggestion by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) that they be transported in "a civilian vessel without Sri Lanka Navy involvement." SLMM's head Ulf Henricsson would also be on board the ferry on Saturday when the rebel sea movement takes place, the report said.

The reason for the call to postpone the talks is that the LTTE would have to conclude a week-

long meeting involving the participation of its eastern leadership to arrive at a negotiating position.

Cabinet Ministers on Thursday condemned Wednesday's market bombing as a provocative act by the LTTE, but did not elaborate on the arson attacks.

"There is a magisterial inquiry on and we will wait for the report," Cabinet Minister and member of negotiating team Rohita Bogollogama said when asked about the arson.

According to defence sources, an improvised explosive device, weighing five kg, was triggered near a crowded market place aimed at causing maximum damage ahead of the New Year festivities.

Reports from the north-east said the spate of killings continued on Thursday.

Mine attacks and shootings claimed the lives of at least eight persons on Thursday. These include an attack on LTTE cadres in the rebel-held eastern Batticaloa district.



NOTHING TO SALVAGE?: A man pours water to douse a fire in a shop in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, on Thursday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

13 killed in blasts, arson in Sri Lanka

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Colombo blames LTTE for spiralling violence in north-east

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: At least 13 persons were killed and 40 others injured in a string of bombings and arson in Sri Lanka's eastern Trincomalee district on Wednesday. Police curfew has been clamped in the ethnically-mixed, sensitive eastern town. With Wednesday's killings, the death toll in the north-east since last week's spurt in violence rose to 35. Wednesday started on a bloody note when a police bus was trapped in a claymore mine set by LTTE cadres in the outskirts of Trincomalee town, the army said. At least two policemen were killed and two others injured in this blast.

Later on Wednesday afternoon, a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) set off by "the LTTE" outside a vegetable market killed at least five others, the Army said. This was followed by mob violence in which shops,

including those belonging to Tamils and Muslims were torched, killing six others, preliminary reports from Trincomalee said.

Trincomalee has a near-equal mix of Sri Lanka's three main ethnicities — Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims.

The security forces confirmed the death of a soldier in the IED explosion outside the market but said they had "no information" about the civilian deaths in the bombing. The 11 persons killed in the market bombing and the subsequent arson included a child, four women and six men, reports reaching Colombo said.

Attack condemned

India and the U.S. have condemned the recent escalation in violence. Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse on Wednesday evening discussed the present situation with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and

over telephone.

The U.S. condemned the "recent terrorist attacks of the LTTE against the armed forces of Sri Lanka."

It called upon the LTTE to cease the violent attacks and to return to the ceasefire implementation talks.

"The U.S. commends the continued restraint of the Government in the face of these provocations," a statement by the U.S. embassy in Colombo said. Mr. Rajapakse on Wednesday deputed two Ministers and a group of officials to inquire into the Trincomalee incidents and submit a report.

At a media briefing on Wednesday, senior Cabinet Minister Keheliya Rambukwella said the recent incidents were a "manifestation of the thinking of the LTTE and a clear indication that they reject" the call by the international community to abandon violence.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2006 ✓

Teaching dissidence to LTTE

After four agonising years, the Sri Lankan peace process has boiled down to a single issue that has nothing to do with the rights of Tamils. It is the survival of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which has centre-staged the bizarre demand that the Sri Lankan Government should guarantee its welfare by disarming Karuna, the breakaway LTTE leader. Immediately after the March 2004 rebellion, the LTTE declared it to be an "internal matter," which it would resolve on its own. Facilitator Norway, the ceasefire monitors, and the Sri Lankan Government all stood by, as the Vanni leadership launched a mini-war against the Karuna faction in eastern Sri Lanka. Unable to quell the revolt, V. Prabhakaran's organisation has since changed tack – and made the "internal matter" the responsibility of the Government. This was the burden of the Tiger song at the Geneva talks in February, the first time the former combatants met after 2003. The issue could determine whether the next round of talks, scheduled for April 19, will be held at all. That Norway and the international ceasefire monitors parrot the LTTE's demand on this issue is deplorable. For a start, such a stance insinuates that the Sri Lankan Government maintains and supports the Karuna faction. The outgoing head of the ceasefire monitors, Hågrup Haukland, has conceded in a recent interview to a Sri Lankan newspaper that there is no evidence to back such an assumption. The ceasefire monitors need to be reminded that the 'absence of evidence' is the ostensible reason for their reluctance to hold the LTTE responsible for outrageous ceasefire violations, notably the killings of political opponents as well as Sri Lankan soldiers and sailors.

When the ceasefire was signed in February 2002, the clause obliging the Government to disarm "paramilitaries" referred exclusively – and one-sidedly – to members of Tamil political parties opposed to the LTTE who carried weapons for their own protection against a killer organisation. The Government disarmed them by the stipulated deadline. The Karuna revolt was a later development, an outcome of the LTTE leadership's internal contradictions. The charge that the Government is in violation of the ceasefire by not disarming Karuna is completely over the top. In any case, why should the Government help a terrorist group set its house in order? The LTTE is determined to carve up Sri Lanka to form a separate Eelam; and there is no basis for its claim of being the 'sole representative' of Sri Lankan Tamils. Karuna's existence and flourishing mock the LTTE case for dividing the country. It helps, however inadequately, the case of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils who do not accept either the LTTE's secessionist programme and murderous ways or its hegemonic claim. There is no reason for the Sri Lankan Government to be apologetic about Karuna. It is time the LTTE learnt that dissidence is an integral and inescapable part of democratic politics.

05 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Rajapakse's party sweeps polls

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) on Friday swept the elections to 266 local bodies held on March 30. But its key ally, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), managed just one victory.

The UPFA won 216 of the 254 local bodies. The main Opposition party, the United National Party (UNP) finished a distant second with 30 followed by the Tamil National Alliance's five.

The significance of the polls is that it considerably strengthens President Mahinda Rajapakse in

• JVP manages one victory

• Results strengthen President's hands

his approach to the peace negotiations. The JVP and the all-Buddhist clergy Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) brought considerable pressure on Mr. Rajapakse by demanding the "immediate ouster" of Norway as the facilitator.

The results will have a sobering effect on the shrill rhetoric that had clouded the negotia-

tions process. "The Sri Lankan electorate has reaffirmed its moderate position on the ethnic conflict, through this verdict," Jayadeva Uyangoda, Professor of Political Science, University of Colombo, told *The Hindu*.

"The JVP and JHU may now find it difficult to pressurise the President to follow a hardline approach." One of the reasons for the JVP's rout, he said, was that they claimed they were "better equipped" to govern rural areas. "The Sri Lankan electorate does not see the JVP as mature enough to govern their lives," he said.

01 APR 2006

119-14

Lanka wants military help from Pak

P K Balachandran
Colombo, March 31

SRI LANKAN President Mahinda Rajapaksa's visit to Pakistan, beginning on Friday, has an important message for India, political observers here say.

Informed sources say that one of the main aims of Rajapaksa's visit was to send a message to India: that if it did not help Sri Lanka militarily, the latter might approach Pakistan for help.

The power vacuum in Sri Lanka would be filled by Pakistan. "Will India want it?". That's is a question Sri Lankans ask.

Sri Lanka's move is expected to set New Delhi wondering if it is doing the right thing by postponing a decision on signing a Defence Cooperation Agreement with Sri Lanka, and not moving boldly on aiding the reconstruction and modernisation of the Jaffna's Palaly airbase.

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The 80-member delegation accompanying Rajapaksa has top representatives of the defence, finance and trade ministries.

The aim is to secure defence as well as economic cooperation.

Sri Lanka greatly values its defence ties with Pakistan. The most widely cited reason for this is the military help which Pakistan gave when the LTTE was about to overrun Jaffna in 2000.

The multi-barrel rocket launchers, which Pakistan sold to Sri Lanka, are thought to have played an invaluable role in sending the Tigers packing to their bases in the Wannai.

Because India and the West could not sell arms to Sri Lanka for political or humanitarian reasons, Sri Lanka had no option but to look to Pakistan, China and the open international market for its military needs.

Pakistan has been selling small armaments to Sri Lanka for a long time, besides training its military officers.

Musharraf's advice



PAKISTANI PRESIDENT General Pervez Musharraf has cautioned Sri Lankan leaders against too much reliance on military might to bring an end to the ethnic conflict in the island. In an interview to the state-owned *Daily News*, Musharraf said a country's armed forces could not be expected to solve political conflicts. They could only help political leaderships "buy time" to settle conflicts, he said.

HTC, Colombo

01 APR 2006

The Economic Times

Rajapaksa seen in peacemaker's role

P K Balachandran
Colombo, March 16

AN OVERWHELMING majority of Sinhalas, the dominant community in Sri Lanka, think that President Mahinda Rajapaksa is committed to a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict, and that he has the strength to bring it about, according to a survey conducted by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA).

Around 87 per cent said that Rajapaksa had the strength to take the peace process forward and 80 per cent said that he was committed to finding peace through talks.

The survey, conducted by Pradeep Peiris, head of the Social Indicators section of the CPA, found that 95 per cent were of the view that the government and the LTTE should go in for a negotiated settlement, instead of letting the current stalemate continue indefinitely.

The survey was conducted from February 17 to March 3 among 1300 respondents in the island excluding the Tamil-speaking North Eastern Province which is disturbed because of the armed ethnic conflict.

Since September 2005, there has been a 10 per cent increase in people who say that a "no-war, no-peace" scenario is not good and that the government and the LTTE should start talking about



Mahinda Rajapaksa
Man of peace

Around 87 per cent said that Rajapaksa had the strength to take the peace process forward and 80 per cent said that he was committed to finding peace through talks

a permanent solution.

