



SRI LANKA

The 'business' of elections

The Sri Lankan Parliament was dissolved by proclamation on 24 June and President DB Wijetunge called for general elections on 16 August. The move took the opposition parties, which were expecting presidential elections in November, by complete surprise.

Around 1,440 candidates representing thirteen political parties and twenty-six independent groups will contest for the 225 seats in Parliament. Nearly 12 million voters are registered and over 9,500 polling stations will be set up.

Nominations were fixed for the week commencing 4 July, hardly giving time for parties to negotiate political alliances before the elections. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) has signed an electoral agreement with the opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led People's Alliance (PA). SLMC leader M H M Ashraff has pledged half a million Muslim votes for the PA.

Half a million plantation Tamil votes have been pledged for the ruling United National Party (UNP) by the leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) S. Thondaman. Only a few days earlier CWC and SLMC submitted joint proposals for the resolution of the Sri Lankan national problem. The CWC has entered into an agreement with the UNP and will contest under the UNP ticket. CWC sources say that the first demand of the CWC was that General Secretary M S Sellasamy should not be included in the UNP election candidates list. UNP has agreed and Mr Sellasamy has now joined the PA. The CWC National Council met on 27 June and sacked Mr Sellasamy and elected Mr Thondaman's grandson S Arumugam in his place. The CWC-UNP Pact also provides that

both parties would work towards national reconciliation. In the event of UNP winning the elections, the CWC would expect its demands relating to welfare of plantation workers to be met before the presidential elections. UNP's earlier attempts to split the CWC by supporting Mr Sellasamy and the eight CWC rebels, failed following support for Mr Thondaman from the plantation Tamils. Overtures from the PA were turned down by Mr Thondaman despite strong views of some senior CWC members that the party should not support the ruling UNP which has failed to sufficiently address the problems of plantation workers over a period of 17 years and was increasingly becoming undemocratic and hostile to the minorities. These senior members also pointed out that it would be easier to do business with Chandrika Kumaranatunge who has a clean slate.

Sources say Mr Thondaman believes that the PA will not gain power and he would not like to be on the losing side after enjoying ministerial office for a long period. Others point to the witch-hunt launched by the SLFP government against Mr Thondaman and his

supporters between 1970 and 1977. During this period many plantation workers lost their jobs when the Land Reform Law came into force and Sinhalese MPs led attacks on workers' line rooms. It was during this period that workers died of starvation when the SLFP government refused to supply sufficient food to the plantations. Most importantly the 40 year-old citizenship problem of the plantation Tamils was solved when the UNP was in power. There is no doubt that these issues would have influenced Mr Thondaman's decision despite UNP's poor record relating to welfare rights of plantation workers and the certain possibility that the UNP would go back on its election promises as in the years past.

The government has announced that elections will be held in the North where most areas are controlled by the LTTE. In the Jaffna electoral district which includes Jaffna and Kilinochchi administrative districts, only 5% of the population is under army-control. In the Vanni electoral district, which contains Mullaitivu, Vavuniya and Mannar, army-control extends only to 20% of

FOCUS ON ELECTIONS

the population. Voting is scheduled to take place in the islands west of Jaffna peninsula and at army-controlled Tellipalai within the peninsula. Reports say that there are only 6,000 of the total population of 110,000 in the islands, mostly old people, and around 300 people in Tellipalai. The contention by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) that free and fair elections cannot be held in the Jaffna District has been rejected by the Court of Appeal. TULF's application to the Supreme Court alleging that fundamental rights are being violated by arrangements for elections in Jaffna has also been turned down.

According to the TULF, elections in Jaffna would be in breach of constitutional provisions guaranteeing the right of franchise to every citizen of Sri Lanka of voting age. In the Jaffna District alone over 200,000 people are displaced and the electoral register has not been revised since 1986 to include new voters. Analysts say the TULF may also be worried about the likelihood of Jaffna District returning several Muslims as Members of Parliament. Around 10,000 Muslims displaced from Jaffna by an LTTE ultimatum in 1990 and now living in refugee camps in Puttalam have registered to vote after Elections Commissioner Chandrananda de Silva declared that displaced people could vote in the district where they currently reside. Compared to the Muslim votes registered, of over 100,000 Tamils displaced from the North-East only 6,000 have registered. Tamil parties blame the lack of Tamil electoral lists in Colombo and other areas of the South for the inability of people to register.

TULF says that the Tamil people are dissatisfied with the Tamil militant organisations which have joined the democratic mainstream and any alliance with them would discredit the TULF. EPRLF which contested under the TULF symbol in the last parliamentary

elections, alleges that it has had difficulties in nominating MPs for those who died and that TULF MPs offered tacit support to the government by absenting themselves during voting in Parliament to extend the Emergency.

According to reports, India had requested the TULF to include EPRLF leaders Suresh Premachandran, L. Ketheeswaran and Varadaraja Perumal in its list of candidates. The TULF has refused. Some Tamil observers say this request indicates that India is still interested in becoming involved in Sri Lanka although the regional power has been saying it has washed its hands of the problem. Others who believe that India is genuine in saying it would not become involved in Sri Lanka again, say that the election is a good opportunity to get rid of former North-East Chief Minister Varadaraja Perumal who has become a burden and an embarrassment to India.

EPRLF's atrocious behaviour when it controlled the North-East Provincial Council with the help of the Indian Peace-Keeping Force has led many people to conclude that the party has lost its base in the Tamil areas. Therefore EPRLF would have benefitted if the TULF had acceded to the Indian request and accommodated the three leaders. Because EPRLF has been opposing the government, it is discouraged from joining Tamil groups which work with the government. In the circumstances EPRLF has joined the PA, but is not expected to win any seats. Observers believe that the PA will use the EPRLF for election campaign and chuck them overboard when their usefulness has ended.

The LTTE which tacitly approved general elections in the North-East in 1989, has rejected the elections in August after its offer of unconditional talks was ignored by the government which has no plans to settle the Sri Lankan national problem. The Tigers also say the

election in the North is a pathetic attempt by the government to undermine LTTE's improving civil administration. Reports say that LTTE cadre have met people in Trincomalee electoral district and have advised them not to vote. It is believed that this would definitely reduce the chances of TULF candidates R Sampanthan and A Thangathurai from being elected. Many Tamils believe, if the LTTE canvasses in a similar manner in other areas, the same fate will befall the other candidates. At the same time many Tamils also blame the LTTE for being stubborn and are concerned over its inability to win over people in opposition camps and work towards Tamil reconciliation. Reports say there are large numbers of Tamil youths who have left other militant groups awaiting to join the LTTE. The Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) has published a statement opposing the election and condemning all the Tamil parties for taking part in the elections.

