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## Tigers explode truce

THE Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) pulled out of the faltering peace process on 19 April launching a series of devastating attacks that has thrown Sri Lanka's political and military establishment into crisis.

A fourth round of peace talks in Jaffna on 10 April, led by President Chandrika Kumaratunge's Secretary K Balapatabendi, Colombo Bishop Rev. Kenneth Fernando and two leading NGO figures, Charles Abeysekera and Dr Jayadeva Uyangoda, could not satisfy four LTTE demands.

A letter from President Chandrika two days later offered two concessions - lifting the fuel blockade and the fishing ban - but deferred decisions on dismantling Pooneryn Army camp and free movement for armed Tiger cadre in the east, until further talks in May. As the second of the two Tiger deadlines loomed, a complacent Colombo administration and its advisors refused to believe the party was over.

The Tigers struck at 1.55am on 19 April as four suicide frogmen loaded with explosives sank two Naval gunboats inside Trincomalee harbour killing 14 sailors. Only four hours earlier, a communique from LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran had arrived in Colombo, quitting the peace talks and accusing President Chandrika of using the 100-day ceasefire to strengthen the military. Both sides agreed in January to give 72 hours notice of a return to hostilities.

Tiger mortar attacks on Jaffna Army camps at Palaly, Elephant Pass and Vetrilakerni were answered by Sri Lankan Navy shelling of the *Sea Tiger* key port of Nagarcoil on the northern shore of the peninsula. As civilian routes closed to the north and the economic embargo and fishing ban were swiftly reinstated Presidential Secretary Balapatabendi claimed it was only a temporary setback to peace.

Then, 700 Tiger guerrillas overran isolated Kattumurivukulam Army camp north of Batticaloa on 21 April leaving 40 soldiers and 14 LTTE dead. Another

six policemen were killed in an ambush on the road north of Trincomalee town minutes before a delayed, North-East Governor Gamini Fonseka was scheduled to pass by.

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The Army response was cautious with ground attacks on Tiger camps north of Vavuniya and on Atchuvveli south of the military's Palaly foothold inside the Jaffna peninsula. Over 1,000 Tamils were arrested in the capital Colombo, in a three-day period as rumours re-surfaced of *Black Tiger* suicide squads seeking high profile targets.

Statements by the United States government, Canada, Japan and the European Union condemned the LTTE aggression and urged the Tigers to return to the negotiating table. A LTTE reply released in London said the doors for peace were still open, a view confirmed by LTTE leader Prabhakaran in a rare BBC interview in Jaffna. Their demands should be seen fulfilling the need of the people rather than concessions granted to the LTTE said Mr Prabhakaran.

President Chandrika Kumaratunge told the annual World Bank meeting on Sri Lanka held in Paris on 27 April that she was willing to go anywhere and to any lengths to secure a peace with honour. As Ms Kumaratunge flew back to Colombo, the Tigers launched a night attack on Kayts, the largest of the Army-controlled islands west of Jaffna, killing 19 security personnel and wounding 14 others.

Worse was to follow. The capital was stunned when defence officials admitted that in the last 24 hours the LTTE had shot

down two military transport planes close to the Jaffna Palaly airbase using ground-to-air missiles. Nearly 100 soldiers and three journalists died as the two aircraft exploded in mid-air.

The People's Alliance (PA) government immediately cancelled traditional May Day parades in Colombo fearing LTTE suicide attacks. Two years ago President Ranasinghe Premadasa was blown to pieces by a May Day rally bomb attributed to the Tigers. The capital was tense and subdued, with only token celebrations that were heavily policed.

For the moment, the new Tiger missile threat has effectively grounded Sri Lanka's meagre Airforce which is vital to supply or reinforce Army camps in the north encircled by Tiger forces and miles of hostile territory. Sea links to northern camps are already under threat from the *Sea Tigers*, the LTTE's increasingly effective navy.

The missile crisis also marks a symbolic shift in the balance of forces and a new threat of rapid military escalation. In a no-holds-barred interview with *India Today* President Chandrika Kumaratunge described LTTE leader Prabhakaran as a "merciless megalomaniac" who had killed every person who had opposed him - including former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi.