The survey finds that the rural Sinhalas are more strongly in favour of a negotiated settlement as compared to the urban Sinhalas.

17 MAR 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Saved from war, for now

Despite the war of words that has erupted between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam following the Geneva talks, the danger of a real war — at the brink of which Sri Lanka was teetering just a few weeks ago — has receded, at least for now. Each side, propelled by its own political compulsions, has projected the February 22-23 interaction as a victory. The Government, which went to the Swiss capital hoping to press for amendments to the February 2002 ceasefire agreement in order to curb the LTTE's free run in the North-East, returned saying that it had achieved this. Although the ceasefire document did not come up for re-negotiation, the Government's legal expert said the commitments made by the two sides at Geneva were new and thus amounted to amendments. The LTTE that was emphatic before going to the talks that it wanted no amendments but only a "full implementation" of the ceasefire agreement now said it had had its way and warned that the Government's interpretation would "seriously undermine" the peace process. The truth lies somewhere in between. Urgently working to save the ceasefire, Norway, the facilitator, appears to have stitched together the issues that both sides brought to the table. The result: a joint statement reiterating the validity of the ceasefire agreement and outlining commitments in language ambiguous enough to be interpreted either as something new or as nothing more than a narration of what the February 2002 document contained.

The two sides are due to meet again in April. Whether they actually will depends mostly on the LTTE, which has made its participation in further rounds conditional on the Government disarming the Karuna-led rebels. In the last two years, the LTTE's former eastern commander has emerged as the biggest threat to Velupillai Prabhakaran; he has staged numerous attacks against the LTTE in its own territory, taking out several top cadres of the group in the process. The Sri Lankan Government has consistently denied having anything to do with Karuna. In any case, why would it strengthen the Tigers by doing what they cannot do? That it was keen to avoid a confrontation on this issue at the talks, yet not tie itself up in a tricky promise is evident from the ambiguity of its commitment "to ensure that no armed group or person other than government security forces will carry arms or conduct armed operations." The killing of two LTTE cadres just days after the talks shows the difficulties that lie ahead. By averting a war that seemed imminent, the Geneva talks have given President Mahinda Rajapakse an opportunity to consolidate himself politically ahead of local government elections. Commendably, he is also using this time to build a democratic consensus among the Sinhalese majority on how to take the peace process forward. With the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna reopening the issue of Norway's continuance as a facilitator, and the LTTE threatening to renew its struggle for Eelam, the road ahead will be bumpy.

Rhetoric clouds peace process in Sri Lanka

V.S. Sambandan

DEBILITATING RHETORIC has been the bane of peace processes in Sri Lanka. Close on the heels of last month's Geneva talks between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, an already fluid situation has been further complicated by a rash of statements. This has raised doubts over the continuation of the negotiations. Broadly, the current rhetoric has three strands — all emanating from post-Geneva developments, after the Government and the Tigers committed themselves to "respect and uphold" a tottering ceasefire agreement. They also reflect entrenched positions of hardliners at the two ends of Sri Lanka's political spectrum: those of the Sinhala majoritarian-unitarists and the Tamil separatists.

The ink on the Geneva statement of February 23 had hardly dried when the first salvo was fired by a member of the Government's negotiating team, H.L. de Silva — a leading lawyer widely known in Sri Lanka from his characterisation of "federalism" as "a beguiling serpent." The Geneva statement, he contended, reflected an "amendment" in the ceasefire agreement. The LTTE disagreed. Its chief negotiator, Anton S. Balasingham, dismissed the interpretation as "ridiculous" and one that was aimed at "appeasing Sinhala hardliners."

Following up on the "amendment" controversy, the unitarist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the majoritarian Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) turned the heat on when they publicly distanced themselves from the Geneva statement. The JHU said it was not happy with the explanation that the ceasefire agreement was "amended" and wanted specific changes to the document. The JVP, for its part, said it welcomed the Geneva talks and the Government's

Negotiations to resolve the ethnic conflict have again run into trouble with both the Sinhala and Tamil camps taking increasingly confrontational positions.

position at the inaugural — that the ceasefire agreement was unconstitutional. The sting, however, was in the tail with the JVP taking the view that the Government in committing itself to "respect and uphold" the ceasefire agreement was contradicting its own stated position.

The second bone of contention was raised by the JVP when it wanted the facilitator, Norway, to be sent packing as it had "compromised Sri Lanka's sovereignty." Almost simultaneously the LTTE declared it had "no faith" in the Geneva talks.

The rhetoric can be viewed from two perspectives. Behind the cacophony of voices lie some critical issues that are central to the peace process. Viewed from one perspective the upsurge of rhetoric is also a manifestation of deeper concerns that are the political *raison d'être* of the parties that raise them.

From the Government's perspective, the "amendment" argument was seen as a way of balancing out its own set of contradictions. One of the long-held positions of the ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party was that the ceasefire agreement was a "violation of the constitution" and that its "lop-sided" nature favoured the LTTE. In addition, President Mahinda Rajapakse's electoral allies, the JVP and the JHU want a review of the agreement. Thus the Government's Geneva commitment to "respect and uphold" the document raises political issues. It is against that backdrop that the "amendment" argument was

put forward. However, this failed to serve its intended purpose with the JHU declaring that post-Geneva statement could not be construed as an amendment.

The JVP, which sees itself as a ruling party in waiting, has even deeper political and electoral concerns. In its own way, the current ruling coalition is also one in which there is a jostling for space between two left-of-centre parties — the SLFP and the JVP. If the latter is to hold its base and further expand its electoral gains in a prospective poll, it needs a rallying point. This rallying point, now, is the conflict resolution process. While there is a broad agreement on the need to avoid a full-blown military offensive, different perspectives on the approach to conflict resolution could well provide room for political machinations.

The current rhetoric is also to be viewed against the island-wide election to local bodies scheduled for March 30. A critical aspect will be how the JVP and the SLFP define their space within the ruling coalition.

A repetition

The JVP's current high pitch on Norway's role is by and large a repetition of what happened during the Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's peace process in the 1980s. In striving to catch the popular imagination, the SLFP and the United National Party and the JVP had competed to criticise New Delhi's role. This time, however,

the opposition to Norway appears largely restricted to the JVP and the JHU. The consequences of the opposition to the Indian involvement are now there for the then opponents to see.

Needless to say, the LTTE's overseas travel and its frequent interaction with the diaspora, while remaining steadfast in its separatist goal, are bound to raise concerns within Sri Lanka. That the LTTE visited Oslo immediately after the Geneva talks is the latest provocation for the JVP to revive its 'oust Norway' call.

What opponents of Norwegian facilitation need to introspect on is: where does rhetoric end and how do they get genuine concerns on board? Much of the onus lies on President Rajapakse who has now been vested with the leadership of the peace process. Sooner or later, the President will have to lay his cards on the table *vis-à-vis* a long-term solution to the conflict. His predecessors at the helm of the peace process in the recent past, President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, did so and made their contribution. If Ms. Kumaratunga's devolution package brought federalism on the public agenda, Mr. Wickremesinghe's ceasefire agreement temporarily halted the LTTE's war machine, resulting in its biggest-ever internal revolt. The current shrill political rhetoric is also a testing moment for these contributions brought in by Ms. Kumaratunga and Mr. Wickremesinghe.

One of the constraints on Mr. Rajapakse's approach to the conflict resolution process is his electoral pact signed with the JVP and the JHU in which he promised to "preserve and maintain" the unitary state. The strategies Mr. Rajapakse adopts, if at all, to overcome this will be a critical factor for a non-unitary solution to be put forward. Needless to say, the internationalisation of the peace process has meant that for the government to be seen as credible, it will have to step outside the confines of unitarism in offering to share power with the Tamils.

If the domestic polity is the main audience for the Sinhala unitarists, the international players in the peace process and the Tamil diaspora are the main target of the LTTE. Its latest assertion that it does not have any faith in the Geneva talks is as much a dampener on the peace efforts as it is fuel for the southern hardliners. Evidently one of the underpinnings of the LTTE's approach to peace talks — not just the current one, but even those preceding it — was to create a disjoint between successive negotiation processes. This serves the purpose of delaying addressing the core issues of the conflict resolution process. For instance, forgotten now is the commitment made in Oslo in December 2002 on an agreement between a unitarist Sri Lankan state and a secessionist LTTE to "explore federal options" for a solution within a united Sri Lanka.

Its latest rhetoric — that it does not nurse any faith in talks and that it is prepared to face a military offensive if required — are familiar strains from the past. However, in the current setting, with elections to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly scheduled in May, and the emerging re-alignment of the State's politics, the LTTE could well be looking for a downturn in the peace efforts in the hope of securing further leverage from across the Palk Strait.

In effect, therefore, the two extremities of Sinhala and Tamil nationalism continue to feed each other, repeating a familiar pattern from the past. Herein also is the blurring of boundaries between rhetoric and serious issues. The timing of the latest rhetoric foretells an upping of the ante by both parties in the run-up to the second round of direct talks in Geneva between April 19 and 21. The lowering of the enervating rhetoric is a critical ingredient for peace in Sri Lanka.

CARTOONSCAPE



LTTE gloomy over Geneva talks outcome

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Tuesday expressed pessimism on the outcome of the Geneva talks and said it was prepared to face the Government's military forces if required.

"We ourselves are not hopeful, how can the people be?" asked LTTE's political wing leader S.P. Tamilselvan at a press conference in Kilinochchi. He was asked if the talks had raised hopes among the people.

The LTTE delegation arrived in Colombo and was flown to the rebel-held area by the Government.

The Geneva talks, Mr. Tamilselvan said, "were a big opportunity" given by the Tigers to the south.

"If they utilise it properly, then there can be peace. Several questions have arisen. The recent actions have raised doubts about the Government's adherence to the peace efforts."

