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TAMIL INFORMATION



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NEWS BULLETIN OF
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OCTOBER 1993

No. 27

TAMILS DISCRIMINATED IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The University Grants Commission (UGC) decided in October to admit only 408 students to the Jaffna University for the 1992/93 academic year although 1,180 vacancies exist in all the faculties of the University. The Jaffna University Senate has expressed concern over the decision and has requested the UGC to consider the special difficulties in Jaffna and admit more students.

The difficulties of northern students in pursuing education have been highlighted in the Tamil Information Centre publication "Sri Lanka: Economic Blockade". Over 100 schools are not functioning and as a result education of thousands of students has been affected. Furthermore a number of schools have been destroyed or occupied by the military. The lack of electricity, books and other material necessary for education have placed a great strain on the students. During the recent military operation *Yal Devi*, 16 students were injured by bombs while attending classes. According to NGOs there are 750 students in refugee camps in Vavuniya who are unable to attend classes because they do not have school uniforms. The Jaffna University itself is functioning under great stress. Recent reports say the government was supplying only a fraction of the fuel and chemicals required by the University. Although the University had budgeted Rs.115 million for 1993, the UGC allocated only Rs. 79 million. The Treasury has paid thus far Rs. 74 million and according to

University authorities an additional Rs.36 million is urgently required to meet expenditure.

Tamil observers say, the UGC decision is part of the attempt by the government to reduce educational opportunities for Tamils, a policy continued since 1970 with the introduction of media-wise standardisation, one of the main reasons which led to Tamils taking up arms. The UGC has also decided to admit more students to Universities in the south. The Colombo University Senate had requested admission of 180 students to the Medical Faculty. But the UGC has selected 185 students. Similarly more students have been admitted to the Medical Faculties of Peradeniya, Kelaniya and Sri Jayawardenepura Universities. The Jaffna University Senate requested the admission of 200 students to the Medical Faculty. But the UGC decided to admit only 60 students.

The UGC refused to meet a student delegation from the Jaffna University to discuss admissions. The delegation arrived in Colombo despite the difficulties in travelling from Jaffna and was told that written submissions could be handed over to a committee that has been appointed. Students staged a demonstration in Jaffna on 28 October and submitted petitions to the Additional Government Agent and the Director of Education. An association of students affected by the UGC decision says, that the 1991 GCE (Advanced Level) Examination

for University admissions was conducted for the rest of the island in August 1991 and for northern students in April 1992. The marking scheme for the April 1992 examination had been made stricter, and consequently examination results were affected. However for the 1992/93 University admissions these two examinations have been considered as one.

Jaffna MP K.Navaratnam says The "cut off marks" (the minimum total marks in four subjects for University admission) should not be the same for Jaffna and Colombo students and the special difficulties of the northern students under the war situation should be taken into consideration. In a resolution adopted on the admission issue the Jaffna University Senate has pointed out that the "cut off marks" are changed every year based on the prevailing situation.

Higher Education Minister Tissa Athanayake has appointed an eight-member committee headed by UGC Vice chairman Nalini Ratnasinghe to review current procedure for university admissions and make recommendations. The committee has been requested to consider aspects such as merit, ethnic proportion and backward areas for recommending future admissions. The Committee is expected to make its recommendations before the end of December.

Under current rules only 40% of the students are admitted on

merit while 60% of University vacancies are reserved for the districts and backward areas. Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides in Article 21 that "higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit". The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Sri Lanka is a signatory, says in Article 13 that "higher education shall be made equally accessible

to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means".

While recognising the need of educationally backward areas, it must be emphasized that while special provisions for admission of students from such areas are made as a transitional measure, merit should be the main basis for University admissions. Education must be improved in the backward areas to the level of the

educationally advanced areas, by sustained state assistance, finally achieving 100% admission on merit.

Discrimination in education will deprive more Tamil students chances of higher education. As has been observed in the past more and more students may join the militant ranks and the hope of a solution to the Sri Lanka crisis will be lost forever.