Most observers interpreted Chandrika's outburst as a message to Jaffna that she could still play the India card and petition the region's superpower for troops or hi-tech weapons to trump the new Tiger threat. After the humiliating withdrawal of its peace keeping force in March 1990, India is unlikely to risk ground troops in northern Sri Lanka but may provide hardware and military advisors. The Colombo press says two leading arms-manufacturing countries have offered Sri Lanka military assistance to combat the missile threat. Britain and France are likely contenders.

The alternative, Chandrika implies is to return to the negotiating table. The problem with playing poker with Prabhakaran say Colombo's armchair generals, is that when you raise the stakes, he doesn't back down.

## THE NORTH

# The nightmare returns

THE LTTE launched an amphibious night attack on a military base at Araliturai on Army-controlled Kayts Island west of the Jaffna peninsula, on 27 April killing 19 soldiers and injuring 14 others. Five Tigers also died in the attack.

Since the LTTE withdrew from peace talks on 19 April, military camps in the Jaffna area, including the disputed Pooneryn Army camp have come under Tiger shelling. Two boats carrying suspected *Sea Tigers* were blasted off Vetrilaikerni on 20 April. The following day two boys were seriously injured in naval attacks on the south coast of Jaffna and a church was damaged. Troops fired from the Kadduvan camp south-west of Palaly injuring a civilian and a helicopter strafed a bus at Vallai on the same day.

In late April, over 300 families fled Atchuvveli and Idaikadu, east of Palaly, to escape bombing and shelling. Over 5,000 people were displaced from Sulipuram and Panipulam. Troops shot dead a man and injured six others in Army-controlled Pandatharippu and Mathagal areas. An injured youth was taken away by the Army.

Troops backed by artillery attempted to advance east from Palali towards Atchuvveli on 24 April. In the ensuing clash six Tigers and two soldiers were killed. At dawn on 28 April the Army moved out of forward defence lines from Pandatharippu and Thellippalai in the west of the Jaffna peninsula on what is described as a limited operation in response to LTTE attacks. The Tigers say the military was repulsed. A Tiger frogman attempting to blow up a ship in Kankesanthurai harbour in late April

was shot dead by the Navy. Planes bombed Thondamanaru on 30 April injuring seven civilians.

Two soldiers were shot dead in Idaikadu in early April during the ceasefire. The Tigers have denied that they were responsible. Madras newspaper *The Hindu* says LTTE have abducted 58 Tamil Nadu fishermen and are holding them at Iranativu Island and Nochchikudah south-west of Pooneryn in Kilinochchi District. Other reports say LTTE has detained three Indian trawlers at Point Pedro, demanding the release of 60 refugee boats currently in the custody of the Indian authorities.

According to reports the ship *Lanka Muditha* carrying 2,700 tons of food for 56,000 refugees in camps in Jaffna has been diverted to Army-controlled Kankesanthurai by the Navy. Over 4,000 barrels of kerosene for Jaffna are also detained by the military. Despite Jaffna Government Agent K Ponnambalam's representations to the Essential Services Commissioner and the Presidential Secretary, food and fuel have not been released.

Shortage of drugs and lack of oxygen cylinders are affecting surgery in Jaffna hospital. Reports say malaria continues to spread throughout the peninsula. People have been asked to travel to Vavuniya for anti-rabies injections. The government has already reimposed the ban on the Kilali route where thousands of people cross the Jaffna lagoon weekly carrying food and fuel. Social workers say the situation of the people in the peninsula is deteriorating.

## Denial

Embassy officials in Colombo denied 12,000 Sri Lankans refused asylum in Switzerland would be forcibly repatriated after a Swiss fact-finding mission declared eastern Sri Lanka stable in early April.

## New Year

Over 16 people were killed and 225 injured in drunken brawls across Sri Lanka, celebrating Sinhalese and Tamil New Year in mid-April.

## Charges

A new political crisis threatens south India's Tamil Nadu state after Governor Chenna Reddy allowed opposition politician Subramaniam Swamy to proceed with two charges of corruption against Chief Minister Jayalalitha Jayaram.