Asked on the call by the President's electoral ally, the Janatha

Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) that the Government should be militarily prepared, Mr. Tamilselvan said: "If they thrust a war on us, we will easily face it in a united manner."

Asked if the LTTE would participate in the second round in April if the other groups were not disarmed by then, he said, "We will go by his [Prabakaran] decision."

Monitoring Committee

President Mahinda Rajapakse has proposed the formation of a

"Monitoring Committee" comprising representatives of political parties to oversee the peace talks with the LTTE.

The committee would be a component of the all party talks, aimed at building a southern consensus for a solution to the decades-long separatist conflict.

Mr. Rajapakse invited political parties — including the Opposition United National Party (UNP) — and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) to nominate a representative each to the committee.

The meeting was attended by other Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim parties represented in Parliament.

Peace holds in Sri Lanka, for the time being

V.S. Sambandan

"POLITICS," CHAIRMAN Mao famously said in 1938, "is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed." Sri Lanka's latest politics of war and peace was set in an Alpine chalet in Switzerland, where the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ended yet another round of direct talks on Thursday.

The Geneva talks, which coincided with the fourth anniversary of the ceasefire agreement (CFA), were more about politics than the immediate prospects of conflict resolution. The main outcome — the two sides will meet again in Geneva in April — is that the prospect of the island relapsing into war has seemingly waned, momentarily. In effect, it represents the continuation of the holding operation.

Norwegian facilitator Erik Solheim's declaration announced no major breakthrough. None was expected either. The commitments fall under two categories: those jointly made by the Government and the LTTE and those specific to each party. By themselves, the commitments do not foretell a big change in the near-term. It is in the minutiae of the CFA that there are clauses of concern in the medium and long terms that could determine the nature of post-conflict northeastern Sri Lanka.

The joint commitments include "respecting and upholding the ceasefire agreement" and taking "all necessary measures to ensure that there will be no intimidation, acts of violence, abductions or killings."

The LTTE has committed itself to taking "all necessary measures to ensure that there will be no acts of violence against the security forces and police." Colombo will "take all necessary

The Geneva talks represent a small, hesitant step away from a relapse into war. It is critical for Colombo and the LTTE to remain engaged.

measures in accordance with the CFA to ensure that no armed group or person other than [the] government security forces will carry arms or conduct armed operations." To a large extent, these outcomes conformed to the expectation in the run-up to the two-day talks.

Implementation the key

Inasmuch as the talks were consistent with the razor-thin agenda of discussing implementation issues, the spirit with which the outcomes are implemented will hold the key to the continued status of a "negative peace." At a broad level, the implication of the Geneva commitments is that they could help in Sri Lanka staying the CFA course, which has translated into the longest period of non-fighting between the state and the rebels. Much of how the situation evolves will, however, depend on how close they stay to the Geneva commitments.

Any "euphoria" over the "success" in Geneva is best tempered with a reality check. The talks and their outcome conform to certain patterns in the continual tragic dynamics of war and peace in Sri Lanka.

As in the past, the LTTE bombed its way to the negotiating table. The sharp escalation in violence since early December last and the implied threat of pushing Sri Lanka over the edge were in

tune with its carefully nurtured image — it would not do business with the state from a position of weakness. The Tigers' main demand at Geneva — that "paramilitaries" be disarmed — conforms to a well-reasoned conclusion that conflict resolution issues will take the backseat as long as the LTTE's immediate issue is not settled.

In the current context, it is the rebellion by its former special commander for Batticaloa-Amparai, V. Muralitharan ("Col." Karuna). What was initially termed an "internal issue" of the Tigers became embarrassingly difficult for the LTTE to accept as a continued challenge. It has, therefore, clubbed other former militant groups and a nascent Muslim group with the "Karuna group" and wants the Government to disarm them.

From Colombo's perspective, the CFA talks will help President Mahinda Rajapakse's Government move towards an image makeover. Internationally, Mr. Rajapakse is seen more through the prism of his main allies in the Presidential poll — the unitarist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the hardline Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU).

The ruling Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which criticised the CFA, when it was signed by the then Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, and LTTE chief V. Prabhakaran, also made its point at Geneva. It maintained that the CFA

was unconstitutional and outside the law, but reiterated its commitment to "respect and uphold" the document. By doing so, it has kept open the slim possibility of reverting to its original position that the CFA should be "reviewed." However, as a review of the document will depend on the consent of both the Government and the LTTE, the possibility has not yet presented itself. The broad endorsement by both sides of the CFA points to the necessity of the document in the current context.

What then are the prospects for peace? The answer lies in how the Geneva commitments are adhered to. The Government and the LTTE could differ on the spirit behind their commitments. It is here key domestic and international dynamics come into play.

The military space gained from Geneva gives the LTTE time to "neutralise" its most serious internal challenge posed by Col. Karuna's rebellion. At a larger domestic level, much will depend on how Mr. Rajapakse convinces his hardline allies on the need to stay the CFA course. The entrenchment of the CFA in its present form could weigh in favour of the LTTE in its control over land territory — an outstanding issue for the rebels being the right to sea passage.

The timing of the next round of Geneva talks is significant. With elections to the Tamil Nadu Assembly coming around the same time, how the LTTE plays its cards could be linked to this critical external dynamic.

A pattern

The current talks are different from the six rounds held between September 2002 and March 2003. Seasoned negotiators point to a particular pattern in the past. The LTTE veers away from the track when a convergence of views between the two sides for a solution within a united Sri Lanka seems possible. The pullout from talks is invariably followed by a period of strain — in all instances save the latest one, outright war — after which negotiations restart.

This has been the pattern through the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the Premadasa parleys, the Kumaratunga devolution debates and the Wickremesinghe peace talks. As the Rajapakse Government starts its peace talks, it is also critical that there is continuity in the key political concepts of the Kumaratunga-Wickremesinghe peace talks.

If Ms. Kumaratunga's Government set the stage for far seeking devolution of political powers, Mr. Wickremesinghe's administration successfully managed a commitment from the state and the LTTE to "explore federal models" for conflict resolution within a united Sri Lanka. Mr. Rajapakse, through his "practical measures," hopes to bring about a solution to the decades-long ethnic conflict. In doing so, it is critical to factor in the successes from the past and utilise the institutional knowledge that is available within Sri Lanka's political and administrative machinery.

The Geneva talks represent a small, hesitant step away from a relapse into war. Rather than count hits and misses, what is important is to set the Geneva developments against the larger prospects for peace, and more critically, the nature of the evolving peace. The one consistency in Sri Lanka's elusive search for peace is the recognition that a solution lies in politics — war without bloodshed.

While it is critical that this political engagement process between the Government and the LTTE should continue, it is equally important that the long-term gaze remains set on a lasting political solution that will bring decades of bloodshed to an end in which all its people share a common nation-state with dignity.

CARTOONSCAPE



Geneva: pact to respect ceasefire

Sri Lanka, LTTE to meet again in April

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Geneva round of direct talks between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) concluded on Thursday with a commitment by both parties to "respect and uphold" the ceasefire agreement (CFA).

The two sides also decided to meet again in Geneva between April 19 and 21. According to reports, the LTTE has linked the April session to progress in implementing the Geneva promises.

Four commitments

The outcome from the round comprises four commitments — two of which are jointly by Colombo and the LTTE. In addition to the ceasefire agreement, both sides would take "all necessary measures to ensure that there will be no intimidation, acts of violence, abductions or killings".

"The LTTE is committed to taking all necessary measures

to ensure that there will be no acts of violence against the security forces and police," while Colombo would take "all necessary measures" to prevent the working of "armed groups" — an obvious reference to the LTTE's main demand that "paramilitaries" be disarmed.

The two sides interpreted the agreement to meet again as a headway in the efforts to revive the peace negotiations. While the Government delegation expressed its satisfaction, LTTE's chief negotiator Anton S. Balasingham described it a "diplomatic victory" for the Tigers.

The LTTE's main demand in fact delayed the announcement of the joint statement after the talks. No official reason was given for the delay, but according to sources, the Government objected to the use of the word "paramilitary" to refer to the armed groups. The statement said Colombo would ensure that "that no armed group or person other than Government security forces will carry arms or conduct armed operations."

25 SEP 2006

THE HINDU

Lanka, LTTE give peace a chance

S. Lanka 01-15 2572

Celigny (Switzerland)/ Colombo: Sri Lanka's government and Tamil Tiger rebels ended talks here on Thursday with a pledge to halt killings and agreed to meet again in April to thrash out thorny issues.

The warring parties were locked in intense negotiations for two days at this Swiss village in a bid to save their four-year-old truce which came under renewed pressure following

steps toward strengthening the cease-fire.

But negotiators from the Lankan government and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) did issue a joint statement in which they pledged to try to halt the violence which has sent the cease-fire deal of 2002 off track.

"The government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE are committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that

there will be no intimidation, acts of violence, abductions or killings," they said.

The statement was kept down to just a few sentences, unlike the more detailed documents which emerged from previous rounds before talks were broken off in 2003.

"There are compromises made by

both sides," the LTTE's chief negotiator **Anton Balasingham** told reporters. However, neither he nor the government's spokesmen spelt out the measures they promised each other to scale down the violence in the island.

"We can't give details, but we can only assure you that the LTTE leadership will give strict instructions to local area commanders that there will be no acts of violence against the security forces or any other," Balasingham said.

Colombo's chief negotiator **Nimal Siripala de Silva** said the government saw Thursday's outcome as positive and as helping to build confidence ahead of the next negotiations. Agencies



The Lankan govt and the rebel Tigers have decided that there will be no violence till they meet again in April to discuss the cease-fire

a spike in violence in December.

Norwegian peacebroker **Erik Solheim** told reporters that both sides, who negotiated behind closed doors, had agreed to meet here again from April 19 to 21 to continue their dialogue.

