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## 1,000 Tamils arrested after assassination

OVER 1,000 Tamils have been arrested in Colombo in the wake of the assassination of President Premadasa, after police warned of a new plot to kill acting President DB Wijetunge and other key politicians by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Police say four members of a LTTE suicide squad were captured entering Colombo in late May and a new wave of arrests and roundups has targeted the refugee population in the Tamil areas of the city. Leading Tamil politicians denounced the arrests as "arbitrary and indiscriminate" and "a collective punishment of Tamils" while Colombo Tamil newspaper *Virakesari* in a front-page editorial lashed out at "inhuman and degrading police treatment" calling on President Wijetunge to protect Tamil refugees in the capital escaping the north-east war.

Over 100,000 have fled to friends and relatives among the 150,000 Tamils who make up Colombo's 550,000 population raising tension in the city. Local sources say police in the capital run flourishing extortion rackets demanding up to Rs 50,000 (\$1,000) from relatives of suspects for their release.

P Thatchinamurthy from Batticaloa District this month filed habeas corpus proceedings after his nephew Shanmugarajah, 26, was arrested in Bambalapitiya's Saraswathy Hall Refugee Camp on 26 August last year. Shanmugarajah joins another 1,000 Tamils in Magazine and Kalutara prisons held without charge, some for over two years.

Military intelligence believes many LTTE sleeper suicide squads have penetrated the capital working in offices and factories, and police have launched a new vigilance campaign calling on people to inform on suspicious neighbours or

workmates. Defence Secretary Walter Fernando described the arrests as "unavoidable". Public appearances by President Wijetunge have been cut back to a minimum after police revealed they warned President Premadasa as early as 9 March of a potential assassination plot.

Mr Premadasa's killer, allegedly Jaffna Tamil businessman Kulaveerasingham Veerakumar or *Babu* penetrated the President's inner circle over a two-year period, supplying liquor and women to presidential aide EMP Mohideen. Veerakumar, who ran a fleet of lorries between Colombo and Jaffna was Mr Premadasa's secret conduit to the Tigers, press speculation maintains. It is no small irony that he was also his executioner. Colombo insider columnist *Taraki* says the LTTE killed Mr Premadasa to prevent a new rapprochement between the President and the Indian government. The Tigers have denied the killing. Colombo police say 18 people are in custody implicated in the assassination, 12 of them Tamils.

The mass arrests began hours after the results of the Provincial Council elections held on 17 May confirmed the transitional administration's hold on the country. The ruling United National Party (UNP) won six out of seven provinces but opposition parties say governors in two provinces ignored their combined majority and will challenge the results in North West and Southern provinces in the courts. Chandrika Kumaranatunge, daughter of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) leader Srimavo Bandaranaike swept to power in the densely populated Western Province which contains the capital and commercial centre, Colombo, driving a new opposition wedge into national politics.

New President DB Wijetunge, 71, projected as the kindly "silver haired uncle" of Sri Lankan politics defines his tenancy as that of elder statesman rather than party boss and already there is talk of a new

openness or *perestroika*. On the eve of the Provincial elections Mr Wijetunge told journalists in Kandy he was willing to examine opposition demands for the abolition of the executive Presidency which in the hands of Mr Premadasa was a "one man show".

Part of Mr Wijetunge's *perestroika* is no more than the traditional ousting of previous political appointees of Mr Premadasa's state-within-a-state but cautious optimism prevails. Ministry Secretaries and Chairmen of State Corporations close to the Premadasa faction currently led by Housing Minister Sirisena Cooray have been replaced on the grounds of inefficiency. Lawyer KN Choksy, one of Mr Premadasa's inner circle becomes Minister of Constitutional Affairs and London High Commissioner and former Army commander Gen. Sepala Attygala is recalled to Colombo as National Security Adviser.

A "dirty tricks" unit staffed by retired policemen operating from Mr Premadasa's former fiefdom at the National Housing Development Authority has been disbanded in a blaze of publicity. Mr Wijetunge has publicly eschewed *tamashas*, costly political carnivals and ceremonial inaugurations, the hallmark of the previous regime, and will shortly scrap the Presidential Mobile Secretariat and *Gammudawa* (village reawakening) schemes. The proliferation of politicians' armed bodyguards and private armies will be reined in say government sources.

