

Tamil Information



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Peace or Propaganda?

Leader of the Sri Lankan delegation K. Balapatabendi said in the course of talks with the LTTE in Jaffna on 13 and 14 October that 'for the first time, since 1957, a Sri Lankan leader has publicly pledged herself to peacefully resolve Tamil grievances which are themselves perceived to be real and reasonable'.

The other members of the government delegation were Bank of Ceylon Chairman Rajan Asirwatham, Architect Navin Gunaratne and Information Ministry Secretary and former Jaffna Government Agent Lionel Fernando. LTTE was represented by *Karikalan*, Political Section Deputy leader, *Dominic*, Administrative Services, *Ravi*, head of Tamil Eelam Economic Development Organisation (TEEDO) and Ilamparuthy.

A joint statement signed by *Karikalan* and K. Balapatabendi was issued following the discussions. The need for a ceasefire and the ending of the sufferings of the people was stressed by *Karikalan*. It was said that the government delegation had been mandated by Prime Minister Chandrika to discuss how best the government can alleviate the hardships of daily life presently experienced by the people, both in terms of the enhanced supply of essential goods, as well as the restriction of services and repairs of damaged utilities, with a view to achieving conditions conducive to an eventual ceasefire. Opening of a safe passage for civilians between the Jaffna peninsula and the mainland and resettlement of refugees were also discussed.

On his return to Colombo,

Lionel Fernando said the present administrative structure of the LTTE in the North will help devolution. Other delegates were of the view that further discussions were necessary to remove years of mistrust. Although Tamils feel that there is hope for peace, many accept that it would take years to arrive at a permanent solution. LTTE would also be very cautious. LTTE's objective still remains the same - the establishment of Tamil Eelam, the only acceptable solution to the wedged Sri Lankan problem. Political observers say LTTE leader V Prabhakaran will find it difficult to shift from this position without substantial devolution of powers and the guarantee of total security for Tamils. The general position of Tamils including other Tamil parties and groups is somewhat similar to LTTE thinking. However, there are others who for various reasons and in particular those who seek positions in the government and others who are obliged to various stakeholders

in Sri Lankan politics have different views. "It is difficult to trust any Sinhalese government", say some. "Their attitude towards Tamils has not changed much" say others. "Chandrika like the UNP hasn't put forward any proposals for settlement and she is a lone runner and she has no strength to sustain pressures of Sinhala chauvinism", claims another section. "India will create problems. They want the settlement in Sri Lanka to be only on their terms", is the view of many others. And, now following the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake and others the talks have been postponed indefinitely. These killings have resulted in the deepening of the crisis within the UNP.

"You are aware that there are elements within the army who prefer war to peace. They are in high positions at Colombo, not among troops in camps. I believe we have good control over the army. We will not allow them to do whatever they feel is correct."

"We do not accept the policies of the LTTE. But the army has maintained its influence during the past eleven years. They have been a government unto themselves. In our talks with top army officers we felt that their line of thinking is that we should not take decisions without their approval. Our government does not accept this position. Unlike the previous government we have left the army abreast of the events."

Chandrika Kumaranatunga, Prime Minister

According to reports, Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunga is keen to resolve the protracted Sri Lankan conflict. However, members of her government continue to make the errors made by successive governments, by making statements

which give expression to the perception that the Tamils and other minorities should expect and depend on "concessions" granted by the majority Sinhalese community. The

minorities must be accepted as equal partners in nation building and their legitimate rights must be respected and appropriate measures taken to guarantee the rights. Since assuming office some PA politicians have been making statements to satisfy the majority Sinhalese community. History has shown that such an attitude will only further fester the wound of discord.

Parliament speaker K. B. Ratnayake addressing Hartley College old boys and other members of the Tamil community in London during his recent visit said that the PA government partially lifted the economic blockade of the North as a 'goodwill gesture'. Tamils say this cannot be regarded as a goodwill gesture. The question as to why the blockade was imposed must be asked. The blockade was imposed under Emergency regulations allegedly to prevent the banned items falling into the hands of the LTTE. The ban on essential goods severely affected the people resulting in thousands of deaths, including children. Army officers have openly admitted that the LTTE had free access to all the banned items, many of which were openly sold in Jaffna markets and shops. Army officers have also admitted that the blockade was intended as a strategy to turn the people against the LTTE. The issue here is not the number of items that are banned or released. What matters to the Tamil people is the intention behind the blockade. Intention continues while the blockade continues. Therefore the statements of Chandrika and others that some items are allowed as a 'goodwill gesture' have no meaning to the Tamil people.

Ceasefire had also been dis-

cussed by the delegations in Jaffna. The Army fears that if a ceasefire is agreed, LTTE would be able to move freely and has the capacity to seize the East. The Army is reluctant to agree for a ceasefire because it also believes that the LTTE would establish administrative machineries in the East as in the North, which would be difficult to dismantle if the need arose. The LTTE has made it clear that it will not accept any dismantling of its administrative structures in the North. If permanent peace is to be achieved this reality must be appreciated.

Reports say that doubts had been cast by people in the government and others over the ability of the LTTE team to match the negoti-

" The ordinary Sinhalese people don't want the war to continue. We know very well that they want only peace. The results of the recent elections also show this. We want a permanent settlement, and for everyone to live in harmony "

V Prabhakaran, LTTE Leader

ating skills of the government delegation. These are attempts to bring about obstacles to the talks, observers say. Other reports indicate that 'peace proposals' are in abundance and continue to be received by Prime Minister Chandrika. The number of "peace makers" are also on the increase. It appears that Chandrika and Prabhakaran do not wish any outside interference, at least for the time being. Meanwhile, a number of Tamil expatriates, with good intentions probably, are turning out proposals for the resolution of the conflict which they see through Western eyes without appreciating the true situation in Sri Lanka. Many feel that such proposals would only confuse issues and weaken the bargaining position of the Tamils.