Why are the Tamil parties contesting? They say failure to contest would result in the parliamentary seats falling into the hands of the major Sinhalese parties. Some parties have stated that they are not supporting either of the two major parties to emphasize the individuality of the Tamils. The latter argument is untenable in view of the fact that four of the seven Tamil parties are contesting separately, rather to emphasize their own individuality than that of the Tamil nation as a whole.

Observers say the usual privileges and perks that go with the office of parliamentarians such as BMWs and accommodation at Sravasti, have more than any other reason prompted the Tamil parties to shamelessly seek the positions, leading to ugly scenes even on the streets in Tamil areas. However, it cannot be denied that some Tamil MPs in the last Parliament performed useful services, particularly exposing human rights violations of

the government. But is this what the people want? It is clear that the Tamil parties are unable to declare acceptable and justifiable reasons for contesting the elections.

It is regrettable that the Tamil parties continue to squabble in the run-up to the elections, each party attempting to carve its own piece in the Tamil areas. EPRLF members on their way to Jaffna to file nominations were assaulted by EPDP cadre, to the delight of Sinhalese soldiers. EPDP which is active along with the army in the Jaffna islands is determined that other Tamil parties would not be allowed to campaign in their 'kingdom'. PLOTE cadre have issued death threats to TULF leaders who tried to canvass votes in Vavuniya. The SLFP has already demanded from the Elections Commissioner that the EPDP must be removed from the Jaffna islands. If SLFP is returned to power, EPDP would be disarmed and control of the islands would be taken away. Because of past activities of the EPDP in Colombo, such as threats, abductions and extortion, the capital would become dangerous ground for them to operate.

The Tamil groups aligned to the Sri Lankan government and those which are said to be 'independent' have failed to consider several historical and other factors in their clamour to gain power. The two major parties have always gone back on their promises made to minority parties before elections, since 1947. Even after the death of any number of people between 80,000 to 100,000 in the last ten years, both parties seem more interested in retaining or gaining power than genuinely working towards peace. They do not want to admit that the Tamil national problem can be solved only jointly by both parties.

In the recent past all the Tamil groups have insisted that the North-East must remain merged. They declared opposition to the

decision of the Parliamentary Select Committee to divide the North-East. This unity has been successfully dismantled by the government. Observers believe that the party that wins the general elections will proceed to divide the North-East.

The Tamil militant groups took up arms to fight, not merely against the Sri Lankan security forces, but against injustice and to realise the aspirations of the Tamil people. But now some have become part of the oppressive machinery of the government. It is difficult to comprehend the nature of a militant group which participates in actions of the security forces which are designed to kill, detain or torture Tamils, destroy their property and occupy their lands. TULF, of which ACTC was a member, does not want to remember the mandate given by the Tamil people in 1977 - the setting up of a separate state based on the right of self determination inherent to every nation. In its 1977 election manifesto even the UNP admitted that "the lack of solution to their problems has made the Tamil-speaking people support even a movement for the creation of a separate state". Have all the problems of the Tamils been solved. Whether the TULF is seeking a fresh mandate for some other objective is unclear. The TULF seems to now feel that it should have joined the bandwagon in the local government elections. In the current election campaign TULF is back to its old high-flown rhetoric. The TULF has forgotten about liberation of the Tamils; it has refused to form alliances; the old constituents CWC and ACTC are currently not part of the TULF. There is no justification whatever for retaining the name Tamil United Liberation Front! The TULF will not receive any votes from the younger generation as demonstrated by the failure of A Amirthalingam in the last general elections.

There is widespread concern whether the elections will be free and fair. The government has invited a 30-member International Election Monitoring Team. Eight British MPs and MEPs will be members of the team. Doubts have been expressed whether this team will be impartial, particularly in view of reports that the enthusiasm of the European Union that trade links with Sri Lanka should be strengthened and restrictions on arms sales lifted. The NGO Forum on Sri Lanka is organising an independent Monitoring Committee led by the US-based International Human Rights Law Group. However there are indications that this committee may not receive cooperation from the Sri Lankan government. UNP General Secretary Gamini Wijesekera is opposed to the monitoring of elections by any other team than the official monitoring committee. Reports also say the Law Group has already begun training 10,000 volunteers to monitor the elections through The Peoples Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) and other local organisations.

There is also widespread fear that the government death squads and Ministers' personal thugs have become active in the run-up to the elections. Thus far eleven people have been killed and thousands of election offences committed. A court in Anuradhapura ordered the arrest of the Minister of Post and Telecommunications A M S Adhikari in late July for involvement in the murder of a PA election organiser. He later surrendered to the police.

Amnesty International has publicised an open letter to the political parties contesting the elections stating that:-

a) the Constitution and all relevant laws need be reviewed to ensure they conform with international human rights standards;

b) impunity must be ended by thorough investigation of offences

TIC ACCESSION LIST

A selection of documents received by the Centre in June/July 1994

and bringing those responsible to justice;

c) at least the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant to Civil and Political Rights and the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions should be ratified.

Amnesty has urged the parties to assist in developing a climate within which the rights of all people of Sri Lanka will be respected and protected.

Many Tamils believe that the government is attempting to achieve several objectives by holding the elections early. The government would like to show the world that human rights has improved, democracy has been restored and that there is only a terrorist threat in some areas of the country. This is also an attempt to discredit the Tamil struggle for justice and to establish that it is the LTTE that is waging war, pointing out that the other Tamil groups have joined the democratic mainstream. The aim is to isolate the LTTE politically and then crush them militarily. The European Union will make use of this opportunity to get rid of the Tamil refugees in member countries, which will also tacitly assist the Sri Lankan government in its proclamation that normalcy has been achieved in Sri Lanka.

As has been emphasized before, unity of the Tamils is more important than contesting elections and some Tamils becoming Members of Parliament. If all the Tamil parties jointly rejected the or contested the elections, such unity would have demonstrated to the majority parties that Tamils mean business. Now that the parties have given themselves to be manipulated once again, the Tamil nation has taken another step backwards.

OHR 287

Human Rights Watch World Report 1994: events of 1993

New York: Human Rights Watch; December 1993

389p

DESCRIPTORS: Human Rights Violation/ Africa/ Asia/ America/ Middle East/ Repatriation/ Disappearance/ Detention/ Liberation Movements/ Aid/ Militarisation

OHR 286

Some thing like home again "the repatriation of Cambodian refugees"

Washington: The U.S. Committee for Refugees; May 1994

72p

DESCRIPTORS: Refugees/ Cambodia/ Displaced Persons/ Repatriation Statistics/ UNHCR

OHR 284

Sivard, Ruth Leger

World military and social expenditures 1993

Washington: World Priorities; 1993

56p

DESCRIPTORS: Militarisation/ Statistics

PC 4711

Hans, Asha

Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in India

Geneva: Refugee; June 1993

4p

DESCRIPTORS: Refugees/ Tamil Nadu/ Sri Lankan Tamils/ Refugee Camps/ UNHCR/ Repatriation

SHR 3370

Mahadeva, Kopan

A plan for peace in Eelam

Birmingham: Century House; 1994

105p

DESCRIPTORS: Peace Initiative/ Discrimination/ Sri Lankan/ Recommendations

SER

Bastin, Sunil

UNP in the south: what went wrong?