## Relief

Holland will donate 3,800 tons of rice to the World Food Programme to feed 55,000 refugees in welfare centres outside the North-East war zone in the coming year.

## War child

A new UNICEF report "The State of the World's Children" condemns the LTTE for mass recruitment of child soldiers and enforcing harsh punishment of those who try to leave.

## Cartel

Seven nations have agreed to set up a new Association of Tea Producing Countries in the face of the continuing decline in tea prices on the world market, said a spokesman after a meeting in Colombo in late April.

## checkpoint offensive

OVER 20 LTTE cadre were killed and two Tiger camps destroyed when elite Sri Lankan forces launched a retaliatory strike north of Vavuniya on 27 April.

Special Forces commandos riding motor bikes burst through the nine kilometres of no-mans-land that mark the major civilian crossing point between the two armies, and destroyed the Tigers' "customs" complex outside Omanthai.

Helicopter gunships strafed three truckloads of LTTE reinforcements as soldiers overran Tiger camps and supply dumps at Rambaikulam and Kondakkarakulam. Hundreds of civilians thronged the highway north, seeking shelter with friends and relatives. Three

soldiers and two civilians were killed. LTTE sappers have mined positions outside Puvarasankulam to prevent the Army pushing further west down the Mannar Road. Sri Lankan aircraft bombed the key LTTE port of Vidattativu on the Mannar mainland on 24 April, killing Mrs Edward Adaikalamuthu, 45, and injuring four other civilians. A nearby school was completely destroyed.

Hours later, the Tigers blew up a culvert on the Thallady bridge linking the mainland to isolated Mannar island. Food prices have spiralled on the island where most of the 5,000 refugees repatriated from India in March, remain in limbo.

Another 4,000 local fishermen's families are badly hit by the reinstated fishing ban and the government has promised dry rations. A fisherman was shot dead and another wounded off the Pallimunai coast in late April. Defence sources said they had destroyed a LTTE boat.

South of Vavuniya, a log-jam of 200 lorries loaded with food aid for the north, waits for the go-ahead from the military. Cordon-and-search operations in Vavuniya town have intensified. Three men were shot dead outside the town in three separate incidents on 1 May, in the latest in a series of internecine militant killings. One of them Periya Appu, was a former LTTE helper.

## ■ War of attrition grips to the east

# Cordon and search

A STRING of skirmishes and military roundups have polarised the east since the Tigers declared war on 19 April by sinking two Navy gunboats in Trincomalee harbour.

Tension was already high as the Tigers openly reprovisioned secret jungle camps and recruited over 2,000 teenagers mostly from the rural interior. Ilayarajah Jeyarajah, a former EPRLF cadre now working with the Army, was shot dead by the LTTE on 8 April at Palukamam.

The struggle for social control mounted as the Tigers enforced widespread commemoration ceremonies on 11 April for adopted martyr *Annai Poopathy* who fasted to death in a Batticaloa temple seven years ago after her son was killed

by Sri Lankan police. Soldiers attacked a *Poopathy* procession in Manmunai North tear-gassing villagers and killing Sarawanamuthu Navaratnam.

As the truce collapsed in Trincomalee authorities immediately clamped down on food and fuel movements to sensitive rural areas like Eechilampathai. Diesel, sugar and flour are in short supply in many areas. Amnesty International has issued an urgent appeal for the safety of farmer Selvanayagam Rasanayagam who was taken by soldiers to Periyakulam Army camp on 20 April. Tiger guerrillas launched an inconclusive attack on Kuchchaveli Army camp north of Trincomalee town four days later.

In Batticaloa and further south, arrests

followed army cordon and search operations at Puthur and Veechukalmunai. The Tigers have kept up the pressure in Batticaloa town attacking police headquarters and Kallady bridge in a night-long gun battle on 29 April. In a dawn attack on a police post at Thalavai near Eravur, Civil Volunteer Force member Ali Kahn Mansoor was killed. At Kopaveli a Buffel armoured car was wrecked in a landmine ambush injuring four soldiers.