In his discussions with the Tamil Information Centre, TULF MP Joseph Pararajasingam said that

the role of Tamil representatives must be to create conditions and facilitate talks between the government and the LTTE and not suggest solutions which may affect any negotiations. This was the view of the TULF, and Mr. Pararajasingam was of the opinion that all other Tamil representatives in Colombo would also support such a position.

TIC also received a number of queries and comments from a cross-section of people who are concerned about the deteriorating political and economic situation in Sri Lanka. They sincerely believe, for the negotiations to succeed and to arrive at a permanent settlement, apart from the issues mentioned above, there must be openness on both sides and all agreements must be publicised. It is also important for many that a pronouncement as to who are the main parties in the negotiations, that is, the government and the LTTE, while preventing interference, will assist in the conduct of result-oriented negotiations. Most people believe that other parties (eg. opposition parties and other Tamil parties) should be allowed to contribute to the settlement, only at a secondary level, submitting their ideas to whichever party they choose. Others feel in case of a ceasefire, an agreement by both parties for the appointment of an impartial independent ceasefire monitoring body, would assist in preventing the breaking down of the talks. It has been observed earlier, parties have broken away from negotiations accusing each other of ceasefire violations. The same committee could also investigate complaints of interference by third parties such as foreign nations.

Some people feel that a time frame for implementation of decisions is important. The general public must be informed of the time frame for implementation of decisions. An example would be restoration of electricity. If electricity

supply is to be restored the public must know as to when the job will be completed. This will go a long way in restoring public confidence and encourage the next stages of negotiations. It is also the view of some, if any area during negotiations proves to be problematic, both parties must speak about it publicly, of course maintaining the confidentiality that may be required.

War Lobby

The quest for peace in the country after the advent of the People's Alliance government has been a body blow to the war lobby. Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunga herself alluded to this in an interview to the BBC on 17 October.

Lionel Fernando one of the negotiators with the LTTE appears to be more informative of the war lobby. The Sinhalese daily *Lanka-deepa* quoted him and he attributed political advantage, commercial benefit and private expectations as reasons for the existence of the war lobby. The People's Alliance in its election campaign repeatedly charged the governing UNP with reaping political advantage out of the conduct of a meaningless war. The Prime Minister did not deny military officers enriching themselves through the war. Several arms purchases had been alleged as fraudulent which sought only to bring commercial benefit to the local agents and through them to those in power.

The print media pandered to the war lobby both for commercial benefit and private expectations. Defence desks in the dailies sought to outbid each other by suggesting better ways for winning the war. The interception of enemy communications by the security forces was given publicity while lightning strikes by the LTTE

caught the troops unawares on many occasions with heavy loss of life. Defence correspondents failed or were unwilling to see through the claims made by accommodating defence sources. The media acquiesced with the political advantage sought by the ruling party through a pursuit of war by turning a blind eye to the human cost of the war. The media was striving to outdo the forces themselves in running the war. In helping the war lobby the print media was trying to widen the circulation and the defence correspondents were trying to secure their pay packets. The rural youth who are the backbone of the forces in the meanwhile became cannon fodder which fact was conveniently shut out before the so-called Nation's interests.

When in fact negotiations did start the media still could not come to terms with the possibility of peace. The *Island* in its editorial column dubbed the government negotiators as "NEOPHYTES". The jitteryness of the war lobby needs no further evidence than this description of the negotiators - a remark in the backdrop of the H. W. Jayewardenes, S.L. Gunasekeras, S. Attygales, C. Ranatunagas, B. Weerakoons etc. who all miserably failed to bring peace - but did not merit mention. The media refuses to grab the opportunity for peace as beneficial to all citizens and continues to indulge in scoring points through stacking as many impediments to peace as possible.

In the face of the war lobby which will not give up easily the luxury of millions of rupees it has earned thus far, the government will need strong support from the silent majority that has disavowed war and voted for the peace pledge of the Peoples' Alliance. The trust placed in the quest for peace by the electorate needs to be translated into concrete peace building measures and this should be done at all costs inspite of the war lobby which alone stands to lose.

Lack of Sanitary facilities in the Plantations

The parlous sanitary conditions in the plantation sector was highlighted by a tragedy recently at Sita Eliya estate at Deniyaya in the Matara District. Family members of the employees numbering over one hundred and fifty occupying the line rooms had not a single toilet built by the management. The occupants of the line rooms had to use the surrounding woods and the river bank to answer calls of nature. Subramaniam Ranjan, a 7 year-old resident of the estate was washed away in the river while attempting to clean himself after the usual call of nature.

At the inquest held into the death of the boy coroner Ranasinghe criticised the estate management for not providing drinking water or toilets to its employees while not failing to exploit their labour.

INFANT DEATHS CONTINUE UNABATED IN THE NORTH

The Regional Director of Health, Jaffna has reported 271 infant deaths for the period January to September 1994. The figure for the period between January and April was 94. The latest figure confirms that the trend continues to be alarming.

The breakdown of primary health care in the North is having a devastating impact on the general health status of the population. Majority of the infant deaths according to the Regional Director of Health had been caused by anaemia among mothers which reflects malnourished state.

TIC ACCESSION LIST

A selection of documents received by the Centre in
September/October 1994

SHR 3405

Sri Lanka: new report calls for urgent reform to end censorship

London: Article 19; 31st October 1994

2p

DESCRIPTORS: Freedom of Expression/Recommendations/Sri Lanka

SHR 3406

Internal Flight Alternative

Denmark: Danish Refugee Council; 17th June 1994

3p

DESCRIPTORS: Repatriation/Sri Lankan Tamils/UNHCR/Passive Monitoring/Refugees

SHR 3414

Jayasinghe, Nanda

Indo-Sri Lankan Relations and the Problem of Indian Plantation Labour 1910-1931

Kelaniya: University of Kelaniya; 1987

Vol. IV; 266p-307p

DESCRIPTORS: India/Sri Lanka/Up-Country Tamils/Foreign Relations

SHR 3417

Gunalan, E. G.