"I'm happy to announce that the parties have agreed to discuss the ceasefire agreement," said Solheim, referring to a fragile accord reached in February 2002. Solheim said the two parties, meeting for the first time in three years, had built mutual confidence during the talks. But, they held separate press conferences, deviating from the earlier practice of facing the media together.

The meeting fell short of its stated goal of taking practical

Colombo, LTTE take opposing positions

V.S. Sambandam

S. K. K. 40-19
COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) commenced in Geneva on Wednesday their two-day direct talks on implementation issues of the four-year old ceasefire agreement (CFA).

The two delegations took distinct and sharply opposed positions in their opening speeches. Colombo's chief negotiator, Nimal Siripala de Silva, proposed to "rectify certain grave anomalies" in the CFA. His counterpart from the LTTE, Anton S. Balasingham, put forward his organisation's main demand — disarming of paramilitaries — and wanted the talks to explore "ways and means to stabilise and strengthen the CFA."

The two sides saw the CFA as critical to continued peace. Expressing the Government's "strong determination and desire to preserve the ceasefire," Mr. de Silva said "we also consider the CFA as the first step to arrive a negotiated settlement." He said the CFA entered into in 2002 was "contrary to Constitution and law," and that it was "prejudicial to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Sri Lanka."

Mr. Balasingham described the signing of the CFA four years ago as the "most constructive achievement of the Norwegian facilitated peace process."

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The similarities, however, were largely limited to these broad endorsements as the Government and the LTTE outlined the violations committed by each other.

Two key facilitators, Norwegian Minister for International Development Erik Solheim and Vidar Helgesen, former Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister the Political Affairs and Director in the Swiss Foreign Ministry, Urs Ziswiler, were present during the opening ceremony.

Ceasefire undermined

Mr. de Silva said the LTTE had "taken undue and unfair advantage of the CFA to strengthen its military capability" and that the violations had "undermined the spirit of the ceasefire and threatened its termination." He particularly criticised the LTTE for the assassination of Lakshman Kadirgamar saying it was a "demonstration" of the rebels' "disregard" for the CFA.

The LTTE's central theme was the disarming of paramilitaries. "The existence of Tamil armed paramilitary groups is an indisputable fact," Mr. Balasingham said. He named "the Karuna Group," three former militant parties — the EPDP, the PLOTE and a faction of the EPRLF and a "Muslim paramilitary group, Jihad group."

Geneva talks: not much scope for optimism

V.S. Sambandan

SEVERAL ISSUES will be at stake when the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) meet in Geneva later this month. There is no reasonable ground for optimism that the talks will mark a resumption of full-fledged negotiations on conflict resolution. For, the exercise is restricted to issues of implementation of the February 2002 ceasefire agreement.

On February 7, the LTTE made its agenda explicit, stating it "is not prepared to discuss modifications to the ceasefire agreement or to push the ceasefire agreement aside and waste time talking about [a] political solution."

As the LTTE has made it evident, the talks are not about a political solution to the separatist conflict. They are not even about resuming from where the last round of engagement broke off — implementation of the agreements reached in six rounds of negotiations between September 2002 and March 2003.

Even on the ceasefire agreement, the Geneva talks are not intended to cover the militarised conflict in its entirety. Clearly, the purpose is to stave off war and keep afloat the fragile ceasefire agreement as it enters its fourth year when the two sides meet on February 22 and 23.

This leaves them with a razor-thin agenda but one which may still have immense prospects for peace or otherwise in Sri Lanka. Simply put, the talks mark the short-term desire for continuation of a "negative peace" — a scenario of non-fighting — rather than a long-term pointer to a big push towards positive elements of conflict resolution.

Even within this limited ambit, the Government and the LTTE have several issues to bring to the table. The cumulative figures compiled by

The limited range of talks between the LTTE and Colombo does not provide much scope for optimism that a success at Geneva will translate into a ready-made recipe for peace.

109-10 8/2 S. Karuna

the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) make it clear that the LTTE's violations of the ceasefire agreement far outnumber those by the Government. A total of 3,471 cases (including 18 assassinations) were ruled violations by the LTTE, compared to 162 violations by the Government.

The primary issue for the Tigers is the continued presence of supporters of its former eastern special commander, V. Muralitharan, ('Col.' Karuna) in the eastern Batticaloa district. By all indications, their main talking point will be implementation of clause 1.8 of the February 2002 ceasefire agreement, on the issue of "Tamil paramilitaries."

The clause reads: "1.8 Tamil paramilitary groups shall be disarmed by the GOSL by D-day + 30 at the latest. The GOSL shall offer to integrate individuals in these units under the command and disciplinary structure of the GOSL armed forces for service away from the northern and eastern provinces."

Herein lies a fundamental difference in the Government and LTTE perspectives. For the LTTE, the emergence of Karuna and his supporters in Batticaloa has questioned its claim to being the "sole representative" of the island's Tamils. Hence its call that the Government should "disarm Tamil paramilitaries," invoking

a clause in the agreement.

Significantly, the Karuna factor has also eclipsed the long-standing LTTE demand that the northern High Security Zones be reduced. Though the ceasefire agreement touches on the northern issue, the LTTE has not yet pitchforked it into the current public debate. This downplaying, however, does not mean the issue has been forgotten. At the most, it has been deferred.

From the Government's perspective, the issue of Tamil paramilitaries is non-existent in the current context. The LTTE's rebellion, it is contended, was a post-ceasefire development. Colombo also says the paramilitaries who were in operation when the ceasefire agreement was signed have been disarmed. In another dimension to the southern perspective, there is a view that the LTTE, which initially described the rebellion by 'Col.' Karuna as an "internal matter," is now bringing it into the public domain as it is unable to contain it.

For the Government, one main issue is the continued killing by the LTTE. One key change in the ground situation since the ceasefire agreement is that the Army's Long Rangers — a deep penetration unit deployed to take on LTTE targets inside rebel-held areas before 2002 — have been eliminated. Since 2002 intelligence offi-

cials and operatives have been killed, including those in the higher echelons of the state apparatus. Then came the assassination of Foreign Affairs Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar. In several ways, the assassination by a suspected LTTE sniper catalysed the international opinion.

Following the election of Mahinda Rajapakse as President, the sudden spurt in killings in the north and east Sri Lanka had its own dynamic. If provocation was the Tigers' motive, it failed. Not even the suicide attack on a naval fast attack craft pushed the fragile truce over the edge. The Geneva talks could hence be construed as a holding operation.

It is within this that the Government and the LTTE appear set to make their moves to ward off the threat of war. The talks also provide the setting for a round of propaganda manoeuvres, particularly by the LTTE.

The talks are taking place when the European Union is actively considering the formal listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation. On the heels of the assassination of Kadirgamar, the E.U. said LTTE delegations would not be welcome in its capitals. This, to a large extent, explained the LTTE's insistence that the talks commence in Oslo. Now that Geneva has emerged as the agreed venue, indications are the Tigers will utilise the meeting to engage both the Tamil diaspora and the international audience during their visit to Switzerland.

Expanded delegation

Symbolically, the LTTE has presented an expanded delegation to Geneva, consisting of the head of its 'Police force,' its new eastern leadership and, more critically, its northern military commander. The sub-text of the composition of the LTTE's negotiating team is that it represents a statement of a "de facto state" being run by the Tigers.

The Government delegation is to be led by Health Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva. Its team does not have experienced political negotiators. To overcome this limitation, the Government has embarked upon serious background preparation for the negotiators. However, at the negotiating table, what would matter are the personal chemistry of the negotiators and their ability to make their points with telling effect.

For instance, while the LTTE has said Clause 1.8 would be its main talking point, there is little mention by the Government of the serious skew in the violations of the ceasefire agreement.

The unfolding political developments — both within Sri Lanka and abroad, particularly in India — are critical factors that run alongside the Geneva talks. The island-wide local bodies elections to be held in a couple of months will emerge as a reality check for the main political parties.