Elsewhere it is business as usual. New Prime Minister and President-in-waiting Ranil Wickremasinghe told journalists in Puttalam on 23 May that the government would continue its "war and peace" strategy, moving to militarily weaken the LTTE while seeking a political settlement to the ten-year separatist war. "The unit of devolution in the north and east is the most difficult issue. There has to be some agreement by political parties on this", said Mr Wickremasinghe.

It remains to be seen whether Mr Wijetunge's velvet revolution will outlast the traditional honeymoon period in a state and a capital under siege.

**As part of the continuing war with the LTTE, Jayalalitha's Tamil Nadu government has banned voluntary agencies from working in 130 camps in south India housing 80,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, effectively closing the camps to the outside world. Like the Vietnamese detention camps in Hong Kong, refugee workers fear this is a recipe for repression and social breakdown. A full report on page four.**

## THE NORTH

## Blockade

MEDICAL reports from Jaffna say malaria, typhoid and chronic diarrhoea are spreading rapidly as severe drought grips the peninsula. After three years of malnutrition and economic blockade, vulnerable groups such as mothers, young children and the elderly have lost their resistance to infection and medical staff are deprived of basic drugs and equipment to treat them.

Doctors have registered 2,474 malaria cases at Vadamaratchi East hospital in the last three months. There is a chronic shortage of qualified nursing staff and vaccines, antibiotics, heart drugs and key anaesthetics such as Ketamine are banned by the current military blockade. Government sources say 15 Russian medical specialists will arrive in June to work in north-east hospitals but NGO pleas for medicine and equipment are sidelined. Operating theatre equipment and X-Ray machines worth \$4 million gifted by the British government to Jaffna hospital, remain in political quarantine in Colombo harbour.

Jaffna is locked in a military stalemate as the Army consolidates its 20km foothold around Palaly and Kankasanturai on the north-east tip of the peninsula. A group of 11 elderly civilians too old to run when the Army pushed forward to Ilavalai nine months ago were released this month after Red Cross intervention. Over 100,000 civilians fled into Jaffna when the Army invaded the islands west of Jaffna in October 1991 increasing the burden on relief agencies.

After a lull following the Premadasa assassination, the endless round of shelling from military bases at Tellipalai and Karainagar began again in mid-May designed to batter the civilian population into psychological submission. Many families leave their houses to spend the

night in temples and community halls. Further south, one woman was killed and several injured when Sri Lankan jets strafed Kanakapuram in Kilinochchi District on 12 May. Food stocks in the peninsula have stabilised after a 26,000-ton injection of relief aid in the last three months but thousands of day-wage labourers have no jobs, no food and no savings to fall back on.

At Kilali, the last exit from Jaffna on the dangerous night crossing over the lagoon, attacks by Sri Lankan naval patrol boats have continued. Four civilians died after their boat was hit by shell fire on 18 May. Three Sea Tigers, the LTTE's navy, who escort civilian convoys, died when 25 boats were shelled crossing the lagoon a week later.

The Kilali crossing offers the LTTE vital access to 60,000 tons of rice harvested in the February *Maha* season in mainland Kilinochchi District as well as the burgeoning black market in banned staple goods like kerosene and batteries sanctioned by corrupt Army officials in Vavuniya.

Colombo military spokesman Brig. Nalin Angamma reaffirmed on 26 May, that anyone crossing at Kilali would be shot on sight. Over 2,000 defied the ban in a massive buildup of civilians who crossed the lagoon under cover of darkness on 2 June.

United Nations refugee agency UNHCR wants to open a humanitarian corridor to the peninsula through the western crossing point at Pooneryn on the south side of the lagoon, currently in Army hands. Sources say a fresh round of negotiations with the LTTE in Jaffna will begin in June. In a letter to President Wijetunge in late May, the Tamil moderate TULF party called for government approval for the UN initiative.

### Food aid

Japan made a food production grant worth \$15 million in mid-May to enable Sri Lanka to buy fertiliser and farm machinery for its ailing agricultural sector.

### Investigation

Three Commonwealth judges appointed by the Sri Lankan government to investigate the explosion on Kayts island that killed Army northern commander Lt.Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa last August arrived in Colombo on 21 May.