Information on Health Facilities in Trincomalee District

Trincomalee: Sri Lanka Red Cross Society; 2nd July 1994

20p

DESCRIPTORS: Medical Facilities/Trincomalee District

SHR 3418

Bala, S. S.

Peace Constitution for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka: Swastika (Private) Ltd;

1994

30p

DESCRIPTORS: Peace Initiative/Ethnic Problem/Sri Lanka/Statistics

SHR 3427

Peace Proposals

Sri Lanka: World Solidarity Forum Sri Lanka Group; 1994

(Collection of articles from different publications)

DESCRIPTORS: Peace Initiative/Ethnic Problem/Sri Lanka

PB

Coomaraswamy, Radhika

Chelvanayakam, Wilson and the Tamil Politics

Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies; February 1994

Vol. 7; No. 1; 8p

DESCRIPTORS: Biography/Chelvanayakam/Politics

SGN 405

Cantitasekatan, S

Ilanikaiyit Kalvi

India: Kavita Patippakam; 1993

119p (text in tamil)

DESCRIPTORS: Education/Sri Lanka

PC 4758

We are not enemies of the Sinhala people: interview with V. Prabhakaran

Frontline: 21st October, 1994

3p

DESCRIPTORS: Interview/LTTE

SEPTICAEMIA IN JAFFNA - A FACET OF MEDICAL DEPRIVATION

High incidence of death from septicaemia among children in Jaffna was the subject of a study in October by a Senior Lecturer of the North Colombo Medical College. The report on the study shows that:-

- culture of blood, a facility vital to identify the micro-organisms causing it and to identify the antibiotic that would respond to them is not available at the Jaffna hospital.

- no competent persons are available to use any little facility available to do these tests.

- using the facilities available at the Jaffna University microbiology laboratory two varieties of septicaemia were recognised, one affecting children under ten years and the other affecting all age groups.

- malnutrition is a major factor for the disease as is also the non-availability of drugs even after the suitable drug has been identified.

- norflaoxacin and ciprofloxacin needed for treating the second variety are in short supply.

The recommendations made are that drugs and nutrition promoting items be sent to the Director of General Hospital Jaffna and that materials like culture media and antibiotic sensitivity discs be sent to the Faculty of Medicine, Jaffna.

They can also be sent to Vivekananda Society in Colombo or any other NGO doing relief work.

SEPTEMBER DIARY

SEPTEMBER 01

PM TALKS TO SERVICE CHIEFS: Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunga had talks lasting three hours with the service Commanders and the Inspector General of Police on the war situation, the available public services and the day to day problems of the civilians and soldiers in the North-East.

FOOT PATROL KILLS MILITANTS: Soldiers on a foot patrol proceeding to Burgher Camp in the Wegamvehera area of Trincomalee District clashed with armed men. Two bodies along with firearms were later recovered by the troops.

SEPTEMBER 02

PEACE MOVES: At a press conference held for foreign media personal in Jaffna the LTTE announced its unconditional readiness for peace talks with the government and a cessation of hostilities.

SEPTEMBER 03

LTTE CAPTIVES RELEASED: Ten prisoners of war held in captivity by the LTTE for fifty months were released to the ICRC.

SEPTEMBER 04

SPREAD OF DIARRHOEA: A rapid spread of diarrhoea disease was reported in the Kilinochchi District and several areas of the Vavuniya District.

SEPTEMBER 05

CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN JAFFNA: The Jaffna Government Agent met Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunga in Colombo to appraise her of the situation in Jaffna.

SEPTEMBER 06

NAVAL FIRE KILLS FISHERMEN: Two fishermen were killed at sea off the coast of Point Pedro by cannon fire from naval vessels in the

area.

EMERGENCY RULE RESTRICTED: A motion was passed in parliament whereby Emergency was restricted to the North-East Province and its border areas.

SEPTEMBER 07

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY PLANTATION WORKERS: A reduction in the number of working days in tea plantations in the Hatton area of Nuwara Eliya District led to strike action by 1,750 plantation workers.

FISHERMEN TARGETED: Two fishermen went missing off the Poonakari coast in the Kilinochchi District. Their bodies were later recovered with gunshot wounds.

LTTE AMBUSHED: Three LTTE guerrillas were killed when government troops ambushed them at Pothuwakatuwa in Manal Aru area in Trincomalee District.

DISPLACED CIVILIAN SHOT DEAD BY SOLDIERS: S. Thirunavukarasu (45 yrs) who was displaced from Pandatharippu and living at Suthumalai in Jaffna District was shot dead by soldiers while collecting firewood on a visit to his house.

SEPTEMBER 08

SOLDIERS AMBUSHED: Soldiers from Poonakari army camp lying in ambush for guerrillas were surprised by the latter. Two soldiers were killed and five others injured in the incident.

SEPTEMBER 09

GOVERNMENT PREFERS ELEPHANT PASS ROUTE: Deputy Minister of Defence Col. Anurudha Ratwatte, in a press conference pointed out that the government preferred to open Elephant Pass for travel and transportation of goods as a safe passage to the Jaffna

Peninsula because Sangupiddy needs repair leading to delay.

SEPTEMBER 10

YOUTH KILLED: A youth named *Das* described as a local leader of the LTTE was killed by security forces at Kaluvankerny in Batticaloa District.

SEPTEMBER 11

ELECTRIFICATION: A team from Ceylon Electricity Board was in Batticaloa to study the possibility of restoration of 132 KV electricity supply that has been abandoned since the outbreak of hostilities in June 1990.