A blanket fishing ban has badly hit thousands of poor families on the eastern coastal strip and little food or fuel is moving west of Batticaloa lagoon to the Tiger-dominated interior. The LTTE destroyed two electricity transformers at Sithandy and Amabalathady on 25 April and will keep up the pressure on utilities.

Road and rail links to the rest of the island at Valaichenai and Kalkudah remain flashpoints and the military are increasingly trigger-happy. Kalkudah police attack civilians specially youths who venture on the road and soldiers patrolling the two miles of railway line through Santhiveli are forcing hundreds of local villagers to walk in front of them as a crude mine-clearing device.

Further south in Amparai, MP Joseph Pararajasingham has demanded an enquiry after 13 villagers were hospitalised as a result of police attacks during search operations at Thuraineelavanai on 26 April. Four soldiers were badly injured after an Army vehicle was blown up in a Tiger ambush in Maha Oya.

## missile crisis

**JUST as the Tigers downed two military transport planes over Jaffna with surprise missile strikes, a Sri Lankan airforce delegation was in Moscow with a shopping list that included four Antonov AN-32 aircraft and six M1-17 helicopters. In the jaundiced eye of the arms-dealer *Eelam War Three* will be a bigger and better war with bigger and better weapons. The only surprise about the Tigers' missile capability was that they took so long to display it. The arms bazaars of Asia are within easy reach and LTTE global income tops \$20 million annually. As early as January 1991, LTTE leader Prabhakaran vowed to install modern anti-aircraft defences in the north. Four more years of arbitrary air attacks and shelling by Sri Lankan forces have killed and maimed thousands of civilians and pushed a new generation into the arms of the Tigers.**

The LTTE navy or *Sea Tigers* have instead emerged as a formidable force fusing the skills of the traditional Tamil *otti* or boatman with the Tiger cult of death and glory suicide attacks. Over 17 Sri Lankan Navy ships have been sunk or captured in the last three years including the Navy's largest ship, the 330-ton *Sagarawardene*, last September. The *Sea Tigers* now control Jaffna lagoon and threaten the supply routes to most major Army camps in the north.

Rumours surfaced again this month that the Tigers are now training a 40-strong air corps equipped with micro-light aircraft and improvised gliders supervised by *Soranie* a former pilot in Vavuniya.

Escalation for the Sri Lankan forces means aerial bombing and naval shelling rather than throwing ground forces forward who lack motivation or training. The Tigers have already signalled that they have an increasing capacity to strike back on air, land and sea.

## Forced out

THOUSANDS of villagers have fled isolated Vaharai north of Batticaloa fearing Army reprisals after the LTTE attack on Kattumurivukulam on 21 April which killed over 40 soldiers. After the attack nearby villages were shelled and two villagers were shot dead.

Over 200 refugees are now camped in Pethalai school close to Valaichenai after two nights in the jungle without food or water. Some are now refugees for the third time being displaced in 1990 and August 1994. Another 100 families are at a Vaharai local council building.

Like much of the east coast, military control of Vaharai extends only a few miles inland from the coastal strip. The Army has tightened its blockade to starve the Tigers out of their jungle

strongholds. Villagers are issued rations of only two kilos of rice and flour to prevent food falling into LTTE hands. Many now make the 20-mile journey to Valaichenai through scores of new checkpoints several times a week just to feed their families. Buses are infrequent, expensive and travelling dangerous.

Local MP Joseph Pararajasingham has appealed for food to be allowed into the area but to little effect. The fishing ban has been reimposed affecting thousands of fishing families on Vaharai's coastal strip. The Sri Lankan military lacks the manpower to sweep the vast jungle tracts of the interior and the new fighting has already hardened into a predictable pattern of hit-and-run guerrilla attack followed by military reprisals on civilians.

## Colombo reels under a new wave of roundups and rumour

# Tigers at the gates

OVER 2,000 young Tamils have been arrested in Colombo in the ten days since the Tigers' 19 April ultimatum shattered the 100-day ceasefire. Many are released after a few hours while their documents are checked but human rights workers estimate around 400 remain in custody. Arrests have continued at around 200 a day.