### Media update

The 18-strong editorial staff of *Lakdiva*, a popular Sinhala tabloid weekly have resigned claiming the paper's owner had bowed to government pressure to censor critical articles. The directors of Sri Lankan radio and TV have been replaced in the current government reshuffle.

### Torture

Mother of 18 year-old Perinpam Pushparani from Vanthrumoolai, Batticaloa has filed a habeas corpus action in Colombo's Court of Appeal demanding the release of her daughter, tortured for three days in Kommathurai Army camp. The girl has a fractured shoulder and damaged eardrums. The court ordered a medical examination.

### Deluge

Eight people died and over 75,000 were displaced after major floods hit Sri Lanka's southern districts in late May. Opposition MP KT Wickremaratne has called for a permanent Task Force to coordinate flood relief. The government has authorised Rs 20 million (\$500,000) of assistance.

## Human shield

OVER 15 Tamil civilians were killed and 25 wounded when the LTTE attacked the Nochchimodai checkpoint separating Army and Tiger-controlled territory on 31 May, using those crossing as human shields.

In a three-hour mortar and rocket battle at the checkpoint few miles north of Vavuniya, 14 LTTE, one soldier and three PLOTE cadre died as the Tigers advanced suddenly behind the routine morning crossing of Tamils moving south. Over 300 civilians were caught in the crossfire. Three Tigers disguised as

traders were captured alive, one carrying a bomb destined for Army headquarters in Vavuniya town. Sri Lankan artillery and air raids pounded civilian areas north of Nochchimodai for hours the following day.

The Nochchimodai checkpoint is a death trap with regular clashes between the Tigers and nervous young heavily-armed PLOTE cadre pushed into exposed positions by the Army. The crossing functions only one hour a day in either direction with often thousands of frightened tense civilians waiting on either

side. Only 15 food aid lorries are allowed north daily tightening the blockade.

Further west, three TELO cadre were killed at Pambaimadu in an Army raid into LTTE-controlled territory on the Vavuniya-Mannar road. Isolated Periyakunchukulam suffered seven consecutive days of air raids in late May during which a pregnant mother gave premature birth to a child which died a few hours later. All rehabilitation work in Mannar District by local authorities has stopped until the Rs 30 million allocated for this year is sent from Colombo.

*Batticaloa refugees refuse to go home to the war zone*

## Point of no return

AFTER a high level meeting earlier this month Batticaloa authorities have launched a new programme to resettle over 70,000 people officially displaced in the district. Refugee workers say few will return home into virtual war zones to have dry rations blockaded by the Army or pocketed by corrupt officials.

Army control west of Batticaloa lagoon remains minimal and hundreds of refugee families refused this month to return to villages around Kokkaddicholai in the south after new Army camps opened close by. Almost 180 people from Kokkaddicholai were killed by an Army patrol in June 1991 in frenzied reprisal after a LTTE ambush. In late May, thugs attacked refugees in Veechukalmunai Church camp in

Batticaloa town, where there are 150 families from Periyapullumalai, trying to force them to leave. There is now a police guard on the camp. Three Sri Lankan soldiers were killed in a LTTE ambush between Porativu and Vellaveli on 7 May.

Sri Lankan forces in north Batticaloa have pushed into LTTE strongholds in the Thoppigala jungles west of Sithandy opening a new Army camp and killing six LTTE in a confrontation in early May. Batticaloa's link to the outside world remains fragile with the Tigers' continuing ability to target the Polonnaruwa road from the Thoppigala jungles. Five Sri Lankan soldiers were killed and five badly wounded when 300 LTTE attacked the Army post at

Jayanthipura near Punanai on 29 May.

The coastal road from Valaichenai to Batticaloa, dotted with Muslim villages and patrolled only on alternate days, remains a flashpoint. There are six checkpoints and three new police posts guarding ethnically divided Eravur, the scene of many Tamil-Muslim killings, were blown up by the Tigers in late May. North of Valaichenai in isolated Vaharai all private transport has been banned and food aid commandeered by the Army as they prepare for a new offensive.

LTTE taxation throughout the district remains pervasive. Army officers have warned that many of those collecting money for local temples are LTTE fundraisers and liable to arrest.