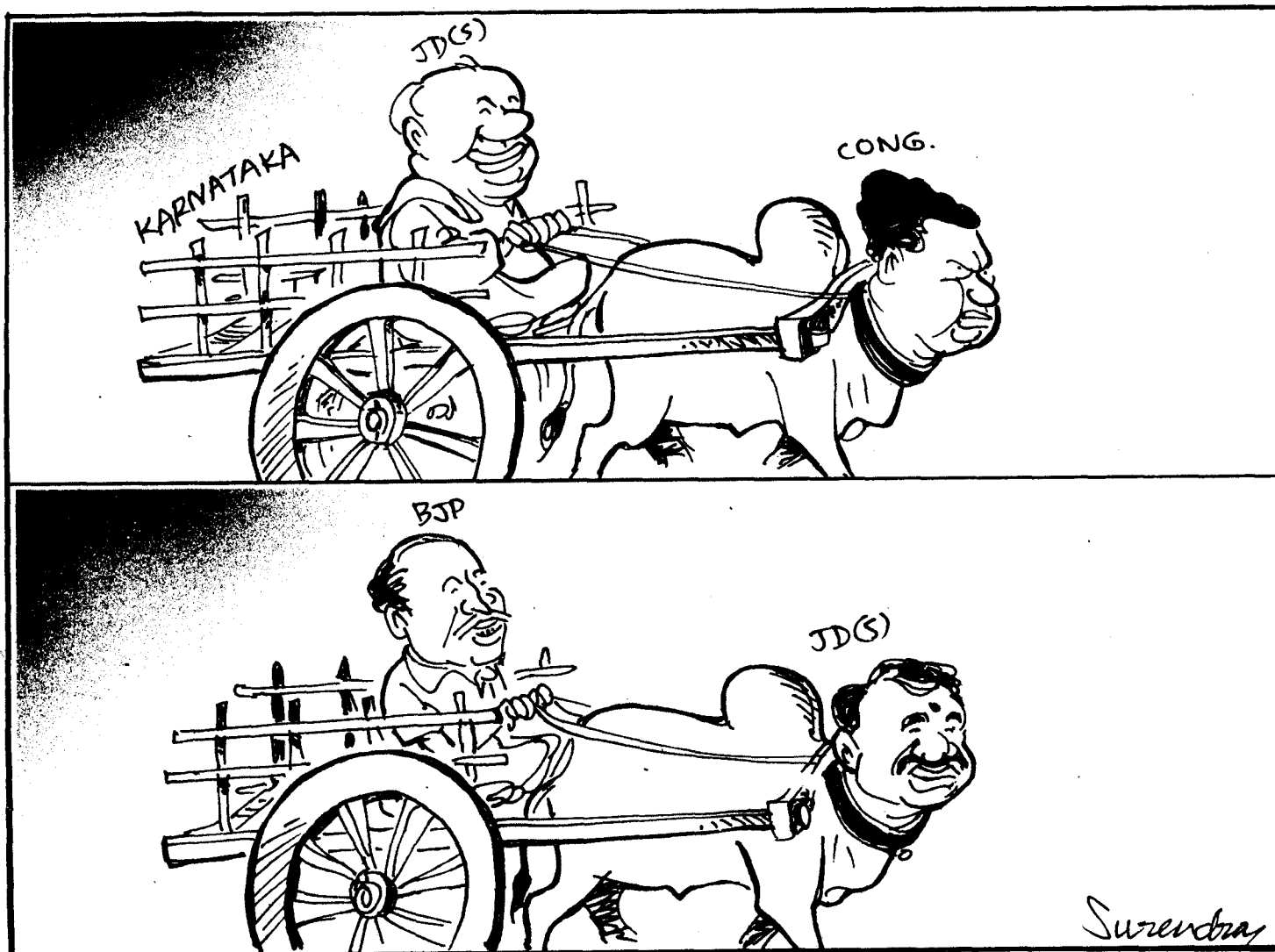
A key difficulty for Mr. Rajapakse is his international image trap. Elected to office with the backing of the unitarist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the majoritarian-hardline Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), his intentions are under a cloud in the international community, which strongly advocates power sharing. Against that backdrop, the manner in which the ruling party strikes its equations with the JVP and the JHU for the local bodies elections will be a pointer to the future.

The LTTE will also watch the coming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections to further its external propaganda and leverage. These emerging domestic and international democratic exercises give the LTTE the required breathing space to attempt, yet again, an image makeover.

The narrow focus of the Geneva talks will confine the negotiations to the points the LTTE is keen on securing. It could run the risk of glossing over other critical aspects of the ceasefire agreement.

The limited range of the talks does not provide much scope for optimism that a success at Geneva will translate into a ready-made recipe for peace. A failure, however, would push Sri Lanka back to its increasingly familiar situation of being a nation that is frequently on the brink.

CARTOONSCAPE



We won't be frightened by threats: Rajapakse

"There is nothing to hide in the peace process. The Government is not forcibly bringing about a solution"

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Saturday celebrated its 58th Independence Day with a show of its military hardware and a call by President Mahinda Rajapakse for renewed efforts to build a unified country through a "transparent peace process".

"We should bear well in our minds that if we are to stop the increasing flow of blood through war we should shed more and more sweat in the cause of peace." He announced the launch of a "special programme of national integration this year to build greater amity and trust" among Sri Lankans.

Pointing out that "many efforts made in the past to achieve peace have failed," Mr. Raja-

• **Special programme of national integration launched to build greater amity and trust**

• **President promises transparency in the new peace process**

papakse said there were lessons to be learnt. "There is, therefore, the need to establish a structure of state to bring about the genuine participation of all sections of our people in development activities and the administration of Government."

Saturday's celebration was held at the island's most popular beachfront — the Galle Face Green — described by Mr. Rajapakse as a return of "grandeur and pride" to the venue after 28 years. Compared to the abridged

Wickremanayake, Minister for Public Administration Sarath Amunugama, political leaders and diplomats witnessed the celebration, which was also telecast nationally.

Promising transparency in the "new peace process," Mr. Rajapakse said "There is nothing to hide in it. We are not preparing to forcibly bring about a solution. We shall not be frightened by threats from any quarter."

The aim of the Government was to "bring about a national consensus from a solution brought about by broad and deep discussion."

The Independence Day speech came just ahead of a proposed round of talks between the Government and the Liber-

ation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) later this month in Geneva to discuss implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

Mr. Rajapakse said he was "not politically selfish" to claim the benefits of the process of national consensus-building on negotiations with the Tigers. "This success should be shared equally among the Government and all those of the Opposition who participated in this effort," he said.

The consensus efforts could be taken forward "only with a full understanding of the lessons to be drawn from the mistakes of the past," he said, asserting that "this country is one that belongs to all Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, Burgher and other peoples to whom this is home."

versions during the past, this year's full-scale ceremonies included a sail-past by the navy off Colombo's shore featuring its Fast Attack Craft among others and a fly-past by military helicopters and aircraft from the air force, over the city's sky.

Regiments from the army, navy, air force and the police participated in the march-past, and so did school children representing various regions of the country.

Prime Minister Ratnasiri

5 FEB 2006

THE HINDU

UNDECLARED CIVIL WAR

The LTTE, without engaging in direct confrontation with the government forces, has evolved a new strategy of fighting a proxy war

PEACE process in Sri Lanka has come to a standstill. The Tamil majority North-East is fast becoming a battlefield in what seems more and more like an undeclared civil war. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, fighting for a separate state for the linguistic minority, has adopted a new multi-pronged combative strategy against the Sri Lankan armed forces under the guise of a people's war. Not wanting to be condemned by the international community for breaking the 2002 ceasefire agreement, the LTTE, without engaging in direct confrontation with the government forces, has evolved a new strategy of fighting a proxy war by a front organisation called Makkal Padai (People's Force) under its direct supervision.

Members of this militia have been trained by the LTTE and anyone killed in action is treated as a Maaaveerar (Great Hero). Estimated to number about 20,000, the Makkal Padai recruits live mostly in the government-controlled areas in the North-East. These fighters move around on motorcycles and keep in touch with the LTTE headquarters in Kilinochchi over cellular phones. Members of this militia were behind most of the recent grenade attacks and shooting in which more than 75 Sri Lankan soldiers and sailors have been killed.

The LTTE, convinced that President Mahinda Rajapakse, bound by the Janata Vimukthi Perumana and the Jathika Hela Urumaya, his electoral allies, would not be in a position to offer the Tamils what the previous President, Chandrika Kumaratunga of his own Sri Lanka Freedom Party, and the former Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe, of the opposition United National Party, had offered, is bent on provoking the government forces for a showdown to further its cause for a separate Tamil Eelam.

Partitioning of Sri Lanka to carve out a separate state of Tamil Eelam is not on the cards of any Sinhala political party. The major powers, including India and the USA, are committed to protecting the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. It was to get a reiteration of this stand that Rajapakse chose India to make

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

By SAM RAJAPPA

his first diplomatic foray after assuming the office of President. India has its own reasons to prevent the Tamils in Sri Lanka gaining a separate state. Most state-level parties in Tamil Nadu, some of them constituents of the United Progressive Alliance government in Delhi, nurture ambitions of a pan-Tamil nation comprising Sri Lanka's North-East and India's southern state of Tamil Nadu.

The presence of parties like the

two sides reaffirmed their resolve to "further consolidate and build on this strong and dynamic relationship". Rajapakse came to India with a long shopping list. Top on the list was the signing of the Indo-Sri Lankan defence pact, drafted more than two years ago. Non-signing of the pact did not come in the way of military cooperation between the two countries. Sri Lanka very much wanted India also to join the co-chairs in facilitating the



Having banned the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, India declined to play the role of a peace broker

Pattali Makkal Katchi and the Marulmairchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in the UPA has cramped the style of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in dealing with the delicate subject of the LTTE whose leader, Velupillai Pirapaharan, is the prime accused in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The joint statement issued at the end of Rajapakse's state visit is so wishy-washy that it is neither fish nor fowl. It says: "The two sides agreed that an enduring solution (to the ethnic issue) can emerge only through internal political process of seeking a negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights. India continues to maintain an abiding interest in the security of Sri Lanka and remain committed to her unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity". The Indian side expressed the hope that a political settlement of the ethnic issue based on devolution of power to the Tamils and inclusivity would emerge through negotiations between the parties concerned.

The statement noted with satisfaction that Indo-Sri Lankan relationship had continued to be "in a state of excellence characterised by political consensus in both countries, understanding, friendship, co-operation and mutual respect and benefit." The

peace process along with Norway, European Union, the USA and Japan. Having banned the LTTE as a terrorist organisation, India declined to play the role of a peace broker.

The USA, on the other hand, was forthright in spelling out its policy goals. In a talk on "US goals in Sri Lanka for 2006" in Colombo on 9 January, the US ambassador, Jeffrey Lunstead, called on the LTTE to stop its violent activities and to return to the negotiating table with the government of Sri Lanka in order to work towards a stable, permanent peace. "There can be a role for the LTTE in future development of Sri Lanka but only if it returns to the peace table, renounces terrorism in word and deed and become a responsible participant in Sri Lanka's future", he said, and questioned the quality of its present leadership. "What kind of leaders continue to pursue violence when the clear benefits of peace are obvious?" he asked.