SITUATION REPORT

THREE MONTH DETENTION IN POLICE CELL

Mrs. M.Gunasingham has filed a habeas corpus application in the Court of Appeal, Colombo for the release of her husband M. Gunasingham (40yrs). In her application she claims that the detainee was a cultivator from Malave in Vavuniya District. He left Vavuniya on 25/06/93 to visit his sister in Colombo having obtained permission from army officers in Vavuniya. He had been arrested while at Sri Sidhartha Place in Kirillapone, Colombo during a cordon and search operation. The police had held him at the police station for three months after which he was transferred to Magazine prison where he is presently held without charge or trial.

ALL ACCUSED IDENTIFIED

Twenty four accused of the massacre of 35 Tamil villagers of Mylanthanai in Batticaloa District on 09/08/92 were identified by 10 witnesses during five days of trial at the Polannaruwa courts. Further hearings were fixed for 16 and 17 December.

ANOTHER TAMIL TORTURED

A fundamental rights application with claims for compensation was taken up for hearing before the Supreme Court in Colombo. The applicant Palipodi Sunderalingham (27yrs) from Kali Kovil Road, Koduwamadu in Batticaloa District is presently held at Magazine Prison in Colombo. The applicant claims that he was arrested during a cordon and search operation conducted on 22/10/92 by soldiers from the Koduwamadu army camp. He was tortured on 23/10/93 at this camp, where he was stripped and his genitals were subjected to beatings. Torture had been inflicted even when hung by his legs. On 26.10.92 he was transferred to Batticaloa prison after being detained for two days at Thummodera army camp. On the intervention of ICRC he was given treatment at the Batticaloa hospital and surgery was scheduled prior to which date he was transferred to Magazine prison. After treatment at the prison hospital and at the General Hospital he underwent surgery in August 93. Another surgery is due on 30 October. No charges have thus far been brought against him.

The Supreme Court made order that the applicant be produced before the Judicial Medical Officer and fixed trial for 26.01.94.

TAMILS REPEATEDLY ARRESTED

Selvanayagam Balendran from Mannar Road in Puttalam had been arrested on 16/08/93 by police. Produced before a Magistrate he was released on bail on 24/08/93. He had however been rearrested on 01/09/93 and is held in detention at Puttalam police station without charge or trial. Balendran's wife expecting their third baby has filed a rights application for his release. Court allowed time till 28 October for answers to be filed by the respondents.

TAMILS ARRESTED IN UDAPPU

Twenty Tamils were arrested on 11 October at Udappu village in Chilaw District during a midnight search conducted jointly by the Udappu and Mundel Police.

TIC ACCESSION LIST

JOURNALISTS UNDER ATTACK

A selection of documents received by TIC in October 1993

1) The Free Media Movement in an interview with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinge sought action for ensuring the freedom of expression. It listed over fifty incidents of attack and harassment on journalists by police and others for an year upto March 93. A commission of inquiry had been appointed only in respect of the incident on 10 December 92 according to the delegation which presented the list. The findings of the inquiry had not been acted upon and the perpetrators of this attack remain unpunished. Ariyananda Dombagahawatte, Simon Vakarachi and Lucien Rajakarunanayake comprised the delegation.

2) Reports on the military operation YalDevi by the defence correspondent in the Sunday Times led to another death threat for the journalist. Senior journalist Iqbal Athas was the subject of this incident where the newspaper officer was informed of the threat to burn him on rubber tyres, the modus operandi widely used by army death squads against the JVP supporters in the past.

The two page article by the journalist ran contrary to the claims of total victory by the army. The threat had been made by Army Commander Lt. Gen. Cecil Waidyaratne who has also demanded from the government power to censure media reports on military operations.

The Free Media Movement on 20 October condemned this threat and called it terror tactics aimed at stifling fair reporting of current events.