SEPTEMBER 12

LTTE NOMINATES NEGOTIATORS: The LTTE nominated its team of negotiators for peace talks with the Government in a message sent to the Prime Minister through the ICRC.

SEPTEMBER 13

COUNCILLOR KILLED: Village Councillor of Eravurpattu in Batticaloa District and TELO member T. Jeyarajan (30 yrs) was shot dead in his office at 10.00 am by a lone gunman.

SEPTEMBER 14

EXHUMATION CONTINUES: Human bones, dentures and hair were unearthed when mass graves were again dug at Suriyakanda in Ratnapura District.

SEPTEMBER 15

SKELETONS UNEARTHED: Three skeletons and wearing apparel were unearthed from another alleged mass grave at Wariyapola in Matale District.

SEPTEMBER 16

CIVILIANS KILLED: Three civilians were killed and seven were injured while picking fruits, by troops lying in ambush at Nedun-

SEPTEMBER DIARY

kerny-Katkulam Road in Mullaitivu District.

FISHERMAN INJURED: A fisherman was injured while at sea off the Pannai coast in Jaffna District by shellfire directed from Mandaitivu army camp and was admitted to Jaffna hospital in a critical state.

SEPTEMBER 17

VESSELS HIJACKED AT SEA: Five boats engaged in transporting supplies between Kalpitty in Puttalam District and Mannar were hijacked off the Silavathurai coast.

TAMILS QUESTIONED: Tamil occupants of hotels and lodging houses in Colombo were subjected to questioning by police teams.

SEPTEMBER 18

FISHERMAN KILLED: A fisherman was killed and seven others were injured in naval attacks off Point Pedro coast in Jaffna District.

SEPTEMBER 19

NAVY LOSES VESSEL: Sagarawardena, the off shore patrol craft was sunk off the Mannar coast in an LTTE attack. Over twenty-six sailors were killed while two officers including the Captain were taken prisoner. Six LTTE cadres also died.

EXPLOSION CLAIMS LTTE FIGHTERS: Six women cadres of the LTTE were reported killed in an explosion in Jaffna.

SEPTEMBER 20

COMMANDO KILLED: One police commando was killed in an army operation at Vellavelly in Batticaloa District.

SEPTEMBER 21

CLASHES IN THE EAST: Operational headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported the killing of six soldiers and two LTTE cadres in confrontations at Saabinagar in Trincomalee District and at

Santhimalai in Batticaloa District.

SEPTEMBER 22

HOMEGUARDS KILLED: Three Home Guards on duty at Yakawewa in Anuradhapura District were killed by the LTTE.

ATTACK IN MANNAR: Two soldiers were killed when a party on guard at the jetty at Tharapuram in Mannar District was attacked by the LTTE.

SEPTEMBER 23

ACCUSED IN DISAPPEARANCES: Four soldiers and the school principal accused over the disappearance of thirty-one school children from Embilipitiya in the Ratnapura District were produced in courts by the police.

REFUGEE RETURNS: A batch of 1,210 Tamil refugees returned to Trincomalee by ship from Tamil Nadu in India.

SECURITY POST TARGETED: The security post at Pallikudiyiruppu in Trincomalee District came under attack by the LTTE. Three soldiers and two LTTE cadres died in this encounter.

SEPTEMBER 24

ARRESTS IN EAST: Thanthamalai, Pavatkodichchenai and Pancholai villages in Batticaloa District were surrounded by security personnel who arrested twelve persons on suspicion after screening.

AMBUSH IN MANAL ARU: A group of LTTE members were ambushed by soldiers at the 11th Mile Post at Manal Aru in the Trincomalee District.

SEPTEMBER 25

HOLDING THE FORT: A senior army officer disclosed that soldiers launched a pre-emptive strike with air cover against LTTE concentrations beside their lines at Atchuvely in Jaffna District in which

thirty bodies were recovered. Two soldiers were killed and eight were injured according to the spokesman. Batticaloa MP Joseph Pararajasingam however, in a message to the President said that six civilians were killed and over thirty injured.

SEPTEMBER 26

RETURNEES REACH NORTH: Around 348 refugee families from Tamil Nadu reached temporary refugee camps in Vavuniya.

SEPTEMBER 27

PLOTE MEMBER KILLED: One Home Guard was killed when the security post at Kathankudi in Batticaloa District came under attack. T. Ponnambalam a member of PLOTE was shot dead by unidentified men at Batticaloa.

SEPTEMBER 28

TROOPS AMBUSHED: Soldiers from the army camp at Pulipainthakal in Batticaloa District suffered thirteen casualties in an LTTE ambush.

AERIAL BOMBING: Eechchankulam and Kalmadu villages in Vavuniya District were targeted by air force planes. Shell fire was also directed at these villages from the army camp in Vavuniya.

SEPTEMBER 29

PLANTATION PROTEST: Three hundred plantation workers in the Nagalle estate in Matale District struck work in protest at plans to convert the factory building into an animal farm.

SEPTEMBER 30

KILLINGS CONTINUE: Kandiah Karunaratne (33 yrs) of Vavuniya-Kandy Road in Vavuniya District was gunned down by unidentified persons.

OCTOBER DIARY

OCTOBER 01

HEIGHTENED TENSION: A helicopter fired from the air while troops at the Batticaloa airport camp opened up with shellfire and gunfire from 9.35 p.m. to midnight. The false alarm ended with no casualties.

OCTOBER 02

SNIPER FIRE: Operational headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported the killing of two LTTE men by army sniper fire at Thellipalai in Jaffna District.

OCTOBER 03

HALT TO OFFENSIVES: An army officer confirmed the suspension of offensive operations in the North. Deputy Ministry for Defence however denied the statement.

