

# The Sri Lanka Monitor

No 104

September 1996

Produced by the British Refugee Council

## Army captures Kilinochchi

THE Sri Lankan Army stormed into heavily defended Kilinochchi town on 29 September after a week's fierce fighting in *Operation Sath Jaya III* (Truth's Victory). Kilinochchi, the new headquarters of the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) after the capture of Jaffna last December, fell in a three-pronged military assault.

The Tigers claimed in early October that fighting continued after the Army entered Kilinochchi, but BBC reports say the LTTE withdrew on 27 September after blowing up the telecommunication tower as troops threatened to encircle the town. There are no civilians left in Kilinochchi.

Defence sources say 269 soldiers and 750 guerrillas died in a week's fighting. The Tigers have denied they suffered heavy casualties. LTTE political wing's SP Thamilchelvan describes Sri Lankan government claims that 138 bodies of Tiger cadre were handed over through the ICRC as false propaganda. Government restrictions on correspondents in the war zone and press censorship mean there is no independent confirmation of the claims.

The loss of Kilinochchi is a psychological blow to the LTTE. The Tiger headquarters has been shifted to the strategic crossroad town of Mankulam, 45km south, where many of the 200,000 refugees have sought shelter. Mankulam, where international agencies are attempting to establish relief operations, is set to become the Army's next target.

The government's objective is to take the 70km road between Kilinochchi and the frontline Vavuniya symbolically reuniting the island and to secure a vital supply line to Jaffna, where Sri Lankan troops are increasingly bogged down by

## Relief agencies warn of major disaster

guerrilla attacks and reconstruction has come to a standstill.

The LTTE is expected to seek a quick reply to Kilinochchi with an attack by its *Black Tigers* or suicide commandos on the capital Colombo or the eastern seaboard town of Batticaloa. But observers believe that the Tigers have a long-term strategy to capture government-held territory. Mannar Island infiltrated by the LTTE now looks increasingly vulnerable.

As over 200,000 civilians are pushed south by the fighting in Kilinochchi, rather than allow them into government territory in Vavuniya, the Tigers may seek to engineer a new refugee exodus to the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu across the Palk Strait to drag India back into the Sri Lankan conflict.

Around 3,000 Tamils have arrived in south India in the last month. Press reports say after Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi met Indian Foreign minister IK Gujral in late September, India has called on the Sri Lankan government to provide food and medicine to the Vanni refugees.

The plight of refugees is of increasing concern for international agencies. International refugee agency UNHCR's Peter Meijer has urged the government to ensure that food supplies reached the Vanni refugees and expressed fears that more people will pour out of Mannar Island. Lack of security and food is the major cause and thousands of refugees are trekking towards Mannar Island, says UNHCR.

French medical agency Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) says in an early September statement that there is an

acute shortage of drugs and patients cannot be treated. The last shipment of drugs, 25% of the total requirement for Vanni, was in June. The

Defence Ministry has turned down recent requests for drugs from MSF and the ICRC. MSF Country Director Guillermo Bertoletti says only two weeks supply of medicine are available. Madhu has not received medical supplies since August and even basic items such as vitamins for pregnant women have not been allowed by the Defence Ministry. Aid workers fear an epidemic if outbreaks of water-borne diseases and malaria are not checked.

As drought continues, clean water supply and sanitation are major concerns in the Vanni. In late September ICRC's water and sanitation head John Fleming warned of a major disaster and sought urgent clearance from the Defence Ministry for chlorine to purify water and spare parts for tube wells.

Food is in short supply. The continual movement of the population following military operations makes distribution difficult and food is not reaching many people. Vavuniya's senior government officer Government Agent (GA) Ganesh says that Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu districts need 2,126 lorryloads of food per month, but in September only 1,355 lorries were permitted at the crossing point at Thandikulam in Vavuniya.

The government claims that there are only 199,167 refugees in the Vanni and therefore sufficient food reaches the areas whereas NGOs estimate there are over 350,000 refugees. The government says sections of food shipments are routinely taken by the LTTE. Other reports say displaced people in some areas have become disillusioned with LTTE's relief wing the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) which is allowing people under its care to settle only in places it decides.

The stage is now set for a dramatic tug-of-war for control of 350,000 displaced civilians with diminishing access to food, clean water and adequate shelter. Military priorities are likely to prevail on both sides.