Some 20 of 958 people arrested in the capital in a 72-hour sweep after the LTTE attack on Trincomalee harbour were hardcore Tigers said a police spokesman. A four-man LTTE hit squad apprehended in a Modera suburb on 27 April had a list of high profile targets including 18 police stations and VIP politicians, police maintain. Police said they were still seeking two Tiger suicide bombers Venslaus Markalis, 22 from Nallur and Mahalingam Mahadevan, 23, from Point Pedro, Jaffna.

Police believe hundreds of *Black Tiger* suicide squads waiting to be activated, have penetrated the capital concealed among the 150,000 Tamil refugees who have fled the north since

1990. Defence chiefs want to close hundreds of cheap hotels and lodges in Pettah and Maradana to flush out Tiger suspects.

Human rights groups fear corrupt police officers use the roundups to extort money from Tamil families by arresting their sons. Another 250,000 Tamils make up part of the capital's regular two million population. Now that the government-sponsored Human Rights Task Force's mandate has lapsed there is no neutral body to check who is being held and no humanitarian safeguards for those arrested says local lawyers.

Even before the ceasefire breakdown regular police roundups continued. Subaidasan, a Tiger suspect prevented from swallowing a cyanide capsule told police he had a brief to assassinate several Tamil political leaders. Some 16 Tamils were arrested after his interrogation. Another 64 LTTE suspects were arrested including three women and two Jaffna University students as fears grew of a major Tiger attack on the capital over Sinhalese and Tamil New Year in

mid-April. Emergency bomb squads were called in when a powerful Motorola transmitter was thrown away by a fleeing youth. More than 15 young Tamils were arrested in a nearby Bankshall Street lodge.

A fresh wave of hysteria preceded May Day the capital's annual political carnival, including rumours that the Tigers planned to poison the city's water supply. Cinemas and bars usually packed during the holiday were half-empty or closed.

Tamil lawyer and party organiser for the ruling coalition's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Kumarasamy Vinodhan was shot dead in his Colombo home on 28 April fuelling fears of another May Day assassination campaign. Police refused to speculate on the identity of his killers as a new wave of roundups and arrests got underway in Wellawatte and Bambalapitiya.

As the string of LTTE attacks on Army camps and isolated patrols continues the mood in the capital is increasingly unpredictable and ugly.

## rendezvous in Paris

INTERNATIONAL donor countries pledged \$850 million aid to the new People's Alliance (PA) government at the annual World Bank meeting on Sri Lanka, held in Paris on 27 April.

The assembled 13 governments and ten multilateral agencies agreed there was no higher priority than peace if Sri Lanka was to achieve its economic potential and urged the insurgent Tamil Tigers to return to the negotiating table.

Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunge in a long presentation, said her government was committed to pro-market pro-market policies encouraging competition and productivity, while ensuring good governance and upholding human rights.

Mrs Kumaratunge vowed to reduce the fiscal deficit from 12% to 3% by the year 2000, bringing down inflation to 4% and interest rates to 7%. But she admitted that her government had an enormous task ahead to convince the country that large-scale privatisation - the engine of the World Bank's widely-challenged "structural adjustment" programme - will

rescue Sri Lanka's ailing economy. In contrast, Sri Lanka's financial sector wants faster and more efficient privatisation and is not convinced that the PA

**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.

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government has done enough to attract inward investment in the face of increasing regional competition as India's slumbering giant economy opens up. The second day of the Paris meeting allowed major Sri Lankan industrialists to meet potential international investors. Shares on Colombo's stock market have continued to slide in the aftermath, as new fighting in the north saps investor confidence.

The NGO Forum on Sri Lanka a campaign coalition of local and international NGOs says structural adjustment is the disease in economic terms and not the cure. A new Forum report by development economist Seamus Cleary says World Bank policies have increased the gap between rich and poor and that poverty remains, despite Bank rhetoric, a largely rural phenomenon.

A statement from a Forum conference in Colombo in early April maintains that the World Bank model of development has created social and political instability in Sri Lanka and the potential for recurring societal crisis.