TROOP AMBUSH: Defence Ministry sources reported the killing of a LTTE cadre in a troop ambush at Verugal in Trincomalee District.

OCTOBER 04

GRAVE DIGGING: Remains of three bodies were recovered from a grave at Hokandara in Colombo District. Court was petitioned that extra-judicial killings took place in the area earlier.

OCTOBER 05

SEARCH OPERATION: Troops killed one LTTE member in a search operation at Koraitivu in Trincomalee District.

OCTOBER 06

REFUGEE DEATHS: Bodies of five Tamil refugees were recovered from a well near the Palavaththan-nor refugee camp in Tamil Nadu, India.

OCTOBER 07

SOLDIERS REMANDED: Six soldiers including a Brigadier were remanded by the Magistrate at Embilipitiya over the disappearance

of thirty-one school children during the clamp down on JVP activity.

UPCOUNTRY LEADER FREED: Upcountry Peoples' Front leader P. Chandrasekaran was cleared of charges that he harboured he suspect in the JOC bombing incident. Court held that the alleged confession obtained from the accused was false.

JETTY UNDER ATTACK: Two soldiers guarding the jetty at China Bay in Trincomalee District were killed in an LTTE raid.

OCTOBER 08

PEACE BUILDING: Rotary Club officials from the Colombo area visited Jaffna to organise social contacts between the Tamil and Sinhala communities.

OCTOBER 09

SUPPLY VESSEL SUNK: A ship discharging cement and asbestos sheets to the Elephant Pass army camp in Kilinchchi District was sunk in an explosion off Vetrilaikerni coast. The communications equipment in the ship was removed by LTTE cadres.

OCTOBER 10

INDIA WORRIED OVER TALKS: Indian State Minister of Home Affairs said in a BBC interview that India was concerned about peace talks between LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. He also said that India was watching developments closely.

OCTOBER 11

TROOP RAMPAGE: Following the killing of two soldiers on bicycles in Mannar, troops went on the rampage firing, assaulting and smashing window panes. Cyril Banda a Sinhalese trader died within his house and several passers-by were injured.

ATTACK IN THE EAST: Two

commandos were killed around 9.15 p.m. at Manalchenai in Amparai District when they came under LTTE attack.

SOLDIERS KILLED IN MANAL ARU: Seven soldiers and a civilian travelling in a tractor at Manal Aru in Mullaitivu District died in an LTTE attack.

OCTOBER 12

COMMANDOS KILLED: Two commandos at the Badurakandiya watch in Amparai District were killed in an LTTE attack.

TASK FORCE JEEP TARGETED:

A jeep carrying Police Commandos came under attack at Sorikkalmunai, (in Kanlmunai) in Amparai District. Two police men were killed in the incident.

OCTOBER 13

SOLDIERS RUN AMOK: Following the killing of two police commandos in the area troops ran amok in the 39th colony at Pattirippu in Batticaloa District. Residences of V. Parasuraman and S. Arulampalam were set alight and civilians were beaten up. Villagers fled their homes and took refuge in a school building.

OCTOBER 14

ABDUCTION IN COLOMBO: I. Sivapragasam the owner of a lodging house at Bambalapitiya in Colombo where many Tamils stay was abducted by two men in army uniform and another in commando uniform who arrived in a jeep at 5.30 a.m. A ransom demand was made to his wife for release.

OCTOBER 15

MASS GRAVE IN KANDY: Remains of thirty-one bodies were recovered from a mass grave at Ankumbura in Kandy following the petitioning of court over dis-

OCTOBER DIARY

appearances.

OCTOBER 16

VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE: An estimate prepared by the REPIA indicates 15,500 public servants in the east had been victims of violence and are entitled to compensation. All Sinhalese among this number had received compensation and the Tamils and Muslims await payment.

OCTOBER 17

PRIME MINISTER SPEAKS OUT: In an interview to the BBC Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaranatunga spoke of the war mentality among the officer corps in the armed forces and the desire for peace among the frontier troops.

INDUSTRIAL STRIFE: Plantation workers at the Dambullagalle Estate in Matale District struck work over the shorter number of working days.

ANOTHER GRAVE DIGGING: Three human skeletons were recovered from a grave at Petiyatenne, Rakwana in Ratnapura District following a court order.

OCTOBER 18

RECIPROCAL GESTURE: The LTTE released nine Sinhalese fishermen in their custody through the ICRC.

OCTOBER 19

MINISTER PLEDGES TO CLOSE DOWN REFUGEE CAMPS: Minister in charge of Rehabilitation M.H.M. Ashraff speaking at the Town Council hall in Amparai said all refugee camps would be closed down by December thereby making the Rehabilitation Ministry redundant.

OCTOBER 20

COUNCILLOR SHOT AT: S. Krishnananthan local Councillor of the Valaichchenai Pradeshiya Sabha

in Batticaloa District was shot and injured. In a search of the area by security forces a suspected LTTE member took his life by taking cyanide.

OCTOBER 21

COMMANDO CASUALTIES: Two Special Task Force Commandos succumbed in an LTTE attack at Lellaveli, Thumpankerni in Batticaloa District.

LEAFLETS FROM THE SKY: Reports said that leaflets dropped by the airforce over Jaffna invited "all Tamil brothers and sisters to live peacefully without fighting".

OCTOBER 22

BOUNDARIES TO BE CHANGED: Minister of Agriculture and Landa D M Jayaratne said that it was the intention of the PA government to redemarcate the boundaries of the North-East in arriving at a solution to the ethnic issue.

OCTOBER 23

FAST TO DEATH: Batticaloa MP Thurairajasingham intervened to postpone a fast unto death by twenty-six Tamil detainees held indefinitely at Batticaloa prison without trial.