Pravada; March/April 1994

3p

DESCRIPTORS: Election/Provincial Council/Sri Lanka/Political

Opinion/Local Council

SHR 3369

Wijemanne, Adrian

"Secession; Nationalist guerilla movements and peace"

London: International Tamil Foundation; 12 June 1994

8p

DESCRIPTORS: Ethnic Problem/ Peace Initiative/ Political Opinion/ Sri Lanka/ Liberation Movements/ Separatist

OHR 285

Refugees and the "New Europe": Refugee education and training advisory services

London: World University Service; March 1994

72p

DESCRIPTORS: Education/ Training/Refugees/Europe/Statistics

NGOs Concerned Over Swiss Repatriation Programme

ments have interpreted UNHCR's statement as an endorsement of its position that southern areas of Sri Lanka are safe for return of rejected asylum seekers whom the UNHCR categorises as 'persons not in need of international protection'. The UNHCR position has been referred to in rejected asylum applications and government officials often used UNHCR involvement to counter criticism by NGOs.

The Swiss Refugee Council (OSAR) said that the Swiss public were unaware that UNHCR was not involved actively in monitoring returns in Sri Lanka but would act only if a problem relating to a returned refugee was referred to the UN agency. UNHCR was also unable to report on the security situation in Sri Lanka. A request by NGOs for a clear public statement of its real role was turned down by the UNHCR.

NGOs also said that various government and UNHCR officers were taking different positions relating to refugee returns. UNHCR's resident representative in Sri Lanka told a Scandinavian government delegation in March that returned Tamils could take up residence wherever they are prepared, contrary to UNHCR's June statement that returns should only be to areas not directly affected by the armed conflict. The French Refugee Appeals Commission had circulated a report originating from the UNHCR Colombo office, which used an OSAR questionnaire and alleged opinions of a senior member of the Swiss Appeals Commission to promote a positive view of returns to Sri Lanka.

NGOs expressed concern

over UNHCR's reluctance to urge for privileged treatment to returnees in the issuing of National Identity Cards (NIC) and expressed doubt over the competence of the Sri Lankan authorities to promptly issue the necessary documents to enable them to reside in Colombo or any other place.

Many young Tamils are routinely re-arrested as security sweeps target different parts of Colombo. Those without NICs are increasingly vulnerable, police will accept no other proof of identity. Thousands of North-East refugees have lost NICs fleeing the war. Replacement cards take months of tortuous bureaucracy to acquire. Some government officers are reported to no longer issue NICs to North-East Tamils. Over 50% of a million Hill Country Tamils have received no response to their initial applications.

NGOs expressed further concern over the fact that the returnee could be identified as such at any time as this would be specified on the identity certificates, and that it will also state the amount of currency brought into the country, thus increasing the chances of being arrested by security forces for the purposes of extortion. Mr. Blatter reaffirmed that following the bilateral agreement, the Swiss government as well as the Sri Lankan government were required to come to an understanding with UNHCR on the modalities of UNHCR's participation in such arrangements as passive monitoring.

The Swiss Refugee Council then drew attention to aspects of the implementation of the repatriation programme which still needed to be clarified, such as the practical arrangements for passive monitoring and the information system, and tabled a short report by the OSAR

Several Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) including Tamil Information Centre (TIC), Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF), Amnesty International, World Council of Churches and the Swiss Red Cross and the Refugee Councils of various European countries participating in a UNHCR consultation meeting in Geneva on 22 June raised concerns over the safety of Tamil refugees to be deported to Sri Lanka by Switzerland. Asia Oceania Bureau Director Werner Blatter and Senior Legal Officer Bo Schack represented the UNHCR.

UNHCR reaffirmed its position in the statement of 16 June 1993 and contended that refugees could be returned to Colombo even after the NGOs pointed out that over 15,000 Tamils had been arrested in Colombo following the assassination of President R Premadasa on 1 May 1993, over 1,000 remain in custody and arrests continued at the rate of 2,000 a month.

The NGOs pointed to the rising rates of refusals of asylum for Sri Lankans in the European countries. The European govern-

REFUGEE REPATRIATION

delegation, 6-20 March 1994 to Sri Lanka entitled "The time is not yet ripe!"

The Swiss Refugee Council sought clarification from the UNHCR regarding the procedure whereby a returnee in detention can contact his/her relatives or the UNHCR - a practice which is not normally permitted, and concerning the ability of the UNHCR to request information on, and intervention in favour of returnees who face personal security problems.

Mr. Blatter admitted that government's assurance that UNHCR could have access to returnees, were not legally binding. However, Mr. Blatter assured NGOs that each returnee would receive a document indicating his/her particulars as well as relevant addresses and telephone numbers of the Swiss Embassy and the UNHCR's office in Colombo. This document will state that the returnee may bring to their attention problems relating to his/her personal security.

The British Refugee Council (BRC) stated that the UNHCR-involved repatriation of Tamil refugees from South India in the first instance had been necessary to facilitate the repatriation of Sri Lankans from Switzerland. BRC stated that there was now ample evidence to show that the repatriation of Tamils from South India was often of an involuntary nature. This was corroborated in interviews that BRC held with returnees on their recent field trip, who said they experienced secondary and primary coercion. BRC expressed concern that the South Indian authorities expressly allowed for the deterioration of the refugee camps in order to encourage refugees to return, thereby allowing it to fill the quota for the flagging repatriation programme. The inability of the UNHCR to determine the voluntariness of the returns of

Tamil refugees from South India is a matter for concern and had serious implications for the UNHCR's ability to ensure the voluntary nature of the return of rejected asylum-seekers from Switzerland.

Mr Bo Shack stated that the Tamil Nadu repatriation programme which was resumed on 28 January 1994, when 501 refugees were returned, had been of a voluntary nature and declared UNHCR's willingness to be involved in the repatriation of another 4,000 refugees expected to be returned from India in the current phase of the programme.

The Tamil Information Centre expressed its concern over the continuing instability of the security situation in Sri Lanka and drew the UNHCR's attention to the lack of opportunities that the refugees in South India have of receiving clear and authentic information on the situation prevailing in their home areas.

The Tamil Information Centre also said that refugees in Tamil Nadu camps were not receiving letters or newspapers and that no clear information has been provided by UNHCR regarding the situation in Sri Lanka, normally part of UNHCR's protection mandate.

NGOs concluded by requesting that the UNHCR "actively" monitor the return of rejected asylum-seekers from Switzerland to Sri Lanka.