■ A new NGO study estimates the total annual cost of the war at Rs 110 billion (\$2.2 billion) which is 22% of Sri Lanka's GDP. The estimate takes into account the damage to various sectors, loss in agriculture, tourism and the cost of rehabilitation. Deputy Finance minister GL Peiris says defence expenditure will go up to Rs 50 billion (\$1 billion) by the end of the year.

JAFFNA

# Jaffna's secret war

HUMAN RIGHTS violations against the civilian population are multiplying as almost daily LTTE attacks on the Army continue in the Jaffna peninsula.

Human rights agency Amnesty International says six people, all from Kaithady, 5 miles east of Jaffna town, disappeared in early September. Krishanthi Kumarasamy, 18, was arrested at an Army sentry point on 7 September while returning after the GCE (Advanced Level) examination at Chundikuli Girls High School. Her mother Rasammah, brother Pranaban and a friend K Sithamparam who went in search of her on the same day were also taken into custody. The Army has denied these arrests.

Amnesty says the military has also denied the arrests of municipal worker Subramaniam and student Ganesh Sriram from their homes in Kaithady on 12 August. Tamil MP Joseph Pararajasingham has written to President Chandrika alleging that extra-judicial killings, torture and disappearances are on the increase and in the three weeks before 15 September alone over 200 youths were detained.

Of the 200 people arrested earlier, reports suggest ICRC has been able to confirm 65 are in custody at the major military camps at Kankesanthurai, Palaly and Karainagar. The rest are unaccounted

for. The LTTE claims that as many as 750 men and women are held at Kankesanthurai alone. Amnesty International has urged the Human Rights Task Force (HRTF), the body monitoring welfare of detainees, to set up an office in Jaffna. Reports say HRTF is awaiting approval from the military.

The LTTE claims that the Army shot dead 25 year-old teacher S Saravanapavan at Sarasalai in southern Theninaratchy on 17 September. The Tigers also say that soldiers fired indiscriminately in Eluthumadduval killing six civilians and wounding nine others.

Two Tigers were killed in an Army ambush at Uduvil on 5 September. Five days later a landmine injured six soldiers at Imayanan in Vadamaratchy. Five soldiers died in a clash at Muhamalai, east of Chavakachcheri on 13 September. In another mine attack at Nunavil on 17 September two soldiers were killed. Two Tigers died in a clash on 20 September at Thunnalai.

Reports from Jaffna say price of food is rising rapidly. Fish costs Rs 150 a kilo and all vegetables cost over Rs 130. With all avenues of income destroyed many people depend on money sent from abroad by relatives. But without facilities to telephone abroad or travel south to cash money orders, people are unable to buy at the current prices.

## Assassination

TELO member and Vaharai local councillor K Amirthalingam and his assistant were shot dead on 29 September. TELO leader N Srikantha says over 120 cadre have been killed by the LTTE since June 1990.

## Safe havens

Foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar addressing the UN General Assembly on 26 September called for international cooperation to deny safe havens for terrorists. He said the LTTE draws support from misguided Tamils living in developed countries.

## Cooperation

In late September, visiting British Foreign Office minister Liam Fox urged closer cooperation between the government and opposition to resolve national issues. Britain would be involved in mediation only if both parties want a settlement, said Mr Fox.

## Disappeared

Amnesty International made an urgent appeal in September for information on Jaffna tailor P Sinnathurai and his assistant Muhunthan, disappeared after they were taken away in an Army truck on 31 July. The Army has denied arresting them.

## Truce

The LTTE agreed for a four day truce in September and October to facilitate immunisation of children against polio, following an appeal by UNICEF.

# Mannar crisis

DISCRIMINATION in relief provision in Mannar District is causing disunity within refugee camps, reports say. Over 26,800 people have taken refuge in Mannar mainland following the three major military operations since December last year.

Refugees who arrived after military *Operation Sunray I* are being issued dry rations. But the government still refuses to recognise refugees after *Operation Sunray II* in April. Refugees arriving after *Operation Sath Jaya* have been issued only one month's dry rations.

On Mannar Island, only small numbers of refugees continued to leave for India by boats in September following the reduction in the number of search

operations and clashes between the Army and the LTTE.