OCTOBER 24

MAYHEM AT RALLY: Opposition presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake and fifty-three others including eighteen security personnel were killed at midnight in an explosion at an election rally at Grandpass in Colombo.

OCTOBER 25

NEW OPPOSITION CANDIDATE: Srma, widow of Gamini Dissanayake was chosen by the UNP as its presidential candidate.

OCTOBER 26

TAMIL ARRESTS IN COL-

OMBO: Following the explosion that killed opposition leader Gamini Dissanayake and others police reported the arrest on suspicion of thirty-five Tamils from the North-East.

OCTOBER 27

FISHERMEN KILLED BY NAVY: Naval fire claimed the lives of nine lobster fishermen off the Aripputhurai coast in Mannar District. These fishermen had earlier been refugees at the Madhu refugee camp. Defence Ministry in a report referring to the incident claimed six LTTE members were killed and three went missing after the naval attack at 2.00 p.m.

OCTOBER 28

LTTE AMBUSHED: Troops lying in ambush at Indiyadi in Batticaloa District killed two LTTE members.

OCTOBER 29

MILITANT KILLED: Operational Headquarters of the Defence Ministry reported the killing of one militant at Kandamurivukulam in Batticaloa District.

OCTOBER 30

WOMAN ASSASSIN IN PHOTOGRAPHS: Police said they had discovered that the suspected woman suicide bomber who was responsible for bomb blast which killed Gamini Dissanayake and 50 others, appears in photographs Taken during the UNP meeting.

OCTOBER 31

TAMILS ARRESTED: Reports said that over 50 LTTE suspects were arrested in Colombo by police in Lodges and Chummaries in connection with the assassination of UNP leader Gamini Dissanayake.

Tamil Refugees say Gamini's misdeeds caught up with him

Opposition leader and UNP presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake and 53 others were killed in a bomb explosion during an election rally at Thottalanga in the Grandpass area of the Colombo city in the early hours of 24 October. Former ministers G.M. Premachandra, Weerasinghe Mallimarachchi and UNP organiser Christy Perera were among those killed. Sri Lanka People's Party (SLMP) leader Ossi Abeygunasekera sustained serious injuries and his condition was critical.

The UNP blames the LTTE for the assassination. Mr. Dissanayake's brother-in-law and former Plan Implementation Secretary Wickrema Weerasooriya alleges that Mr. Dissanayake had been receiving death threats in the last few months. The Tigers have denied involvement. The police say a suicide bomber was responsible and have arrested over 300 Tamils in Colombo including a doctor. The head of a woman, the alleged assassin, has been sent to Britain's Scotland Yard for forensic examination. Even before investigations began, Sri Lankan newspapers had concluded that the LTTE had carried out the assassination. Following the example by Indian newspapers after the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, graphic details with maps were published. The immediate aim of the newspapers seems to be to make use of the opportunity to increase sales.

The UNP appointed Srimathy, the mourning wife of Mr Dissanayake as the presidential candidate despite opposition within the party, with the sole aim of winning sympathy votes. She appeared on TV wearing a white saree the mark of

widowhood. Many people are appalled that such a tragedy which has an immense impact on the family has been used by the UNP for political gain.

Meanwhile, accusations and counter-accusations follow. Some observers argue that the assassination was carried out by the LTTE to destabilise the South, and getting rid of Gamini who was close to India would be in the Tiger's interest in the long-term. Others believe that sections in the military which are opposed to the peace process were responsible. Inspector General of Police Frank Silva has suggested that the killing may be an "inside job". Reports say UNP MPs who went to discuss Frank Silva's statement with President DB Wijetunge were unceremoniously shown the door. Former minister and UNP General Secretary Sirisena Cooray is also a suspect. Mr. Cooray was vehemently opposed to Gamini returning to the UNP after leaving the party to form the Democratic United National Front (DUNF) with Lalith Athulathmudali, following an impeachment motion in Parliament against President Premadasa in August 1991. The ruling People's Alliance government says that it will refrain from accusing anyone but pursue the investigations with vigour. The government also points to the fact that the killings of President Premadasa and Lalith Athulathmudali were not investigated properly. The place on Armour Street where President Premadasa was killed, had been thoroughly cleaned within hours, thus preventing any examination. The reason given by the police and politicians was that the people who were present would become psycho-

logically affected. But the gory scene of mangled bodies was shown on several occasions to millions of viewers on TV.

Some journalists, particularly Western reporters, have attempted to portray Gamini Dissanayake as a honest statesman who believed in equality and the welfare of the nation. Many Sri Lankans are convinced that he was a man who would do anything to gain power. He is said to have amassed wealth and with Wickrema Weerasooriya and other relatives had acquired vast tracts of land in Australia. Sources say that Gamini had also acquired immovable property in parts of Tamil Nadu with the help of rich Hill Country Tamil repatriates whom he had assisted when they were in Sri Lanka. This had been made easy by his close links with the Indian government and CWC leader S Thondaman. Sources also say the close rapport between Mr Thondaman and Mr Dissanayake stemmed from their common interests in Tamil Nadu. Indian politicians had trust in him and he always contended that India had a role in the affairs of Sri Lanka. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987, presented as a cure for the Sri Lankan conflict, was signed due to the ceaseless efforts behind the scenes by Gamini Dissanayake. As a result he fell out with R. Premadasa, Prime Minister at the time, who was a declared opponent to the agreement and any intervention by India.

Some Western journalists have also sought to deny his involvement in anti-Tamil activities. Many Tamil refugees and expatriates are angered by the report of John Rettie in the Guardian (published from London) and have provided details of Gamini's acts against the Tamil com-

munity. This they say is an attempt, as the Tamil saying goes, "to hide a pumpkin in a plate of rice". Tamils were surprised how a reputed journalist like John Rettie, who is currently living in India, could make fundamental errors in his reporting.