The UNHCR agreed to meet with NGOs and Swiss government representatives to further discuss and clarify some of the aspects of the implementation of the Swiss-Sri Lankan repatriation programme.

SHORT TAKES

PRESIDENT CHANGES TACK

Speaking from behind bullet-proof glass panes President Wijetunge asserted at Gandhi Square in Batticaloa that a new UNP government would settle the North-East problem through negotiations. However, at an election rally in Colombo, the President has claimed that if UNP is re-elected he would crush the terrorists in two weeks.

BUDDHIST PRELATES IDENTIFY PROBLEM

Chief Priests of the Malwatte and Asgiriya chapters Ven Sri Wipassi and Ven Sri Chandananda appraised President Wijetunge of the rising tide of violence in the country when he called on them on 16 July to seek their blessings before inaugurating the election campaign of the ruling party at Kandy in the evening. Controlling the rise of violence and the rapid deterioration of discipline in the country was urgent according to these Buddhist prelates.

The Ven. Sri Wipassi further said "whatever steps you take for the benefit of the country, it is very important that those steps should be useful to suppress the rising tide of violence in the country. Violence and indiscipline seem to be the order of the day", he added.

Australian Federation of Tamil Association's Statement on Sri Lanka Parliamentary General Election, August 1994



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SRI LANKA HOLDS ELECTIONS ON 16th. AUGUST 1994!

WHAT does it mean for the Tamils ?
WHAT do they want from the new government ?

The Tamils want :-

1. **IMMEDIATE** stoppage of the bombing of Tamil areas.
 2. The right to live in safety. To this end all the 1 1/2 million refugees, including those in Sri Lanka, must be able to return to their homes to live and work in safety. (Just in Colombo alone 2000 refugees are arrested each week and only released on exhorbitant bail)
 3. All Tamils must be accorded the fundamental human right to life, liberty, food and shelter.
 4. **IMMEDIATE** lifting of the military seige of the North-East of the island.
 5. **IMMEDIATE** lifting of the embargo on 49 essential items to the North-East which is crippling the economic and daily lives of the people.
 6. **IMMEDIATE** ceasefire of all hostilities and a genuine move towards a peaceful solution must be made to end the long-drawn civil strife in Sri Lanka.
 7. Democracy of the people , by the people must be for **ALL** the people - not just the privilege of some.
 8. Tamils want the right to self-determination in Tamil lands.
 9. Tamils want a just government for **ALL**.
 - 10 To achieve the above ends the new Sri Lankan government must commence talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as to how some type of Tamil state can be established in North-East Sri Lanka. This state should hold the necessary powers through which Tamils can control their own destinies, security and development.
- Finally, we hope that the United Nations, the Commonwealth and all nations will re-double their efforts to end the cruel genocide of the Tamils and urge the new government to restore peace to our beautiful land.

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JUNE DIARY

JUNE 01

OBSERVATION POST ATTACKED: Defence Ministry sources indicated that four LTTE men were killed as troops retaliated when the security post at Siruvilan in Jaffna District came under attack.

JUNE 02

AERIAL BOMBING: Residents of Mullivaikkal in Mullaitivu District vacated the village following three days of aerial bombing of vacant lands. The pattern of bombing was interpreted by villagers as a message to vacate.

JUNE 03

LACK OF SCHOOL FURNITURE: Reports said that schools in Vadammaradchy in Jaffna District have insufficient furniture. Tamil Teachers union has request the Regional Director of Education to supply furniture to the schools.

JUNE04

DISCRIMINATION IN LAND SETTLEMENT: At a meeting held at the Batticaloa secretariat attended by the Government Agent and Security Coordinator Brigadier Rohan Gunawardene, Prins Casinader MP pointed out that not a single Tamil family had been settled in the Mahaweli B. Zone although 210 Muslims families had been settled there.

JUNE05

RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES: The Rehabilitation Ministry has requested the government for a grant of Rs 800 million (\$ 20 million) for resettlement of refugees in the North-East. The Ministry says 700,000 families have been affected by violence since 1983.

JUNE 06

UPF's PRESIDENT RELEASED: V. T. Dharmalingam Vice President of the Upcountry People's Front held in detention from 4/7/91 on a charge of harbouring Varathan, the main suspect in the JOC headquarters bombing was released on Rs.25,000 cash bail.

JUNE 07

TAMIL REFUGEES IN TAMIL

NADU: Answering questions in Parliament Rehabilitation Minister P. Dayaratne informed that 69,150 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are registered occupants in camps within Tamil Nadu state in India.

JUNE 08

LTTE SUFFER IN EAST: Defence Ministry reports said that one LTTE cadre was killed in a confrontation at Selvanagar in Batticaloa District and another at Thanneparichchan.

JUNE 09

TROOPS KILLED IN EAST: Four soldiers were killed by LTTE at Kunathivu in Trincomalee District. Another four policemen were killed when they were ambushed at Mannampitty in Polonnaruwa District. One Police Commando and five LTTE cadres were killed in a clash at Kanchanankudah in Amparai District.

JUNE10

GOVERNOR REPLACED: Governor of the Western Provincial Council and former Chief Justice S. Sharvananda was removed from office by President Wijetunge who replaced him with D. M. Swaminathan. Former Governor Sharvananda refused to resign when requested by the President's Secretary Wijedasa forcing his removal by the President.

JUNE 11

CIVILIANS KILLED IN SHELLFIRE: Shellfire directed from the Mandaitivu army camp towards Gurunagar in Jaffna District claimed three lives. Segar Niroja (4 yrs), Segar Ushanandini Sindu (8 yrs) and Rohini Calistra Suresh (18 yrs) asleep in the same house were killed when a shell exploded on their house at 2.00 a.m. Eight others were also injured in the same village due to shellfire.

TROOPS ATTACK LTTE: Two LTTE cadres were killed by troops in Manal Aru.

JUNE12

CIVILIANS KILLED AGAIN IN SHELLFIRE: Mandaitivu army camp targeted Gurunagar in Jaffna

District in their shellfire. Three civilians were killed and thirty others were injured when a shell exploded at 8.30 a.m. near the busy fish market.

INFILTRATION: Government controlled Karainagar in Jaffna District was infiltrated by the LTTE who ambushed two army vehicles killing four sailors and injuring six others. Resistance met by troops in a limited operation with air cover resulted in the killing of a soldier each at Mathagal and Idaikadu in Jaffna District. Two LTTE cadres were killed by troops at Thirukkonnamadu in Polonnaruwa District.

JUNE13

CIVILIANS TARGETED IN SHELLFIRE: Four civilians including a pregnant woman were injured at Pasaioor in Jaffna District when shells directed from Mandaitivu army camp exploded at 5.00 p.m. Indiscriminate shellfire over three days led to the residents in the coastal areas of Gurunagar, Pasaiyoor and Kottady being displaced.