Further south in Amparai District, over 740 Tamil refugees from coastal Karaitivu were resettled in Sammanturai in early May. Minister of Rehabilitation and Amparai MP P Dayaratne says all refugees in the east will be resettled by 30 September and normalcy restored. Tamil refugees in Thirukovil say their dry rations are plundered by corrupt officials and those who qualify for the *Janasaviya* poverty programme have been cheated out of payments.

In Trincomalee, military intelligence reports over 1,000 LTTE cadre are massing for a new offensive on the district. Four soldiers died in a Tiger attack in Thamburugaswewa on 1 May and another six were killed in an ambush at Sitraru on 31 May.

## Hill Country arrests

**PARENTS of hundreds of Hill Country youth in police custody in the aftermath of the Premadasa assassination have appealed to Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) leader S Thondaman to intervene. Many arrested in Badulla were sent home by Tamil employers in Colombo's Pettah commercial district fearing an ethnic backlash. Some 27 Hill Country youth were arrested in the Colombo suburb of Kandana on 19 May. MP and CWC Vice President TV Sennan said the arrests will only create tension and unrest in the Hill Country.**

**In the Provincial Council (PC) elections Mr Thondaman's CWC secured Central and Uva provinces for its UNP allies, polling over 400,000 votes and winning 14 seats. Mr Thondaman has called for proportional representation in cabinet appointments in recognition of the CWC's strong showing at the polls.**

**CWC General Secretary and State Industries Minister MS Sellasamy says his party stands by Mr Thondaman's controversial December 1991 peace proposals which offered wide-ranging devolutionary powers to the Tigers engendering a Sinhalese backlash. Mr Sellasamy reaffirmed Mr Thondaman's willingness to meet LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and called for the new PC administrations to raise estate workers' living standards.**

**Hundreds of supporters of Talawakelle businessman P Chandrasekaran who won a PC seat in Central Province for the fledgling Upcountry People's Front gathered outside Colombo Fort police station on 23 May. Chandrasekaran, a former CWC and PLOTE activist has been held without trial for the last two years, accused of harbouring LTTE bomber Varadarajan who blew up Army headquarters in Colombo in June 1991. His trial opens on 17 June.**

## Inquest

THE dead body of a young male Tamil found in a quiet Kirulapone street is that of Kandiah Rangunathan from Chavakachcheri, Jaffna, the killer of DUNF leader Lalith Athulathmudali said Colombo police in early May. Mr Athulathmudali was shot dead at a political rally in the Colombo suburb in late April sparking a week of tension in the capital that culminated in the assassination of President Premadasa.

Others are not so sure. Sources claim Rangunathan was arrested by police three days before Lalith's death and his body discovered close to the rally site only 14 hours after the shooting with a bullet in the base of his spine. Also found were a used cyanide capsule, a LTTE trademark, a pistol and a national ID card naming the youth as 'Appiah Balakrishnan' - now said to be a prominent LTTE exile in Canada. Colombo police deny

Rangunathan's arrest claiming he worked at Asiri Radio until around 2pm on the day of the assassination. They are now seeking Sathivel the owner of the shop and another employee who have vanished.

Much of Colombo still believes Lalith's killing was commissioned by prominent local politicians from the Tamil militant group EPDP who provide security for refugee camps in the capital. Colombo Magistrate MA Silva ruled Rangunathan died from cyanide poisoning in court proceedings in late May but did not rule out homicide. The gun found by Rangunathan's side was the Athulathmudali murder weapon said the Government Analyst's report. A Scotland Yard team called to Colombo to investigate the Athulathmudali killing returned to London on 9 May to examine forensic evidence.

## REFUGEES BECOME POLITICAL PAWNS AS RAJIV GANDHI MURDER TRIAL OPENS

**Tamil Nadu bans NGOs from refugee camps**

A Tamil Nadu government order in late May, banning NGOs from working in Sri Lankan refugee camps and restricting refugee movements will effectively close the camps to the outside world and encourage repression and social breakdown say voluntary agencies.

Over 80,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees live in 130 camps, while another 120,000 live in towns and villages throughout the south Indian state many dependent on remittances from 300,000 Tamil refugees in Western countries. Conditions in the camps are already borderline. UK-based Tamil doctor Pararasan Arulanantham found evidence of widespread undernutrition among children in a visit in March.