Listing the assistance the USA was extending to Colombo through military training, including efforts to help with counter-terrorism initiatives and block illegal financial transactions, Lunstead warned that if the LTTE chose to abandon peace, it would face a stronger, more capable and determined Sri Lankan military. "The USA will continue to support a strong, unified Sri Lanka that seeks peace and prosperity

and that offers an atmosphere of respect and justice for all citizens regardless of religion and race", he said.

The ground reality in Sri Lanka today, however, is quite different from what the US envoy envisages. When Parliament met on 19 January to seek extension of the Emergency, the Speaker, MJ Lokkubandara, announced from his chair that the government motion on the subject was passed "unanimously" without any debate or voting, even as the Tamil MPs were occupying the well of the House with placards which read: "Stop killing Tamil people, Stop genocide of Tamil people", and "Withdraw Emergency regulations". Disgusted by the travesty of parliamentary democracy, the Tamil MPs held a mock funeral with one of them, MK Eelavethan, lying on the floor enacting a corpse.

The North-East, traditional homeland of the Tamils, meanwhile, has become a killing field. The Sri Lankan armed forces have lost 78 men to LTTE sniper attacks in the last one month. Besides targeting the armed forces, the LTTE continued to assassinate political opponents among the Tamils with complete immunity. The security forces also cannot escape blame for extra judicial killings of innocent Tamils. While some cases of death in custody and torture have been investigated, no one has been prosecuted or punished.

In this tense situation, considerable significance is attached to the visit of the Norwegian peace broker, Erik Solheim, to Sri Lanka this month. The exercise is to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table. The government has the LTTE proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority for the North-East for consideration. Rajapakse has not revealed what he has up his sleeves to place before the LTTE. His election promise to the Sinhala constituency that he will not sacrifice the present unitary constitution is not acceptable to the Tamils whose minimum expectation is a federal set up in which they will have maximum autonomy. India too has endorsed this position for a lasting peaceful solution to the intractable ethnic issue which is threatening to divide the country. Given the nature of Rajapakse's mandate, the coming talks leading to a breakthrough seem remote.

Sri Lanka, LTTE to resume direct talks

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on Wednesday agreed to resume direct talks next month in Switzerland.

The agreement was announced by the Government

and the LTTE in Colombo and rebel-held Kilinochchi respectively after a meeting between Norwegian facilitator Erik Solheim and LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran in Kilinochchi on Wednesday.

The dates of the meeting and the exact location in Switzerland are to be worked out by the

facilitator, Norway.

President Mahinda Rajapakse "welcomed and appreciated the decision to accept the Government's offer to commence talks on strengthening the effective implementation of the ceasefire agreement in Switzerland," the Sri Lankan Government said.

THE HINDU

26 JAN 2006

Sri Lankan Government will not start war: JVP MP

"We are for finding a solution through talks. That is our first way"

Nirupama Subramanian

CHENNAI: The Sri Lankan Government is determined not to get pushed into a war by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam despite grave provocations, said a Sri Lankan parliamentarian from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). The party gives crucial support to the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse.

"This is a government, not a baby. We can get angry [at the LTTE's ceasefire violations]. Although I cannot speak on behalf of the government I know from government sources and it is also our party's stand that the government will not start a war with the LTTE," said Bimal Ratnayake, who is also a member of the JVP's Central Committee.

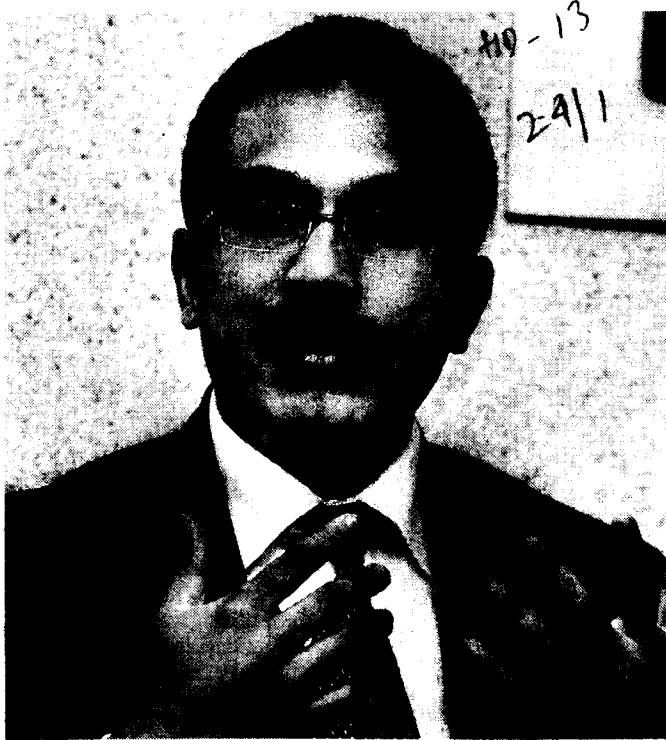
The party, which combines leftist ideology with a strong Sinhala nationalist identity, has been accused many times in the last two years of blocking efforts to find a solution to the ethnic conflict. But Mr. Ratnayake presented a more moderate picture of the JVP in a conversation with *The Hindu* here.

"We are for finding a solution through talks. That is our first way. When we see LTTE activities we have doubts if they will participate in a peace process, but as a government, it is our duty to talk," he said.

He said the ceasefire violations by the LTTE had led to many casualties for the military since last November, but the government and the military would not be provoked.

"Our target is to get peace without dividing the country as well as without a war. That's what we are trying to do. But it's up to the LTTE. If the LTTE declares a war, we are prepared, but that is not our hope," he said.

The JVP leader, who was in the city last week to attend a Cuba Solidarity conference, also said the LTTE was threatening war in order to get its way with the government, but was quite



Bimal Ratnayake - PHOTO: R. RAGU

"Without democracy and a multi-party system in the northern and eastern provinces, there can be no permanent solution to the Sri Lankan national question"

incapable of launching a large-scale attack because it was militarily far weaker now than four years ago following the Karuna rebellion.

"We think the LTTE has big troubles. They have almost lost the eastern province [to Karuna]. They can still kill hundreds of people by using bombs in civilian places. But in the military sense, they are now weaker. So now they are carrying out small attacks, and while that is happening, their media fronts are creating the image that the war will start any time. That way they are trying to make the Sri Lankan Government kneel down. We won't get into that trap," he said.

The parliamentarian said

there were "feelings" within the armed forces about soldiers getting killed almost on a daily basis in LTTE attacks. But, he said, they had faith in Mr. Rajapakse's government and in the Army commander.

"We have a disciplined Army. They have been educated about the politics also, and they have a good morale because of the new government's policies. There is no morale issue," he said.

The government was rebuilding its military intelligence which it had "completely lost" under Ranil Wickremesinghe when he was Prime Minister of a United National Party government in cohabitation with President Chandrika Kumaratunga between 2001 and 2004.

Last week, an all-party conference attended by 15 Sri Lankan parties unanimously resolved that the government must resume peace talks with the LTTE as soon as possible. Mr. Ratnayake said the immediate task of the peace process was to restore democratic politics in the North-East.

"The LTTE must agree [to this]. Without democracy and a multi-party system in the northern and eastern provinces, there can be no permanent solution to the Sri Lankan national question."

Defending his party's articulated stand against a solution along federal lines, Mr. Ratnayake said the JVP was "not targeting any particular structure."

"Our party stand is that we have to find a solution that is feasible and long-lasting, and it should not divide the people along ethnic lines. And the main basis for this has to be democratic rights and equity. If we accept federalism, will the LTTE accept it? Have they said this anywhere? According to our knowledge and experience, no. Their target is to have a separate state, through terrorism."

"Some in the international community, some NGOs in Sri Lanka and LTTE media fronts are always putting pressure on the government to give up its unitary structure. But those people haven't put pressure on the LTTE to give up their terrorist methods of doing politics. If [the LTTE] want a federal solution, at least they have to say so."

He said a select committee in the all-party conference would work out a "common understanding" on a solution within "one Sri Lanka."

"If the LTTE agrees on that kind of solution whatever that might be, and if the Sri Lankan people adopt that in a referendum, then there will be no problem from the JVP. We will respect always the people's mandate."



Tamil Tiger rebels hold their weapons as they keep guard outside a political office in Eastern Sri Lanka—Reuters

Tigers re-issue war threat in Sri Lanka

Peter Apps

SAMPPOOR SRI LANKA 21 JANUARY

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels will return to war unless progress is made soon in the island's deadlocked peace process, a senior rebel said just days ahead of a visit by Norwegian peace broker Erik Solheim. Solheim has warned the island not to expect too much from a visit aimed at rebuilding an almost-destroyed 2002 cease-fire. But, like the rebels, government soldiers in the minority Tamil-dominated north and east say they believe war could come in days if he cannot at least get the sides to agree a venue for new talks.

"If nothing happens in the peace talks, war will start," S S Elilan, Trincomalee district political leader for the Tamil Tiger rebels, told Reuters on Friday. "If there is no solution, we cannot stay in this situation for long," he said, sitting under a tree in his headquarters in Sampoor, near army lines. Rising violence has led to international truce monitors questioning whether the Norwegian-brokered truce is holding at all. Each side says the other is trying to provoke them into restarting the two-decade-old conflict that killed more than 64,000, this in a region that suffered huge casualties in the 2004 tsunami. The rebels deny responsibility for a string of lethal strikes on military personnel pa-trolling areas adjacent to a de-

facto Tiger state across a large swathe of the north and east, but few believe them. Elilan said the attacks had been conducted by a civilian "third force" angry at alleged mounting army abuses. He said the government had begun attacking the rebels first through its own third force, a breakaway eastern Tiger faction they say is now government-backed and led by former rebel commander Karuna Amman. "The peace has gone," Elilan said. "We are ready at any time to start the war." If it comes, military sources predict an offensive towards the army-held Tamil city of Jaffna, but with other guerrilla actions elsewhere and suicide speedboat attacks on naval shipping from the key Trincomalee base.—Reuters

NEAL GOLDMAN is a math entrepreneur. He works on Wall Street, where numbers rule. But he's focusing his analytic tools on a different realm altogether: the world of words.