JUNE14

TAMIL TRADER KILLED IN HILL COUNTRY: Gemini Balachandran (33 yrs) a trader in Badulla Town Centre was stabbed to death in broad day light. The assailant escaped in the presence of the townsfolk and police disclosed that no witnesses came forward to identify the killer.

JUNE 15

STRIKE BY DOCTORS: A strike by doctors in the Vavuniya hospital ended after the Secretary to the Ministry of Health agreed to their demands. The doctors demanded hostel facilities and appointment of new doctors.

JUNE 16

CASUALTIES IN COMBAT: Two policemen were killed at Kudagama in Anuradhapura District when the sentry post came

JUNE DIARY

under LTTE attack at 2.00 a.m. Policeman Anil Kumara was killed when the police sentry at Kantalai in Trincomalee District came under LTTE attack. Two LTTE cadres died in another attack on the army security post at Angoda in Polonnaruwa District.

ARRESTED PERSON DIES IN CROSSFIRE: A Defence Ministry statement said that a person arrested at Unnichchai in Batticaloa District during army operation Bambara Chakra (Revolving Wheel) was killed in crossfire while being taken to the army camp.

JUNE 17

MUSLIMS KILLED: Following a clash with Muslims gathered for Friday prayers at Valaichchenai in Batticaloa District police opened fire killing seven people.

JUNE 18

REWARD ANNOUNCED: A police announcement made in connection with the investigations into the killing of the late President Premadasa on 1 May 1993 fixed Rs.1 million as a reward for information on four wanted LTTE persons.

INFILTRATION FAILS: Defence Ministry officials reported the killing of two LTTE cadres and a soldier at Kayts in Jaffna District when the LTTE attempted to infiltrate at 6.00 p.m.

JUNE 19

RETURNED REFUGEE DETAINED: Arulanantham Thirchelvam (24 yrs), a refugee returnee from Switzerland was detained by Criminal Investigations Department of the police on arrival at Colombo airport.

JUNE 20

JUNE 21

GOVERNMENT NEEDS NOD FROM LTTE: Interceding in the debate on the extension of Emergency rule in Parliament, newly appointed minister of shipping R. De Mel said that the government

cannot act on the proposals to solve the ethnic problem jointly presented by Minister Thondaman and SLMC leader Ashraff without ascertaining the view of the LTTE.

JUNE 22

TAMIL CIVILIANS FIRED UPON: One pilgrim was killed and eight others were injured when the boat in which they were returning to Delft in the Jaffna District was fired upon on arrival. The pilgrims were earlier delayed for two hours at the harbour seeking clearance from the troops to leave Nainativu after attending the chariot festival of the Nagapooshani Temple.

DRUNKEN SOLDIER KILLS BEGGARS: A soldier from the army camp at Marawila in Chilaw District went berserk after taking intoxicating liquor. Wielding a stick he beat to death three beggars in the town.

JUNE 23

DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT: President Wijetunge dissolved Parliament ahead of schedule thus enabling the presidential election to follow parliamentary elections. If the full term of parliament was allowed to run presidential elections would have preceded. According to the gazette notification issued dissolving parliament, nomination papers would be received at all District Regional Secretariats except in the districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Amparai and Trincomalee where the Government Agents' office would accept papers. The Jaffna Government Agent alone will accept papers at an office other than his, at Tellippalai to be identified later.

JUNE 24

SOLDIERS AMBUSH LTTE: Operational Headquarters of the ministry of defence reported that a militant's body was recovered after a group of men was ambushed by soldiers at Manalpitty in Batticaloa District.

JUNE 25

CONSTABLE SHOT DEAD: A police constable named H N Navaratne on duty at Iyankerni in Eravur in Batticaloa District was shot dead by unknown persons and his gun was robbed.

JUNE 26

AIRMAN INJURED: Corporal Prasanna de Alwis was seriously injured when LTTE attacked air-force personnel working in Velivelikulam in Trincomalee.

JUNE 27

CHILDREN KILLED: Muthulingam Karunananthi (5 yrs) and Muthulingam Jeyakanthini (3 yrs), two sisters from Sithandy in Batticaloa District were killed by shells fired from the Morakottanchenai army camp which hit the front compound where they were playing.

JUNE 28

TAMIL YOUTH ARRESTED:

A hill country youth named S Chandrasekaran was arrested in Katunayake for possessing camouflage military uniform material.

JUNE 29

TAMIL REFUGEES IN DENMARK: Ninety one Tamils arrived as refugees by ship to the Danish island of Bornholm. A Danish spokesman said that they were sent to refugee camp outside Copenhagen.

NAVY DESTROYS BOATS: Security sources reported the destruction of three boats by naval fire off the Valvettiturai coast in Jaffna District resulting in the death of two LTTE cadres. In a separate incident one airman and two LTTE cadres were killed at Veppankulam in Trincomalee District.

JUNE 30

BOMBS FOUND IN CAPITAL: Colombo police found 350 kilo bombs in a van in Kotahena. The discovery followed the arrest of LTTE suspect D Sasitharan a week earlier. Sasitharan committed suicide by taking cyanide.

JULY DIARY

JULY 01

VOTELESS TAMILS: Plantation Tamils Equality Movement's President S Nadesan told reporters that around 500,000 plantation Tamils were stateless as a result of the several citizenship laws. He called for the repeal of all these laws and enactment of a law to ensure equality of all people.

HEALTH HAZARD ON PLANTATIONS: Union members have accused plantation management for failure to protect the workers. Many plantation workers in the Badulla area have become ill after spraying chemicals to tea plants. Recently a worker died at Hali Ela estate.

JULY 02

CANCER ON THE INCREASE: Jaffna hospital has released statistics indicating that the number of Cancer patients in the region are on the increase. In 1991, 585 were affected. In 1992 the number increased to 845 and in 1993 it reached 1,067.

TAMILS ARRESTED IN COLOMBO: Following the discovery of weapons and bombs hundreds of Tamil youths were arrested in Kottehena, Maligawatte, Bambalapitiya, Maradana, Wellawatte and Pettah areas of Colombo. Police said in the last few days 14 Tiger members were also arrested.

JULY 03

AMPARAI REFUGEES TO BE RESETTLED: The government made an announcement that all Tamils displaced from Amparai District will be resettled before the general elections. During the local government elections in March refugees were able to vote in Camps.

JULY 04

WAR A COVER UP: The trial over the skeletons unearched at the mass grave in Sooriyakande

was postponed for 24 October as police informed court that many soldiers who served at the army camp involved in the disappearances are now serving in the war front in the North preventing immediate interrogations.

JULY 05

DISCONTENT IN PLANTATIONS: Twelve hundred workers each from the Laxapana and Logie plantations in Nuwara Eliya District struck work over working conditions.