Regarding the burning of the Jaffna public library in 1981, Nancy Murray said in an article in *Race and Class* (Vol XXVI No.1), the journal published by the London-based Institute of Race Relations: "... With several high-ranking Sinhalese security officers and two cabinet ministers, Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanayake (both self-confessed Sinhala supremacists), present in the town, uniformed security men and plain clothes thugs carried out some well-organised acts of destruction. They burned to the ground certain chosen targets - including the Jaffna public library, with its 95,000 volumes and priceless manuscripts, a Hindu Temple, the office and machinery of the independent Tamil daily newspaper *Eelanadu*, the house of the MP of Jaffna, the headquarters of the TULF, and more than 100 shops and markets. Four people were killed outright". With the burning of the library, the symbol of the Tamils' cultural identity any hope of reconciliation was lost and the armed struggle gained momentum.

In recent years Gamini had been denying that he was responsible for the destruction of the library and said that he arrived in Jaffna only after it was burned. However, it is well known that this is not true. The destruction in the town had been planned and executed with military precision. The targets had been chosen beforehand with a purpose. *Eelanadu* office was destroyed because it published the *Eelanadu* newspaper with wide circulation in the North-East and was used to create awareness of the problems of the Tamil-speaking

people and in the promotion of culture. Jaffna MP V. Yogeswaran's house was burned because he was in the forefront of campaigns and popular among militant youths and an ardent believer in the liberation struggle. TULF office was gutted, for it was the TULF which resolved at its annual convention in 1976 to pursue the establishment of a separate state on the basis of self-determination. Destruction of the market was perceived as necessary as its walls and shop-fronts were being used as the main display board for slogans and information, and as a lesson to the Tamil traders.

During the destruction of the Jaffna town, Cyril Mathew and his henchmen including the present Elections Commissioner Chandrananda de Silva who was then Additional Secretary to the Lands Ministry, were staying at the "Kings House" inside Jaffna Fort. Gamini Dissanayake was wined and dined at the house of a petrol-shed owner and timber merchant, who now lives in Britain. At the time the timber merchant was involved in smuggling freshly-cut satinwood hidden amidst firewood from the north to the south. On one occasion he was caught smuggling by a Divisional Forest Officer who was ordered by the then Lands and Mahaweli Minister Gamini Dissanayake not to institute legal proceedings. Thereafter, the timber merchant's lorries were never checked by forest officers.

Gamini Dissanayake was also directly involved in the Sinhalese Colonisation of the North-East. As Minister of Mahaweli Development he put into effect a "plan" for colonisation. Former tea planter and ministry official Herman Gunaratna says in his book "For a sovereign state" Karunatileke and Hemapriya requested me to keep this plan a complete secret, but to brief Minister Gamini Dissanayake thoroughly on all aspects discussed.

They were both overjoyed to learn that the Minister was in complete agreement with the plan. When I went to see him (Minister) he told me very clearly "... Now please go ahead with all the arrangements... summon a top level conference of all the officials in our Ministry whom you think we will require for the implementation of this scheme". Implementation of the 'plan' went ahead without cabinet approval with the advise of Lalith Athulathmudali. Gamini Dissanayake also initiated the Dry Zone Settlement Scheme says a former government officer, to settle Sinhalese in border villages of the northern Vavuniya. The Mahaweli scheme was to be extended upto Mankulam with the establishment of three systems namely J K and L covering almost the entire breadth of Northern Sri Lanka thus cutting off the east from the north. Dams were also planned across Parangi Aru, Palai Aru and Kanagarayan Aru at strategic areas to create reservoirs and facilitate settlements.

Sinhalese people from the south were settled under the Kokkachankulam reservoir scheme in 1977 even before the scheme was completed. The Kokkachankalam village lies ten miles from the Vavuniya-Anuradhapura district border towards Padaviya. Colonisation was carried out with the help of the army and a Buddhist priest, who had been a magistrate earlier. Vavuniya MP Sivasithamparam complained to Gamini Dissanayake about the illegal settlements. Gamini visited the area with local UNP members without informing the Member of Parliament or the Assistant Government Agent for the region, inspected the settlement and ordered the regularisation of the settlements. He also declared that more and more Sinhalese will be settled in the area.

The Mahaweli Ministry was fully used for Gamini's personal

benefits according to government officers, who cite several examples. One of them relates to an auction in 1981. The Territorial Civil Engineering Services, which comprised Highways, Irrigation and building departments, held an auction in Mankulam of machinery and equipment including power boats, electricity generators, bulldozers and tractors. The then Vavuniya MP Pulendran ensured that 75% of the equipment was reserved to the Mahaweli Ministry at the "book value", although they could have been sold at many times this value in the auction. Government officers say that the equipment was sold in the open market at very high prices and the money misappropriated by Pulendran and Gamini Dissanayake.

In the wake of the 1983 anti-Tamil violence, Gamini Dissanayake addressed the Executive Committee

of the UNP-controlled Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union (LJEWU) as its president, on 5 September 1983 at the UNP headquarters in Colombo. He said:

"They are bringing an army from India. It will take fourteen hours to come from India. In fourteen minutes, the blood of every Tamil in the country can be sacrificed to the land by us".

Regarding the destruction of Nuwara Eliya in 1983, the case study by "B A Ajantha" published by the Tamil Information Centre titled "Sri Lanka: July 1983 violence against Indian Tamils" said as follows:-

"July 29: Minister Gamini Dissanayake arrives by helicopter A secret meeting is held. (It was talked about later that all instructions for an attack were given at this meet-

ing). On the Ministers' orders, all thugs taken in by the police are released, including "Market Rajah". Amidst shouts of "Jayawewa", the Minister is given a rousing send off. That was around noon. Hundreds of thugs converge on the town led by those who were taken in and released Most Tamil shops go up in flames. Vehicles on the road are stopped and secretary to Minister Gamini Dissanayake, a man named Paliyawathene, collects the petrol required by the thugs The proprietor of Radika Stores who was inside his shop was dragged out. A noose was thrown on his neck tied to a tractor When the rope gave way, he was run over by the tractor and killed".