OHR 253
Self-determination: statement and recommendations arising from the Martin Ennals memorial symposium on self-determination
Canada: International Alert; 3 March 1993
4p.
DESCRIPTORS: Self-determination

PC 4651
Izzadeen Ameen
West misusing AI reopr for aid cuts
Sri Lanka: The Sunday Times; 8 August 1993
2p.
DESCRIPTORS: Interview / Amnesty International / Aid / Human Rights violation / LTTE / Sri Lanka

SHR 3232
McGowan, William
Only man is vile: the tragedy of Sri Lanka
London: Pan Books Limited; 1993
397p.
DESCRIPTORS: Political History / Ethnic Conflict / IPKF / History / War

PC 4653
Moonesinghe, Vinod
Weapons fiasco behind the North East War
Sri Lanka: The Sunday Times; 1st August 1993
3p.
DESCRIPTORS: Militarisation / Security Forces / Statistics / Attack on army camp

PC 4649
Choksy, K.N.
Rights of the press: Sri Lanka has few peers
Sri Lanka: Sunday Observer; 8 August 1993
1p.
DESCRIPTORS: Freedom of expression

OHR 254

Preventive diplomacy:
Recommendations of a round table on preventive diplomacy and the UN's agenda for peace
London: International Alert; 28th January 1993
5p.
DESCRIPTORS: Peace making / Recommendations

SHR 3234
Arbitrary and unacknowledged arrests / fear of "Disappearance"
London: Amnesty International; 22 October 1993
2p.
DESCRIPTORS: Detention / Disappearance / Sri Lankan Tamils / Arrest / Appeal

SHR 3235
Amnesty International
Sri Lanka: more than a thousand arbitrarily arrested and at least six held in unacknowledged detention
London: Amnesty International; 27th October 1993
2p.
DESCRIPTORS: Disappearance / Southern Province / Detention / Sri Lankan Tamils

SHR 3251
Present condition of the Thirudetheswaram Temple
Colombo: Thirudetheswaram Temple Restoration Society; 22 July 1993
4p.
DESCRIPTORS: Attack on Temple / Appeal / Mannar District

OHR 262
Resolution on Refugees, Returnees and displaced persons in Africa
Ethiopia: Organization of African Unity; 6th September 1993
4p.
DESCRIPTORS: Refugees / Africa / Repatriation / Resolution

OCTOBER DIARY

OCTOBER 01

YAL DEVI REACHES

KILALI: Security forces claimed that they reached Kilali pier and destroyed over 200 boats belonging to the LTTE.

OCTOBER 02

YAL DEVI PLOUGHS

THROUGH: The Operations Secretariat of the Defence Ministry released the casualty figures for the last three days of Operation Yal Devi as 114 soldiers killed and 248 injured.

OCTOBER 03

YAL DEVI RETURNS: Four soldiers were killed when troops withdrew from Kilali according to a report released by the Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry.

OCTOBER 04

REFUGEES ON THE

STREETS: Twenty five Tamil families out of the hundred who were at the Mutu +wal refugee camp were roaming the streets after the camp was closed. Parishioners of the Church nearby where they first took shelter resented their presence and the Police chased them away when they gathered on the road by the Church.

OCTOBER 05

QUESTION DISALLOWED:

A question raised by SLFP MP Nimal Siripala de Silva in Parliament as to the conduct of Operation Yal Devi was disallowed although he contended that the matter was of national importance.

OCTOBER 06

PRESIDENT'S DENIAL:

President Wijetunge answering a question raised by the visiting Members of the European Parliament as to the possibility of avoiding aerial bombing in the North East denied that innocent civilians were targeted in these bombings.

OCTOBER 07

NINETY PER CENT ARE

TAMILS TIGERS: SLFP MP

Jinadasa Niyathapala speaking on the second reading of the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Bill in Parliament claimed that ninety per cent of the Tamils are Tamil Tigers. He stressed that extra vigilance was needed to ensure that no Tigers were returned to the country from where they had taken refuge.

OCTOBER 08

MUD SLIDE: Sixty persons were killed in the Malwala village in Ratnapura District when it was deluged in a mud slide after torrential rains.

OCTOBER 09

WAR ENDS IN OCTOBER'94:

Army commander speaking at a function at Anuradhapura assured that the war in the North East would be brought to a finish by October 94.

OCTOBER 10

KILALI BACK ON TRACK:

About fifty boats were in operation from Kilali across the prohibited Jaffna lagoon and over a thousand passengers crossed the lagoon.