STATE MINISTER QUILTS: State Minister for Small Industries S Sellasamy resigned from his post and the ruling party to join the opposition.

JULY 06

PROTEST BY WORKERS: Eight hundred workers of the Palmerston plantations in Nuwara Eliya District struck work following a decision to hand over tea land for building a garment factory.

JULY 07

POLICEMEN KILLED IN EAST: Constables Tyrone Gillerie and P Shanmugam were killed when the Kalkudah police station in Batticaloa District came under attack at 7.40 p.m.

JULY 08

ABDUCTION OF REFUGEE: An eighteen year-old girl from a refugee camp in Tamil Nadu, India was abducted by unknown persons at Pullai in Madras while returning from a temple in the company of her two sisters.

JULY 09

CIVILIAN DEATH: One civilian and two LTTE cadres were killed in an attack by the forces in the Nochchimoddai no-man's land in Vavuniya District.

CIVILIANS KILLED: Lucas Sinarasa (46 yrs), Kandasamy Fernando (30 yrs) and S Selvarajah (42 yrs) were killed by soldiers lying in ambush for LTTE cadres at Sema-

madu in Vavuniya District. Asirwatham who accompanied the three in collecting firewood was injured.

JULY 10

LTTE LOSE MEN: Two LTTE members were killed in the Sema-madu area where three civilians were killed the previous day. One hundred and fifty villagers of Semanadu fled the area following the killings on two consecutive days.

JULY 11

NOMINATIONS CLOSED: Accepting of nomination papers for candidates in the parliamentary elections closed with 1,440 nominations being lodged. Wife of former President Premadasa failed to be nominated by the ruling party after presenting herself before the election officials.

JULY 12

SOLDIERS KILLED: An officer and soldier were killed on the Poovarasankulam-Mannar Road in Vavuniya District when a petrol came under LTTE attack.

LTTE MEN KILLED: Security forces killed two LTTE men near the defence lines at the Poonakari camp in Mannar District.

JULY 13

HEROES WEEK: People's Liberation organisation of Tamil Eelam began commemoration of Heroes week. Batticaloa political leader K. Balan said leaders militants and civilians killed in the liberation struggle will be remembered.

JULY 14

ARMY OFFENSIVE: Security forces mounted an attack on a LTTE stronghold in Silavaturai in Mannar District. Four LTTE members were killed and one was captured according to security sources. The same sources indicated that fifteen others arriving in support of those under attack

JULY DIARY

were also killed when the air force fired rockets at them.

JULY 15

LOCAL COUNCILLOR FALLS VICTIM: Vellayapoodu Alagiah, a member of the Eravur Local Body in Batticaloa District was shot dead by unidentified gunmen while tending his field.

SUICIDE AFTER ARMY ATROCITY: Kumaravel Parvathy (34 yrs) from in Batticaloa District committed suicide after being mentally depressed following her husband and 4 year-old son being beaten up by STF police personnel in their home.

JULY 16

AMPARAI REPRESENTATION: The Amparai District Tamil Maha Sangam urged the Tamils in a report to unite to ensure the election of a Tamil representative to pa

JULY 17

RESIDENCY RIGHTS: At a function held in Nuwara Eliya in the presence of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe ownership certificates were distributed among plantation Tamils. Opposition trade unions pointing out to these certificates being bereft of legal value have demanded ownership deeds instead.

JULY 18

DELAY IN TEACHER APPOINTMENTS: Reports said that Muslim Cultural Minister A H M Aswar brought to the notice of the government that the appointment of forty Muslim and twenty-six Tamil volunteer teachers in Mannar District had been delayed for several years.

JULY 19

PLANES ATTACK JAFFNA: Valvettiturai was attacked by air-force planes. A civilian was killed. Fifteen people were injured.

JULY 20

HOSPITAL DAMAGED IN AIR ATTACK: In continuing air attacks two civilians were killed in Velvettiturai. A ward in the Urani hospital was damaged.

JULY 21

ARMY ADVANCE IN JAFFNA: The army attempted to advance from Mathagal to Pandatarippu with air support and shelling. After the LTTE resisted the advance the army returned to camp. A Tiger was killed and some civilians were injured.

JULY 22

TIGER KILLED BY ARMY: Defence Ministry said that an LTTE member was killed by the army at Thanthamalai in Batticaloa District.

JULY 23

ARMY SEARCH OPERATIONS: According to reports intense search operations were being conducted by the army west of the Batticaloa lagoon in the run-up to the general elections.

JULY 24

ELECTION LAW VIOLATIONS: Reports said that IGP Frank de Silva has ordered all police stations to take firm action against those violating election laws. Large number of violations have been reported to the Elections Commissioner.

JULY 25

BOMB IN COLOMBO: A bomb exploded in the premises of the house of a businessman in Dehiwela. Twelve persons in the businessman's house were arrested.

BOMB IN BATTICALOA: A bomb was found by the army in Batticaloa town. It was exploded without causing damage or injury.

MANNA BEFORE ELECTIONS: The cabinet approved the enhancement of subsidies to fishermen. Country craft owners are entitled to a 90% subsidy in place of 50% and mechanised craft owners get 60% instead of 50%.

HOSPITAL SHELLED: A shell fired from Mandaitivu army camp fell inside the Jaffna hospital premises, but failed to explode. ICRC has complained to military officers and the Health Department.

JULY 26

INDUSTRIAL ACTION: All non-academic staff of all universities and University Grants Commission resorted to strike action over working conditions.

JULY 27

LTTE INCURISON: Defence Ministry sources reported the recovery of a body and personal arms after the LTTE intruded on the defence lines near Ottahapulam in the Jaffna District.

JULY 28

RECOGNITION TO SELF DETERMINATION: N S S P leader Dr. Wickremabahu Karunaratne said that one of the ways to solve the ethnic problem was to recognise the Tamil right to self determination.

JULY 29

ELECTION OBSERVER TEAM: Reports said that 22 NGOs will be involved in observing the elections throughout the island. Washington - based. Human Rights Law Group will train 10,000 volunteers.

JULY 30

SEARCH IN VAVUNIYA: Police and the army jointly conducted a search and operation in Vairavapuliyanakulam in Vavuniya District and confiscated weapons from some persons. Candidates have been ordered not to carry weapons by police.

JULY 31

LTTE BOAT DESTROYED: A LTTE boat was destroyed by the Navy south of Nagarkovil in Jaffna District. A Tiger member was killed by an army sniper in Pooaryan.

NEWS IN BRIEF**INTENSE MILITARY ATTACKS IN THE NORTH**

Following continuous aerial bombing and shellfire from army camps in the North, Mavai Senathirajah MP sent a telegram to President Wijetunge condemning them as causing suffering to civilians rather than combatants and called for the President's intervention to prevent further alienation of the Tamils.