The new ban also prevents refugees from leaving camps except for employment between 8am and 6pm effectively shutting them out of the local dawn-to-dusk labour market. Refugee workers say the prison-like atmosphere of closed camps will create infighting and alienation as it did among

Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. The British Refugee Council and other concerned agencies have written to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha calling for a new dialogue with the NGOs.

The ban is part of the war between Jayalalitha's state administration and New Delhi after she dissolved a parliamentary alliance with the ruling Congress (I) government on 9 March. Both sides accuse the other of continuing support for the LTTE in the south Indian state of 60 million Tamils and the refugees are a convenient pawn to push around the political chessboard. Jayalalitha's Transport Minister KA Sengottaiyan claims local Congress (I) officials are linked to the LTTE assassination of Rajiv Gandhi near Madras in 1991.

Two years later, the Gandhi murder trial finally opened on 5 May, at a special high security court inside Poonthamallee prison in Madras with LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran chief-accused-in-absentia, 26 LTTE prisoners indicted and

over 1,044 witnesses scheduled to appear. One of them, Sri Lankan refugee Charles Navas mysteriously escaped from the refugee unit of Saidapet prison on 22 May, perhaps triggering the new crackdown on refugee camps, analysts say. Over 40 Sri Lankans without identity papers or refugee cards were seized in the Madras suburbs in a new wave of roundups and arrests. LTTE suspect *Nagarajah* said to be responsible for many bomb attacks in Tamil Nadu was shot dead by police near Dindugal in late May.

Following Tamil Nadu governor BN Singh's resignation on 23 May, Jayalalitha went on the offensive, claiming Home Minister SB Chavan asked her to hold talks with the Tigers last November. At Madras airport to meet new governor Chenna Reddy, Jayalalitha told reporters that central government was supplying covert assistance to the LTTE to destroy her. That New Delhi wants her out is plain, but the agent is more likely to be the obliging Mr Reddy.

**A narrow vote of confidence**

ONLY two weeks after President Premadasa's assassination, Sri Lanka's ruling United National Party (UNP) has secured a narrow vote of confidence holding four out of seven provinces in Provincial Council (PC) elections on 17 May and appointing UNP Chief Ministers in two others despite combined opposition majorities.

Chandrika Kumaranatunge daughter of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) leader Mrs Srimavo Bandaranaike won the key Western Province containing the capital for the opposition People's Alliance (PA). UNP treasurer R Ganeshalingam blamed the party's defeat on the rising cost of living in the city.

In North West and Southern provinces UNP chief ministers were appointed despite a combined opposition majority for PA and Democratic United National Front (DUNF) candidates, the breakaway party set up by former UNP minister Lalith Athulathmudali assassinated only eight days before President Premadasa. Enraged opposition leaders said both provincial governors were informed by affidavit of their willingness to establish coalition administrations and they would

now move to quash the appointments in the courts. Analysts say these elections were an important trial of strength for the UNP since previous PC elections in 1989 were uncontested after an opposition boycott. Held in only the seven southern

**THE SRI LANKA MONITOR** is part of an information processing service set up by the British Refugee Council to keep Sri Lankan refugees in Britain, Europe and elsewhere, informed about the current situation in their home areas. If you have any information you wish to share, or any enquiries you wish to make regarding developments in Sri Lanka, contact

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provinces, almost 75% of 9.3 million eligible cast their votes. A 25-strong team of international observers declared the elections free and fair but said police should provide security rather than the proliferation of arms and bodyguards to predominantly pro-government candidates. Over 150 election complaints were registered and one DUNF supporter was shot dead in Rambukkana.

The results constitute a mixed mandate. DUNF, the new third force in Sri Lankan politics stole votes from both sides. DUNF and PA combined polled 3.2 million votes to the UNP's 2.9 million registering a technical knockout if viewed as a presidential plebiscite on the Premadasa years. But the UNP performed disproportionately well in many rural areas, the legacy of Mr Premadasa's populist poverty alleviation programmes.

The longer-term question remains whether former UNP aristocrat Gamini Dissanayake will shepherd DUNF's one million voters back to the ruling party or attempt to supplant the fractious Bandaranaike family as opposition candidate before the presidential elections in December 1994.