OCTOBER 11

DEAD BODIES IN

NEGOMBO: A body with the throat cut was found at Baseline Road at Negombo town. Another body with the throat cut was found the previous night at Nicholas Marcus Road in this town. One of the bodies was identified as that of T.Raveendrarajah, a Tamil from Akkaraipatru in Ampara District presently living in Dematagoda, Colombo.

OCTOBER 12

EDF TRANSFORMED:

Eelavar Democratic Front the political wing of EROS in a statement announced that it was suspending all political activities and would in future concentrate in rehabilitation programmes. In line with their new perspective

the name of their organisation is changed to Eastern Development Foundation, the statement added.

OCTOBER 13

CORDON AND SEARCH:

Pandarikulam village in Vavuniya District was surrounded by troops at 4 a.m. and all residents were ordered to assemble at a public place in heavy rain where a hooded informant was screening them.

A similar search was conducted by police and troops in Kochikade area in Colombo between 8.30 p.m. and 1 a.m. where 40 Tamils were arrested.

OCTOBER 14

GENERALS AND

ELECTIONS: Army commander General Waidyaratne and Eastern Commander General Algama visited Batticaloa and discussed the security arrangements necessary for holding local elections in the East.

OCTOBER 15

PRIME MINISTER AND THE

ETHNIC PROBLEM: Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe met Secretary of State and State Department officials in USA where he said "we are in the process of containing armed conflict and terrorism while seeking a political solution to the ethnic problem".

ANOTHER FUEL PRICE

HIKE: Fuel prices were increased by Rs. 2 per litre for petrol and by 10 cents per litre for diesel.

OCTOBER 16

OPERATION CHAMPAGNE:

An army offensive code named CHAMPAGNE destroyed an LTTE camp in south Yan Oya in Trincomalee District in which eight Tigers were killed.

OCTOBER 17

ARRESTS BY MEN IN CIVIL

DRESS: N.Manoranjith (19 yrs.), P. Gobinathan (19 yrs.), V.Pathiparajah (19 yrs.) and

OCTOBER DIARY

N.Ramachandran (24 yrs.) were arrested at their homes in Kalubowila, Kirulapone, Wellawatte and Mt. Lavinia in Colombo respectively by officers in civilian clothes in the early hours of the morning and went missing. V.Pathiparajah was led away blindfolded. Hariharan and Sadeeshwaran (13 yrs.) from Kotahena too were similarly arrested at their homes and have gone missing. The missing persons are from among the hundreds of Tamils arrested in Colombo.

OCTOBER 18
ABDUCTION IN VAVUNIYA: R.Rajeswaran , the officer-in-charge of Seva Lanka, a volunteer organisation in Vavuniya was abducted by six armed and hooded men who arrived in a white van.

OCTOBER 19
VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE'S ADVISE: Associated Press reported that Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe was advised to pursue efforts in his country to strengthen observance of human rights. This report adds that US President Al Gore also applauded Sri Lanka's progress toward economic reform and sought the Prime Minister's views on peacefully settling Sri Lanka's civil war.

FOOL'S PARADISE: Speaking in Parliament SLMC leader M.H.M.Ashraff said military operations such as Yal Devi were driving the Tamil public into the arms of the LTTE.

OCTOBER 20
LTTE LOSE MEN: Security sources reported the killing of six LTTE cadres in a confrontation at Kannatti in Batticaloa District.

OCTOBER 21
POLITICAL SOLUTION IMPERATIVE: SLFP MP Anuruddha Ratwatte speaking in Parliament asserted that a political solution to the ethnic

problem was inevitable and said that the Tamils in Jaffna were being subjected to undue hardship by way of high commodity prices, lack of fuel and difficulties in education without electricity. He also questioned the necessity for the Yal Devi military operation.

OCTOBER 22:
HINDU HIGH PRIEST DETAINED: High priest of the Nallur temple was detained on suspicion by the Seeduwa police in Negombo District.

OCTOBER 23
HILL COUNTRY ARRESTS: Eighteen Tamil youths were arrested by police at the Bambarakalle estate in Nuwara Eliya District.

OCTOBER 24
KILALI BONE OF CONTENTION: At a press conference held at Thatchankulam army camp in Vavuniya District a high ranking army officer announced that intelligence reports indicated a resumption in boat traffic in the Jaffna lagoon and that another offensive would be launched to curtail it.