In a meeting with Northern Commander Brigadier Jayawardene, ICRC's Cedric Briba took up the issue of shelling and bombing on fishermen by naval boats.

Reports spoke of continuous shellfire directed especially at Vasavilan and Point Pedro from the army camp at Palaly, in the Jaffna peninsula and people were forced to stay in make-shift bunkers. Women, children and the elderly were badly affected by such actions by the military.

SHARP INCREASE IN INFANT DEATHS

Reports of the Jaffna Director of Health Services indicate a sharp increase in infant deaths. Between January and April, ninety-four infant deaths had been reported. From March to May eighty-five infant deaths had been reported and among them 54 died within seven days of birth. The balance thirty-one infants died between seven and twenty-eight days after birth. The Chavakachcheri Health Division has the highest infant mortality rate.

Malnutrition, pneumonia, septicaemia and diarrhoea are found to be the main causes for the high incidence of infant deaths.

Jaffna Teaching Hospital has reported a shortage of oxygen for patients. The crisis had been building up for the last three months. Several life saving surgeries have been postponed raising the risk of death without treatment.

TAMIL FISHERMEN FORCED OUT

Dwellings of Tamil fishermen at Kalkudah in Batticaloa are being forcibly occupied by Sinhalese fishermen. Tamil owners of these dwellings are living in refugee camps or with relatives. The displaced Tamils have not been granted relief whereas the occupying Sinhalese fishermen have been issued dry rations.

This glaring discrimination in the treatment meted out to the Tamil fishermen of Kalkudah has been brought to the attention of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe in a memorandum by Batticaloa MP Joseph Pararajasingham.

US Official Denied Access to Jaffna

The government of Sri Lanka refused permission for an official of the US Embassy in Colombo to visit Northern Sri Lanka largely under the control of the LTTE. The request for permission to facilitate a visit was sought from the State Minister for Foreign Affairs John Ameratunge in a letter sent by the US Ambassador on 31 May.

The refusal of the government to allow visits by those seeking to bring an end to the war has been criticised upon by the LTTE. Even cabinet Minister Thondaman and Parliament Speaker Mohamed had been denied a visit by President Wijetunge in April and May respectively. While all land routes to the Jaffna peninsula have been blocked by the military the government had by Emergency regulations also prohibited the crossing of the Jaffna lagoon. Consequently government approved visits have to be through the Palaly army camp which is the government foot-hold on the peninsula.

The refusal to allow visits by distinguished persons and foreign officials is further admission that government has ceased to function in LTTE controlled territory. The unique step of the office of the Government Agent Jaffna being moved to Tellippalai for the purpose of receiving nomination papers has further lent credence to the crossing of the Jaffna lagoon that government writ runs only within army camps and their vicinity where there is no civilian presence.

NEWS IN BRIEF



AGONY OF THE DISPLACED VICTIMS OF WAR

One hundred and seventy families from Muruththanai village in Batticaloa District remain displaced for several years. The Poolakkattu area where they have taken shelter has no basic amenities. Most of the people spend their lives under trees like vagrants. A few have thatched sheds using bush weeds as the roofing.

Their plight has been worsened now by the security officials who have debarred them from entering their former village and fishing in the river beside their place of abode.

Denied their vocation of fishing and honey collection these displaced people have now been made destitute. Appeals have been made to NGOs to alleviate their suffering.

MAGISTRATES ACCUSES POLICE OF COVER UP

Acting Magistrate N M X Sovnabala ordered the continuing of inquest proceedings into the murder of Airman Saman who was stabbed. The Magistrate had written to the Inspector General of Police to send a team from Colombo to investigate under pressure and are prevailed upon from acting fairly".

The police were reluctant to produce a witness named Ukku, a local ruling party man and caused The police were reluctant to produce a witness named Ukku, a local ruling party man and caused the Magistrate to complain to the Police Chief. Airman Saman was killed on 17 July and the house of an alleged attacker

DYSENTERY CLAIMS LIVES

Five people fell victim to dysentery in the Kalmadu village in Vavuniya District. Another 80 have been affected and the conditions of fourteen have been reported as critical. Medical assistance had reached them from the Madhu medical unit who ruled out cholera as the cause of the five deaths. International NGO Save the Children Fund has rushed medical assistance to the stricken village.

The failure of the Vavuniya health authorities to render early relief is due to the restricted

TAMIL EMPLOYEES ARRESTED ENMASS

The Cinnamon garden Police in capital Colombo arrested over forty Tamil employees of Greenlands Hotel in Bambalapitiya.

The reports say that these Tamils from North-East and hill country had been serving here for nearly two years.

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HEALTH

Victims of War in Sri Lanka: A Quest for Health Consensus

Jointly organised by
Medical Institute of Tamils (MIOT) and Tamil Information Centre (TIC)
in Association with
Tamil Refugee Relief Organisation (California, USA)

On
Saturday 17th & Sunday, 18th September 1994
in
London

Health does not merely mean the availability of health services, but the personal wellbeing and a state of health for a person that enable him or her to lead a socially and economically productive life and become a useful and contributing member of the community to which he or she belongs. The ongoing war in Sri Lanka has caused constraints on all communities to achieve this goal and had led to a consensus to review the health status of the people affected by the war.

For the past two decades the Tamil people of Sri Lanka have suffered from military campaigns, civil war and more recently economic blockade. Tens of thousands of women have been widowed and children orphaned. Hundreds of women have been raped. Countless number of people have been crippled or maimed, imprisoned and tortured.

Over 10,000 Tamils have disappeared. Over 40,000 Tamils have died, over a million people have been displaced, billions of rupees worth of property have been destroyed.

Life for the survivors in the Tamil homeland of north-east Sri Lanka is a continuous and precarious struggle. Health, education and other basic services no longer exist in most areas. An estimated half of all the towns and villages has been destroyed.

Economic Blockade

Though there is no full-scale famine, severe and persistent shortage of food and medicine due to the Economic Blockade has caused immense suffering. Malnutrition has worsened the effects of diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, measles and leprosy, which have reappeared since the collapse of government health services, including disease control programmes in the war affected areas.

The health service in the Jaffna peninsula was one of the best in the island. But the situation has reversed with destruction of

hospitals and health centres, and the ban on vital medicine.

Surgical instruments and life-supporting equipment are not allowed into the North. Pain-killers, medicines to treat minor injuries and bandages are among the banned items. Ambulances cannot be used in the North because of the ban on fuel. A number of patients have died as a result of lack of proper transport. Many persons bitten by roaming stray dogs hunting for food have died due to inadequate anti-rabies vaccine.

Infant mortality rate has risen due to lack of food, or lack of nutritious food for pregnant women and poor health facilities. Many children are born prematurely due to shock caused by bombing and other violent incidents.