Despite their view that assassinations only aggravate the problem, refugees say that Gamini's misdeeds caught up with him.

The International Health Conference in London

A gradual deterioration in health services since the 1960s in terms of personnel, equipment, facilities and monetary allocation and more recently, destruction of infrastructure and government ban on medicines have led to a higher rate of infections increasing the morbidity and mortality patterns in North-East Sri Lanka. Decades of neglect in the field of health, poor nutrition and primitive housing and sanitary facilities are causes of the extremely poor health status of plantation workers. These facts were emphasised at the International Health Conference on "Victims of War in Sri Lanka: A Quest for health consensus" held on 17 and 18 September at the University of London Union.

The Conference was jointly organised by the Medical Institute of Tamils (MIOT), Tamil Information Centre (TIC) and Tamil Refugee Relief Organisation (California, USA) (TRRO) and was attended by 400 delegates including health professionals, social workers, human rights advocates and NGO representatives. Fourteen delegates from Sri Lanka also participated in the Conference which was declared open by the Mayor of Camden Bill Budd.

Jaffna University Lecturer Dr. C. S. Natchnarkinian addressing the Conference on "current pattern of health care and resource allocation" said that the health service in Tamil areas had deteriorated following the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act

in 1956 which resulted in lesser number of Tamils receiving health training. Resource allocation was discriminatory and the ban on medicine and medical equipment and the destruction of hospitals in the war were having an adverse effect on the health status of the people. Since 1983 health service deteriorated dramatically and after ten years the service is in the lowest ebb, probably what might have been 75 years ago. Head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Jaffna Dr. Dhaya Somasundaram spoke on the psychological damage and trauma suffered by the North-East population, particularly children, women and post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and or anxiety disorders that have become

common and rate of suicide high. The war situation was preventing proper treatment to those suffering trauma which may have a devastating effect on future generations.

Maternal and Child health was dealt by Dr. N. Sivarajah, Head of the Department of Community Medicine, University of Jaffna. By 1990, small-scale surveys showed that 25 to 75% of the children were malnourished. According to a survey in 1993, 18.9% children under the age of three in Jaffna suffered acute malnutrition, 31.4% were stunted and 40% were underweight. Children in refugee camps were more affected by malnutrition.

The causes of poor health conditions among women and children were the economic blockade and the ban on fishing. Fish is an important source of protein for the Jaffna people. In 1992 only 1,094 tonnes of fish were available, whereas the requirement was 6,605 tonnes. Earlier 33,395 tonnes were produced annually in Jaffna. 'Triposha', milk food the source of protein for children was also restricted. In 1992 and 1993, only 12.3% and 22.7% respectively of the requirement of Triposha was supplied. Nineteen per cent of the children born between 1990 and 1992 in Jaffna District were underweight. A survey in 1993 revealed that infant mortality was 41.2 per 1000 live births as against 23 for the whole of Sri Lanka.

Dr. Sengamalam Theivendran speaking on "Acute trauma and rehabilitation" explained the work of the Jaipur Foot programme and Mrs Saroja Sivachandran, Director, Centre for Women and Development spoke on "Health of women

and elderly". Dr. Jolanda de Vries, WHO consultant presented a paper on "Health of displaced people and refugees".

Five subjects were discussed on 17 September in Workshop sessions. The subjects were, "Mental health of people exposed to violent environment, "Physical disability, torture and rehabilitation" "Acute services access", "Public health and communicable diseases" and "Health of displaced people and refugees".

Dr. Karunyan Arulanandam, consultant, OFERR, speaking on the second day of the conference presented a graphic account of the plight of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu. There were 70,000 to 80,000 refugees in 125 camps and an estimated 100,000 outside camps. According to a survey over 80% of the refugee children were malnourished and the allowance provided by the Indian government was sufficient to purchase food to provide only 70% of the required calories of energy. As a result of malnutrition and insanitary condition and crowded accommodation, respiratory diseases were common. Around 13% of the children suffer from allergy, 3.7% were hard of hearing and 2.8% were affected by asthma.

UNHCR representative Bo Schack described the role of the international refugee agency in refugee care. Speaking on the role of the media in conflict areas *Virakesari* Editor-in-Chief A. Sivaneshelvam traced the history of freedom of expression in Sri Lanka and said that there was renewed hope of media independence continuing with the current changes in the political cli-

mate.

On the second day four workshops sessions discussed "Repatriation: expectations and realities", "Rehabilitation of war-related victims", "Development assistance for better health" and "community initiatives in health services". Among others MIRJE coordinator N. Kandasamy, Sri Lanka Muslim Refugee Assistance Coordinator Mohamed Ali Aziz, Sri Lanka Centre for Development Alternatives Executive Secretary S. Balakrishnan, Dry Zone Development Foundation President Sri Shanmugarajah and a number of medical practitioners and refugees workers participated in workshops and contributed to the success of the conference.

Throughout the conference it was recognised that there must be peace in Sri Lanka for health plans to be implemented and for the populations of the North-East and Hill Country to have access to health services. Bishop Kenneth Fernando who was Chairman of the first day's sessions said that the current situation was conducive for peace and he would continue his peace initiatives. Perhaps the most poignant remark regarding peace in Sri Lanka was made by Dr. Dhaya Somasundaram: "If peace is to be sustained, we must get war out of our minds".

The Conference concluded with an address and a slide presentation by Professor of Public Health at the University of Surrey R. Balarajan on "The Way Forward", dealing with long term plans for a health service accessible to the entire population of the North-East.

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