OCTOBER 25
BOAT SERVICE SUSPENDED: The Trincomalee - Point Pedro ship service was suspended due to turbulent seas. Passengers between the Jaffna islands and Trincomalee also used the service.

OCTOBER 26
YAL DEVI DISPLACES PEOPLE: Jaffna Government Agent (GA) K Manickavagar said around 9,000 families were displaced as a result of Operation Yal Devi. In Jaffna District currently these are 262,413 displaced persons belonging to 79,427 families, according to the GA.

OCTOBER 27
NEGOTIATIONS TO END

CRISIS: Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe on his return after attending the Commonwealth Conference in Cyprus informed at a press conference that the door for negotiations was still open to the LTTE. He said that even President Wijetunge had stated so at the opening of the Jayewardene Cultural Centre.

OCTOBER 28
HIDDEN AGENDA: Addressing government officials of the Ratnapura District President Wijetunge said that local elections would be held in the East as prelude for demerging the North East. Once demerged the North would be of a manageable proportion for it to be easily tackled, the President added.

OCTOBER 29
RELEASED ON BAIL: V.Yogarajah (31 yrs.) held in custody for thirty three days without being produced in courts was released on bail after his lawyer submitted that the only ground for suspicion was the fact that he was from the village of Valvettiturai in Jaffna District.

OCTOBER 30
REFUGEE RESENTMENT: Refugees at the Madhu camp supervised by the UNHCR demonstrated against the decision to stop relief from November and forcibly resettle eight thousand people in Vavuniya District. A sit-in around the UNHCR office prevented the officers leaving and the assurance that relief would be provided for another two weeks led to normalcy being restored in the camp.

OCTOBER 31
TAMIL ARRESTS: Over ten Tamil youths were arrested in the night by police while travelling in vehicles past the main Fort railway station in Colombo.

SITUATION REPORT

CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN BATTICALOA DISTRICT

A delegation from the YMCA southern region was recently on a friendship mission to the Batticaloa District. Members of this delegation were I.I.Thambirajah, Kimar Fernando, Marsh Fonseka, K.Thangamuthu, Sunil Hettiarachi, M.P.L. Fernando, S R Tissera, K.P.A. Wijeyakoon, J.Somanathar and Miss S. Fernando.

Their reports highlights that

- * public transport is limited to a few hours every day.
- * every article is allowed into the District under strict security checks
- * relief measures do not reach those in real need
- * inmates of refugee camps are in miserable conditins. In a particular camp 150 families were licing in tiny thatched huts.
- * refugees are not protected from the weather
- * refugees do not have proper food, clothing and toilet facilities
- * educational facilliteis are insatisfactory.

The YMCA's report has made the following recommendatins for greater social understanding-

- * YMCA branches in the eastern zone must strive for better standards at refugee camps
- * self-employment projects should be implemented
- * more marketing opportunities should be made available.
- * the YMCA branches in south Sri Lanka should run awareness programmes about the plight of the refugees among the Sinhalese population
- * it should be brought out that refugees are suffering not because of their own fault.

TAMIL COUPLE PENALISED FOR OBEYING COURT ORDERS

A Ariyakuhatas (33yrs) and wife Jeyamalar (33yrs) residing presently in Vavuniya were arrested on suspicion on 30 December at Kurunegala while travelling to Colombo to be present in Colombo courts on 5 October. He had been arrested in Colombo on suspicion following President Premadasa's assassination in May and released on bail, court fixing trial for 5 October.

The couple had been arrested while in a bus at Kurunagala bus stand. The national identity card and court documents were not accepted by the police who produced them before the Kurunegala Magistrate on 1 October. The Magistrate ordered bail at Rs.2,000 and fixed trial for 13 October.

With no money and no way of conveying their plight to relatives or friends the bail term could not be met and the couple were kept in remand custody in Kandy prison which is further away from their residence, Vavuniya and their destination Colombo.

The trauma couosed by arrest, remand custody and anxiety over the trial date inattended at Colombo courts have affected the health of A.Ariyakuhatas who is now under treatment. Their case was not heard on 13 October trial being postponed for 10 November.