Goldman's startup, Inform Technologies LLC, is a robotic librarian. Every day it combs through thousands of press articles and blog posts in English. It reads them and groups them with related pieces. Inform doesn't do this work alphabetically or by keywords. It uses algorithms to analyse each article by its language and context. It then sends customised news feeds to its users, who also exist in Inform's system as — you guessed it — math.

How do you convert written words into math? Goldman says it takes a combination of algebra and geometry. Imagine an object floating in space that has an edge for every known scrap of information. It's called a polytope and it has near-infinite dimensions, almost impossible to conjure up in our earthbound minds. It contains every topic written about in the press. And every article that Inform processes becomes a single line within it. Each line has a series of relationships. A single article on Bordeaux wine, for example, turns up in the polytope near France, agriculture, wine, even alcoholism. In each case, Inform's algorithm calculates the relevance of one article to the next by measuring the angle between the two lines.

By the time you're reading these words, this very article will exist as a line in Goldman's polytope. And that raises a fundamental question: If long articles full of twists and turns can be reduced to a mathematical essence, what's next? Our businesses — and, yes, ourselves.

The world is moving into a new age of numbers. Partnerships between mathematicians and computer scientists are bulging into whole new domains of business and imposing the efficiencies of math. This has happened before. In past decades, the marriage of higher math and computer modelling transformed science and engineering. Quants turned finance upside down a generation ago. And data miners plucked useful nuggets from vast consumer and business databases. But just look at where the mathematicians are now. They're helping to map out advertising campaigns, they're changing the nature of research in newsrooms and in biology labs, and they're enabling marketers to forge new one-on-one relationships with customers. As this occurs, more of the economy falls into the realm of numbers. Says James R Schatz, chief of the mathematics research group at the National Security Agency: "There has never been a better time to be a mathematician."

From fledglings like Inform to tech powerhouses such as IBM, companies are hitching mathematics to business in ways that would have seemed fanciful even a few years ago. In the past decade, a sizeable chunk of humanity has moved its work, play, chat, and shopping online. We feed networks gobs of digital data that once would have languished on scraps of paper — or vanished as forgotten conversations. These slices of our lives now sit in databases, many of them in the public domain.

From a business point of view, they're just begging to be analysed. But even with the most powerful computers and abundant, cheap storage, companies can't sort out their means of data, much less build

skilled mathematicians and computer scientists.

The rise of mathematics is heating up the job market for luminary quants, especially at the Internet powerhouses where new math grads land with six-figure salaries and rich stock deals. Tom Leighton, an entrepreneur and applied math professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says: "All of my students have standing offers at Yahoo! and Google." Top mathematicians are becoming a new global elite. It's a force of barely

figure out which worker is best equipped for a particular job. For now, these models are crude, the digital equivalent of stick figures. But over the coming decade, each of us will give birth to far more fleshed out simulations of ourselves. We'll be modelled as workers, shoppers, voters, and patients.

Some of the simulations will have our names and credit cards attached, perhaps a few genetic details.

Umbria Inc., a company that uses math to analyse marketing trends online.

THE DATA This industrial metamorphosis also has a dark side. The power of mathematics to make sense of personal data and to model the behaviour of individuals will inevitably continue to erode privacy. Merchants will be in a position to track many of our most intimate purchases, and employers will be able to rank us not only by productivity, but by wasted minutes. What's more, the rise of math can contribute to a sense that individuals are powerless, a foreboding that mathematics, from our credit rating to our genomic map, spells out our destiny.

Debates over these issues have flared up many times in the past decade. And they are sure to rear up again as the US Congress investigates the Bush Administration's mining of phone and Internet traffic in its effort to sniff

ing Bureau, an industry group.

These studies crunched consumer data to measure the effectiveness of advertising in a host of media. The results came back in hard numbers. They indicated, for example, that Ford Motor Co. could have sold an additional \$625 million worth of trucks if it had lifted its online ad budget from 2.5% to 6% of the total. Ford responded vigorously: Last August it announced plans to move up to 30% of its \$1 billion ad budget into media targeted to individual customers, half of it through online advertising. Such moves are sure to generate even more data, giving greater clout to the numbers people.

Just ask Imran Khan, the director of search advertising at E-Loan, an online lender. An accountant by training, Khan has turned the advertising operation into an enormous statistical laboratory. Like most others in the industry, he started three years ago by bidding on keywords on the major search engines. Over time, Khan's team has amassed a portfolio of 250,000 key words and phrases. Each time a Web surfer types one of those words in a search engine, an E-Loan ad appears next to the results, and Khan's team pays the price bid for each click. But running search-based ads is hardly a static process. Working with Efficient Frontier Inc., an analytics startup in Silicon Valley, Khan crunches his stash of words, calculating the return on investment for each one and tweaking thousands of bids hour by hour. He spends \$15 million a year — half of E-Loan's ad budget — and he accumulates massive feedback from customers.

As data mavens gather more information about customers, they gain muscle to demand changes inside companies. Take media. With banks of consumer data continuing to swell, quants on the marketing side will be able to provide editors and programme managers with increasingly sophisticated statistical models, telling them which types of TV scenes or articles appeal most to certain demographic groups. As publishers seek to optimise profits and performance, data analysis will grow in importance. The risk: It gives math-based analysts, not to mention advertisers, a growing role in editorial decisions. "It puts a question mark around the classic church-state divide in the media," says Rex Briggs, founder of Marketing Evolution, the San Francisco company that conducted the 30 advertising studies.

Rising flows of data give companies the intelligence to home in on the individual customer. Internet marketers are the natural leaders, but traditional businesses are following suit. Gary W Loveman, CEO of casino giant Harrah's Entertainment Inc. and a former Harvard Business school professor, has led the company to build individual profiles of millions of Harrah's customers. The models include gamblers' ages, gender, and Zip codes, as well as the amount of time they spent gambling and how much they won or lost. These data enable Harrah's to study gambling through a host of variables and to target individuals with offers, from getaway week-ends to gourmet dining, calculated to maximise returns. In the last five years, Harrah's has averaged 22% annual growth, and its stock has nearly tripled.

—BusinessWeek

MATHEMATICS



Imaging: SHUBHRA

WILL ROCK YOUR WORK

5,000, by some guesstimates, but every bit as powerful as the armies of Harvard University MBAs who shook up corner suites a generation ago.

Math entrepreneurs, meanwhile, are raking in bonanzas. Fifteen months ago, Neal Goldman of Inform sold his previous math-based startup, a financial analysis company called CapitalIQ, for \$225 million to Standard & Poor's (a division of The McGraw-Hill Companies). And last May two brothers, Amit and Balraj Singh, sold Perabit Networks — a company that developed algorithms for genetic research — to Juniper Networks for \$337 million.

In a world teeming with data, we ourselves become the math nerds' most prized specimens. Researchers at Aetna Health Care, Amazon.com, and many other companies are piecing together mathematical models of customers and employees. Some models predict what music we'll buy, others

In others, our identities will be shielded. Many of these models will be eerily accurate and others laughably off mark. But companies and governments will use them all the same to predict how to sell us things, steer us clear of diseases, and ramp up our productivity. And yes, they'll try to use them to keep us from hijacking airplanes or detonating bombs.

This mathematical modelling of humanity promises to be one of the great undertakings of the 21st century. It will grow in scope to include much of the physical world as mathematicians get their hands on new flows of data, from atmospheric sensors to the feeds from millions of security cameras. It's a parallel world that's taking shape, a laboratory for innovation and discovery composed of numbers, vectors, and algorithms. "We turn the world of content into math, and we turn you into math," says Howard Kaushansky, CEO of Boulder (Colo.)-based

out terrorists. But the merger of sophisticated data mining and higher math has tremendous power to conquer mankind's scourges as well. As Jack Einhorn, chief technical officer of Inform, puts it: "The next Jonas Salk will be a mathematician, not a doctor."

The clearest example of math's disruptive power is in advertising. There Google and other search companies built on math are turning an industry that grew on ideas, hunches, and personal relationships into a series of calculations. They can pull it off because, quite simply, they know where their prospective customers are browsing, what they click on, and often, what they buy. Internet companies use this data not only to profile customers but also to pitch for more contracts. Some 18 months ago, 30 blue-chip companies, from Procter & Gamble Co. to Walt Disney Co., underwent a series of tests promoted by the Interactive Advertis-

A generation ago, quants turned finance upside down. Now they're mapping out ad campaigns and building new businesses from mountains of personal data. Stephen Baker reports

Another push for Sri Lankan peace

Three Tamil women shot dead in Jaffna

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will receive three high-profile visitors soon as part of the continued international efforts to restart the peace process.

They are Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister for International Development, R. Nicholas Burns, U.S. Undersecretary for Political Affairs, and the former chief negotiator of the Sinn Fein, Martin McGuinness.

Mr. Solheim is a key player in the peace process since the inception of the Norwegian facilitation in the late 1990s. The process remained stalled after the LTTE's unilateral pullout from talks in 2003.

Mr. Solheim will be here between January 23 and 26 and will "hold talks" with the Government and the LTTE, a statement by Oslo said.

In his pre-visit statement, Mr. Solheim said: "I am deeply concerned about the recent increase in violence in Sri Lanka.

In order to keep the violence from escalating further, it is urgent to get the two parties to sit down together to discuss how to ensure that the ceasefire agreement is observed and how the peace process can be advanced."