Mental Health

The War has also brought about a sharp deterioration in living conditions and physical and mental well-being.

Incidence of psychiatric morbidity of the Tamil population has

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HEALTH

multiplied due to the protracted war, experience of torture and displacement. The security forces often indulge in indiscriminate violence against civilians. These have a profound psychological impact on people particularly elderly people, women, children and the student population. There has been an increase in the suicidal behaviour among people, specially in the 15-34 age range.

Emotional illness among Tamil refugees who have fled the country is also remarkably high. Many refugees carry with them the emotional burden of separation from their loved ones, and traumatic experiences before or during flight.

The Children of War

Tens of thousands of children in the Tamil homeland have been traumatised by the war and their development is drastically affected by exposure during their formative years to insecurity, homelessness, violent deaths of loved ones, paramilitary training and fighting.

Torture

The lives of many Tamils are shattered by the experience of torture. Torture is widely practised and thousands of Tamils have been subjected to various forms of torture causing in many cases permanent physical and psychological damage.

Refugees and Internally Displaced

Among those who have suffered

most in the war are the refugees and internally displaced. Since July 1983, the ethnic conflict which has ravaged Sri Lanka has led to the flight of nearly 220,000 Tamils to India and around 400,000 to other countries. The total number of people internally displaced and receiving relief is around 650,000 and others live with friends or relatives. This means that around 60% of the Tamil population

ced, despite the efforts of the UNHCR and the local and international NGOs, are inadequately serviced, live in overcrowded conditions and in constant fear of persecution. A whole generation is growing up knowing no other life.

Major towns in the East are controlled by the security forces. The North is controlled by the LTTE, who regulate the price of goods and services and have set up basic civil administration. The new civil administration is rudimentary, fragile and vulnerable to military attack. But it may provide a basis for reconstruction of the Tamil economy and society when hostilities end.

Constraints on Institutions

The contributions of the government together with donor countries, inter-governmental agencies, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the exile Tamil community make up the primary source of funding for victims of war. Increasingly, this aid is being directed towards refugee assistance, including health promotion work. NGOs comple-

ment the services of the government, UNHCR and ICRC are involved in very wide range of activities. Some organisations work very closely with the government, while others have difficult relationships. The increasing capacity of local NGOs also appears to have changed the nature of international NGOs. The government has made it difficult for international observers, media or NGO represen-

CONFERENCE MAIN OBJECTIVE :

The conference is intended to ascertain as far as possible the specific health and health care needs of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and to determine how best to meet them.

CONFERENCE AIMS:

The aims of the conference shall be -

To provide an opportunity for health professionals, health workers, health planners, service providers, human rights activists, donors, researchers and victims of war to share information about health needs and how well these are currently being met.

To clearly identify the special needs and demands for help and medical and psycho-social support for displaced people, refugees, women, children and the elderly.

To mitigate the effects of war and to empower and support self-help initiatives and to promote active coping strategies.

To secure the best possible use of available resources to assist the victims of war.

To urge the government to take positive action to make health care services equally available to all in need.

To make serious efforts to fight against torture and to help its victims to regain their place in the society.

To make this as a preparatory forum for a wider participatory health initiative in the Tamil homeland in 1995.

has been "uprooted" in their homeland.

Life in exile is a struggle against hardship, demoralisation, harassment, stress and growing racism. Women are particularly traumatised by life in exile. Their physical and mental health has deteriorated. Frequent symptoms of stress and depression reflect fundamental and contradictory social changes. The internally displa-

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HEALTH

tatives to travel to badly affected areas in the North-East.

NGOs and community-based organisations outside Sri Lanka also play a unique role, not only in channelling assistance, but also in assisting in settlement work, refugee and human rights campaigns and lobby to end the war.

Repatriation and Resettlement

Western nations have adopted policies to restrict entry of refugees from third-world countries. There are threats of deportation of Tamils from Switzerland, Denmark, Norway and Britain. Over 50,000 Tamil refugees have already been removed to Sri Lanka from India. Hostility towards Tamil refugees is growing in other countries.

Efforts at peace since 1948 have made little progress. Even after a political settlement, enormous problems will remain. How will the refugees be repatriated and their safety guaranteed? How will the refugees and displaced people be resettled? And the most difficult question - how will the Tamil society and economy be rebuilt?

Conference

The conference on a theme that has rarely been critically discussed provides a unique opportunity to bring to-gether intergovernmental and NGO personnel involved in providing health care and other assistance to victims of war, and also personnel from donor agencies, community organisations, health practitioners and refugees.

The conference will focus on a number of problems, issues, ideas and possibilities and will lead to a better understanding of the health care needs of the victims of War in the efforts to achieve improved health-care services for them.

For Conference Programme and other details, contact -

The Conference Co-ordinator

MIOT/TIC

720 Romford Road

London E12 6BT

Tel: 081 514 6390

APPRECIATION

Vice-Chancellor A Thurairajah

The sudden demise of the genial Dr. Thurairajah has removed from among the midst of Sri Lankan Tamils an imposing personality who strived for the good of the community. He sought to give back to the community whatever he achieved as an individual.

In the glare of the service rendered to the Tamils, his own achievements as a brilliant engineering student have receded in significance. Even his academic exploits recognised in the leading seats of learning the world over including Cambridge University where his Thurairajah Hypothesis was expounded have been dwarfed by the eminent direction he gave to the Jaffna University during this four years at its helm. The record of an uninterrupted academic calendar carried through the four years is almost unparalleled in a war torn environment. That the Vice-Chancellor himself led from the front, bicycling to work and back dodging the bombs and shells which is part of Jaffna's daily life, prevented any disruption to the University's functioning. That he was able to overcome state bureaucracy and military obstacles to keep the University going was in itself a gargantuan task. But for the amiable and ever willing Professor this was well within his ambit. With no enemies in any circles Dr. Thurairajah was able to turn any wheel for His University.

He was able to forge international links for the University through his imposing stature as an academic and educationalist. Though afflicted with declining health Dr. Thurairajah never flinched from his duties as the guiding light of the Jaffna University and considered himself the servant of the community. A war situation was no impediment to his commitment. The destiny of the Tamils to him was inseparable from that of the Jaffna University and he made no bones about insisting on it. Perhaps the greatest testament to Dr. Thurairajah's dedication was by the Minister of Higher Education Anura Bandaranaike though with slanted insight when he compared the Jaffna University functioning in the war-torn area with that of the Peradeniya University which had to be closed several times due to student unrest.

Understandably Tamils without exception mourn his loss. Tributes were spontaneous and his remains were received in all parts of the Tamil Homeland with full honours reserved for national leaders. The best tribute the Tamil nation can pay to the departed Thurairajah is to ensure that the Jaffna University he guided continues to be the shining beacon to which all Tamils can turn for succour and establish educational eminence.

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