MASS ARREST FOR BEING TAMILS

Police arrested hundreds of people in night raids in Colombo city for their being Tamils on 15/10/93.

SRI LANKA EXPOSED

Amnesty International in a recent report has listed six disappearances of Tamils in Colombo during October. The youngest in the list is a schoolboy aged 13 years.

In a second reference to a Sri Lanka's "Disappearances" Amnesty International has juxtaposed them with those in Guatemala. In doing so it says that this type of Human Rights violation occurs not only in dictatorships but also in countries practising democracy. Giant wall posters of this reference to Sri Lankan democracy and disappearances adorn the London underground stations.

The November issue of Readers Digest with a circulation of over millions also refers to Sri Lanka in its first article which deals with child abuse titled "Obscene Trade in the Orient".

Sri Lanka is classified herewith Thailand and Philippines where such abuses abound.

BOTTOMLESS PIT MILITARISATION

Five supplimentary estamates were presented in Parliament on 20th October to make up for additional funds over and above the amounts allocated in the budget for defence expenditure. The over all expenditure now sought is as follows-

- 1) Wages for Home Guards in border areas and Naval personnel - Rs.22 m
- 2) Compensation for soldiers killed - Rs.66.64 m
- 3) Navy - Rs.29m
- 4) Air Force - Rs.28.1m
- 5) Police -Rs.62.2m

SITUATION REPORT

TAMILS ARREST IN COLOMBO

Following the failure of operation Yal Devi security forces commenced a series of arrests in Colombo and its environs. Repeated reports in the media about LTTE infiltrators were used as cover for the waves of arrest of Tamils. Arrests were of such intensity from the second week in October that Amnesty International reported them as lobbying for its cessation.

It says that "The latest arrests show a complete failure by the Sri Lankan Government to implement the measures which it agreed with Tamil political leaders in June-which were intended to safeguard Tamils from just this kind of abuse,"

"Since June, there have been several waves of such arrests forming part of a pattern of human rights violations directed at the Tamil community, in which thousands of people appear to have been arrested solely on the basis of their ethnic origin,"

Cabinet minister S.Thondaman and several MPs have repeatedly spotlighted this gross violation of rights of citizens solely on the basis of their Tamil ethnic origin. About 200 Tamils had been cramped into a single police cell 30 feet by 15 feet according to the Minister.

There is no doubt that this persecution of Tamils in Colombo and its environs follows the Nazi example. Even some Muslims with names somewhat similar to Tamil names have been arrested as Tamils. The fact that Amnesty International has reported the persecution of Tamils only serves to establish beyond doubt what has been in existence over a period of time.

MARUTHI JEEPS SCANDAL

The latest scandal concerning purchases for the security outfit concerns the Indian made 'Maruthi Jeeps'. These petrol driven jeeps were purchased for the police. The Inspector General of Police contends that they are not general purpose vehicles and have only a limited role for administrative purpose uses. Former Defence Secretary General Cyril Ranatunge justified the purchase by comparing it with British made Land Rovers and claimed that Maruthi Vehicles performed well during the army operation *Balavegaya*.

A top defence ministry official has now said that Maruthi Jeeps are not a standard requirement as they cannot be used in volatile areas of North East.

It is significant that this 'Maruthi' purchase came up after Speaker Mohamed's assertion that the war is being continued by certain sections for their private gain.

DISPLACED PERSONS

The latest report of the Jaffna Secretariat puts the figure for displaced persons in the District at 262,413 from 79,422 families.

Preliminary surveys have indicated that 9,000 families were displaced as a direct result of the military offensive operation Yal Devi which commenced on 28 September.

OPERATION GRAND SLAM

Security reports indicated that 9 LTTE cadres were killed and 20 were wounded when their camp at Angodavillu in Polonnaruwa District was destroyed on 11 October.

ARMY CAMP: TORTURE CHAMBER

Fundamental rights applications taken up at the Supreme Court in Colombo on 09/ 09/ 93 in respect of Veerasingham Maheswaran and Arunasalam Katheeswaran two cousins from Alankeri, Kinniya in Trincomalee District have detailed the tortures inflicted on them at Seven Island army camp in Trincomalee. The perpetrators have been listed as a Sub Inspector of police and two constables.