Mr. Burns' visit, according to the U.S. embassy, is part of his

tour of the sub-continent. He will "discuss the current status of the peace process" with the Government, Mr. Solheim and others "to reiterate the strong U.S. desire to see all Sri Lankans work for peace," said the Department of State.

According to a report in the *Daily Mirror*, Mr. McGuinness will meet President Mahinda Rajapakse and the LTTE "to advise them that methods employed in the Irish peace process can be applied in Sri Lanka."

LTTE supporters

Three Tamil women, reportedly supporters of the LTTE, were shot dead in the northern Jaffna peninsula on Monday, the TamilNet Web site said.

While it blamed the killings on "army intelligence operatives", the army said it had "not received information" of the killings till Monday evening.

The women were identified as members of a family of LTTE supporters.

One of the victims, Bojan Renuka (30), played a lead role in a Tamil film produced by the film's division of the LTTE, the Web site said.

According to reports from the north, several families were reportedly told by the Tigers to move into LTTE-controlled areas.

13 Sri Lankan sailors killed in suicide attack

V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO: Thirteen Sri Lankan sailors, including two officers, were feared killed in an attack by suspected Black Sea Tigers on a Sri Lankan Navy's Fast Attack Craft (FAC) near the Trincomalee harbour in the early hours of Saturday, the Navy said.

"It is further revealed that a women LTTE cadre had been tasked to take on the target. There were 15 personnel on board out of whom two were rescued and 11 sailors and two officers are still missing," the Sri

Lanka Navy said. Black Sea Tigers are the suicide cadres attached to the Sea Tigers — the marine unit of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The President, Mahinda Rajapakse, held an urgent meeting with the Chief of Defence Staff, Daya Sandagiri, and senior defence officials on Saturday morning, a senior Presidential aide said.

Security sources said the suicide craft was among "hundreds of fishing boats" that were near the harbour and had attacked the *Dvora* — an Israeli-built

FAC. "There is no way in which we could differentiate between fishing vessels and suicide craft," the source said.

The attack was part of the "continued blatant violations" of the February 2002 ceasefire agreement, the Navy maintained. "This incident is the latest act of the LTTE to fulfil its undeclared aim of attacking the Navy in the guise of fishermen," the Navy said.

The attack is also the most serious in a string of recent attacks on Sri Lankan security forces including the killing of at

least 13 sailors were killed in an ambush on a road convoy in the northern Mannar district.

Earlier this week five Tamil youths were killed in the Trincomalee district.

The security forces had initially said that the youngsters were killed in an "accidental grenade explosion." The LTTE blamed the security forces and had warned of "dire consequences."

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THE HINDU

In Sri Lanka: seeding the clouds of war

R. Hariharan

DECEMBER WAS eventful in Sri Lanka, particularly in the North-East. In the Jaffna peninsula, the Sri Lankan Army has been facing a spate of attacks from cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) operating in small numbers in the High Security Zones — key points essential from a military operational point of view. In the second half of the month, there were over 25 such incidents, particularly on December 22 and 23, 2005, in the Jaffna peninsula. The Army has paid a heavy price in these small-scale offensives; its losses have neared the 50 mark. The LTTE has also suffered casualties, notably in a firefight in the Jaffna Fort area on December 25, during which troops killed five persons including a woman and recovered some weapons. The LTTE quickly disowned the dead, saying they were civilians, a luxury that is not available to regular armies. Things have come to such a pass that the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has decided to call off its monitors from active duty in Jaffna.

There are a few other disturbing developments that need closer scrutiny. On December 21, two dinghies of the Sri Lankan Navy came under attack from LTTE boats in a lagoon off the Mannar coast while on routine patrol. In the gun battle that followed, one Navy boat was put out of action and three sailors were killed. Though the LTTE claimed it was only a defensive action, the SLMM has held it responsible for violating the ceasefire. As though this was not enough, two Navy buses were ambushed near Pesalai in the Mannar area on December 22. The Navy lost 13 men while 14 others were wounded and one bus was burnt. A military spokesman said the militants used a combination of claymore fragmentation mines as well as rocket propelled grenades and assault rifles. All these happened

The LTTE is using the same tactics to set the stage for an offensive against the Sri Lankan Army that it employed against the IPKF.

well within areas under the control of the Government.

For sometime now, the youth in Jaffna have, in sizeable numbers, been taking part in well-orchestrated demonstrations against the presence of Army posts in key locations, particularly near the Jaffna University. The situation turned ugly on December 19, when the agitators started throwing stones and clashed with the security forces. In a bid to quell the mob, the police are reported to have forcibly entered the University premises including the Vice-Chancellor's office. In the resulting melee, 14 demonstrators were injured; one of them had gunshot wounds. Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has ordered an inquiry into the incident. In the words of SLMM chief Hargrup Haukland, the demonstrators not only pelted stones at the security forces but also tried to enter the SLMM's office forcibly. "This could not be called a peaceful demonstration. It was a very dangerous thing," he added. Similarly there were agitations against the rape and murder of a Tamil woman at Punguduthivu by suspected Navy personnel. It would be facile to dismiss this outburst of civil agitations as spontaneous.

A significant aspect in all these apparently unconnected events is their timing. On December 19, the four co-chairs of the Tokyo Donors Conference (the European Union, Japan, Norway, and the U.S.) issued a statement condemning "in the strongest terms the recent escalation in violence in the North and East" and asking the LTTE to put an immediate end to the on-going campaign of violence and to demonstrate its

commitment to the ceasefire agreement and the peace process. "Failure to demonstrate a willingness to change would not be without serious consequences," they cautioned. Many of the LTTE actions came after this *demarche* from the co-chairs — that is, in utter disregard of international opinion. This is a serious departure from its behaviour during the three years of ceasefire, when it bent over backwards to appear 'clean' in international eyes.

Another aspect of the timing of the escalation is that it preceded the departure of President Rajapakse on December 27 on his maiden visit to India after assuming office. Apparently India has a crucial role in his strategy for the peace process. He still hopes to persuade India to play a more active role in it and would like it to join the co-chairs of the Tokyo Donors Conference. It is evident the LTTE attacks were aimed at not only embarrassing the President but also at sending a subtle warning to India not to get involved too closely in the mess the Sri Lankan peace process has become.

Why should the LTTE indulge in such large-scale violence, in utter disregard of international opinion? Why are the civilian agitations being pumped up at this time? The answer is that the LTTE believes in sowing the seeds of war well in advance. In this, it has a four-pronged strategy: use civil agitations to restrict free movement of troops; limit army domination of key communication routes and centralise the military mindset on troops through violent actions, and; retain the initiative to launch big attacks at a time and place of its choice. We are seeing the

application of the first three strategies. These are force multipliers and offset the advantage conventional forces enjoy in heavy firepower.

The LTTE has mastered the unconventional approach to warfare. So all these events need to be studied in the overall matrix of the progressing military aims of the LTTE, because it is essentially ruled by a military brain rather than a political process as organised governments are. So it will be futile to read too much into the LTTE's political statements or initiatives unless the underlying military significance is understood. Based on military logic, the developments indicate the following.

The 'spontaneous' demonstrations are part of the strategy of keeping the troops confined to barracks. We in the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) faced similar 'agitations' and gherao of our camps in Palali. Though initially we were naïve and accepted them as similar to the civilian agitations so common in India, we became wiser when we saw the same ringleaders leading mobs of all kinds. Mr. Haukland of the SLMM also reported seeing the same faces leading different mobs. Of course, with over two decades of experience under its belt, the Sri Lankan Army is aware of these tactics. During the IPKF days, Thileepan's well orchestrated fast-unto-death was a high point of this build-up. The LTTE has set up a number of civilian organisations that will claim responsibility for these agitations, enabling it to disclaim any role.

The small scale attacks on security patrols and posts have taken place on key communication axes in the Thenmarachi and Vadamarachi divisions. Similarly, the offensive actions in the Mannar region are aimed at restricting naval patrolling. This would facilitate LTTE boat movements for commando operations and troop build-up to threaten the western flank of the Vavuniya region.

During a ceasefire, the scope for action by the Army and the Navy is restricted and perforce defensive. But militarily, you cannot have defence without offensive action to dominate the areas around. The combined effect of civilian agitation, skirmishes and ambushes, and offensive use of mines in the long run will be detrimental to the troops. This is what the LTTE is aiming to achieve.

The fourth prong of the strategy, of big attacks, is yet to become operational. But it does not seem far off. When the attacks come, they will be strategically aimed at removing the thorn 'Karuna' has become in the East. Operating in tandem with the Army, he makes LTTE operations in the East highly vulnerable. Without the East, "Eelam" would be incomplete and meaningless. If and when talks begin on the ceasefire agreement, it is highly likely the LTTE will attempt to strike a bargain with the Sri Lankan Government on 'Karuna'. If that proves impossible, the LTTE's northern offensive would be aimed at drawing troops away from the East to the North and open the links to the East. That would make it easier for LTTE in the East. Seen in the light of this strategy, the killing of Joseph Pararajasingham, a veteran TULF politician and vociferous pro-LTTE MP of the Tamil National Alliance in the eastern city of Batticaloa on December 25, is as meaningless as it is reprehensible. It confers no advantage to anti-LTTE forces, if they are indeed behind the killing.

Time is literally running out for the peace process in Sri Lanka. Not only Sri Lanka but all those interested in seeing peace return to the island — that includes India — can no longer be complacent. The peace process, which needs resuscitation, is not going to be helped by a brain-dead ceasefire. Norway and the other co-chairs must bring the LTTE around to observe the ceasefire in letter and spirit. The time for rhetoric is over. There is now an urgent need for them to bring the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government back to the table to talk, whatever the means they employ to achieve this.

(Colonel R. Hariharan, a retired Military Intelligence officer, served as the Head of Intelligence of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka.)