Torture methods listed in the application are-

- a) Beating with batons / iron bars on soles of feet
- b) Being suspended beside a fire pit where refuse, fire wood and rubber tyres were used as fuel.
- c) Pouring petrol on exposed wounds

Severe scalding all over the body had been alleged as a consequence of torture method marked (b).

TAMILS EVICTED

Thirty nine Tamil families at Sri Ramapuram village in Vavuniya District on 10 October were given 24 hours to vacate their residences although they had been in residence for over 10 years. This eviction was to make way for a housing scheme planned in the area.

PUCKARAS GROUNDED

Air Force commander Terrence Gunethilake reported on 17/10/93 the grounding of three of the attack aircraft purchased from Argentina.

PRESIDENT'S FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER STARES HIM IN THE FACE

President Wijetunge's simplification of the decade long civil war as a terrorist problem which necessitated a military solution has given new momentum to Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. Former minister and Sinhala Defence League's President Gamini Jayasuriya welcomed the military solution as did the military establishment. The Buddhist clergy gave its blessings for war and Jathika chinthanaya, the ultra right upheld it. Even the once discredited Professor Nalin de Silva espoused it. The media followed suit.

This warm reception for a military solution had to be set in motion if the expectations raised were to be fulfilled. As expected the military had to deliver the goods. The men and equipment requested were made available and the army commander participated in several Buddhist functions and sought blessings from the clergy, which were readily extended. Regimental flags of war were anointed at special ceremonies at the Sacred Bo Tree in Anuradhapura, the very symbol of universal peace and renunciation of violence.

With unqualified backing from the politicians and the Buddhist clergy, the war machine trundled relentlessly. Janakapura and Dvora gunboat losses were two pit falls in the path. The President vented his anger at the first setback and was at a loss to blame anyone for the second, as the circumstances were so murky. The military was therefore goaded into the Yal Devi operation which again failed to deliver the killer punch. Withdrawal from Kilali brought every hawk down to earth. Politicians and the media looked for sacrificial lambs. The wrath of the war mongers first turned on the military. Political need for a military solution was

still not questioned but military strategy was disputed. Senior officers pleaded for avoiding the word debacle. But the casualty figures were too high for the declared "limited operation". General Waidyaratne is on record as calling the critics as "imbeciles". When failure had to be faced the military had to carry the can.

The failure of a military solution infuriated all the sections that had earlier espoused it. The government was in an unenviable position having set out on a military solution. The exponents of a political solution made their presence felt. Prime Minister Ranil Wickeramasinghe had to face Tamil parliamentarians and the press which included foreign journalists. With visits abroad he had to wear a statesman's garb. President Wijetunge too had to meet visiting dignitaries like Members of the European Parliament. It was inevitable that both had to compromise by having talks or mentioning negotiations.

But the war cry orchestrated by President Wijetunge and ably assisted by the Prime Minister had raised hopes so high that a point of no return had been reached without their realising it. They have now been hoisted on their own petard.

BUDDHIST CLERGY IN WAR CRY

Typical of the mood is that of the Ruhunu Rata Bhikku Peramuna. Its message to both the President and the Prime Minister is unambiguous. In a letter to the President they have sought the following

clarifications from both-

1. Is the government or the President ready to have talks with any person or organisation which supports the three point stand of the Tamils.

2. Is government ready to establish its control throughout the country.

The three point stand of the Tamils has been spelt out as:

- a). That the Tamils constitute a nation
- b). That North East is a Tamil homeland.
- c). That they have the right to self-determination.

The clergy in this letter have faulted the leaders for the following lapses:-

1. Prime Minister's statement in Parliament on 19 October that government had talks with Tamil parties on continuing the North East merger without a referendum, increasing powers of the Provincial Councils and a ceasefire with LTTE provided possession and use of weapons by anyone or group unless authorised by law is illegal.
2. Mr.D.B. Wijetunge's reference to the door being open for negotiations when the former Minister for Defence was killed.
3. Mr.D.B. Wijetunge's reference to the door being open for negotiations immediately after President Premadasa's death and the same sentiments being echoed by the Prime Minister.

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