A three-day ban on fishing in early September added to the problems of fishermen who are already suffering by other restrictions. Following the representations of Mannar GA SM Croos, Northern Province Resettlement and Rehabilitation Authority's Somapala Gunadheera has announced that dry rations will be issued to 8,000 fishing families.

Further south in Puttalam, the LTTE abducted 13 fishermen at Vathalakundu and Palliavathai villages on 1 October. There is concern over increased LTTE activity following the discovery of weapons in the district. Defence sources say the weapons are from Wilpattu jun-

gles further north, where the Tigers have stored large quantities of arms.

In Vavuniya District mystery killings continue to increase tension. A body with gunshot wounds was found near the market on 6 September. The bodies of two Muslims and a Tamil who came from Trincomalee were found in a van on Mannar road. Their hands and feet were tied and they had been shot through their heads.

Despite severe restrictions on travellers to Vavuniya, the LTTE has infiltrated the town. Five police officers issuing travel passes at the Vavuniya railway station were injured by a grenade attack on 19 September sending a deadly warning to civilians fleeing south.

## ■ Muslim-Tamil tension rises in the east

# Abducted and killed

COMMUNAL violence flared in the east in late September after five Muslims including three Home Guards were killed by suspected LTTE guerrillas.

The Muslims were abducted from Pandiruppu, a mile north of Kalmunai, on 27 September. Their bullet-ridden bodies were found in a cemetery the following day. The killings sparked reprisal attacks as angry Muslims began damaging and burning passing vehicles. Eight people died when a lorry was set ablaze in Maruthamunai. Many people were injured.

Two days earlier police surrounded the 11th Colony village in Amparai and arrested 45 Tamils. Later 40 were

released and the police deny detaining the other five. The following day all the shops in the village and over 40 houses were burned. People have taken refuge in nearby villages.

Earlier in the month eleven civilians were massacred in a LTTE attack on a passenger bus at Arantalawa on Amparai-Maha Oya road. In this 12 September attack 25 people were injured. Ten of the dead were Sinhalese including two children and three women. Human rights agency Amnesty International has again urged the LTTE leadership to halt deliberate civilian killings.

Border Sinhalese villages remain vulnerable to Tiger attacks. Four people

working in their fields at Aralaganwila in Polonnaruwa District were killed on 9 September by the LTTE.

The economic blockade of LTTE-held rice-producing Vaharai and Paduvankarai continues. The aim of the Army is to starve the Tigers. *Sunday Times* columnist *Taraki* says large tracts of land in these areas which suffered under Army regulations are being cultivated again following the closure of 44 military camps.

In recent months the Tigers have resorted to new terror tactics in the east. A number of soldiers and rival militant group members have received letter bombs. A soldier was seriously injured on 12 September by a letter bomb received at the EPRLF office in Batticaloa town. The LTTE attacked the Petroleum Corporation store in the town a day earlier injuring six policemen. Tiger landmines killed three soldiers at Pillayarady on 15 September.

Civilian casualties in the east continue. N Hemalatha was shot dead by unidentified gunmen on 7 September at Vinayagapuram in Valaichenai. Following a Tiger raid, the Army shelled Nasivantivu on 12 September seriously wounding Saraswathy. Children V Ramesh, 2, and S Ithyanani, 3, were among the people killed by Army shells in Pirambaditivu, 7 miles west of Kiran. Reports say Mehala of Sithandy and K Nadesamurthy of Murakkottanchenai, arrested by the security forces in late September have disappeared.

## third parties

AFTER many months, President Chandrika Kumaratunge offered a ray of hope for resuming peace talks in an interview with the Madras-based *Frontline* magazine. President Chandrika agreed third party involvement, although the government would examine the ability of the potential mediator in the negotiating process. She insists that the LTTE must lay down arms before negotiations could begin. The government must also be convinced that the LTTE would continue discussions until agreement is reached and not use the talks as a breathing space to build its arsenal. The President assured that government conditions need not detain the third party mediator contacting the parties and even beginning discussions, provided certain other conditions are met. She did not, however, specify the "other conditions". Some observers are sceptical after the President declared in another interview in September, this time to the CNN, that there is no basis for third party mediation. Others believe that the days of negotiations are over.

Former Finance minister Ronnie de Mel told *Rupavahini* television on 13 September that President Chandrika spurned a glorious opportunity to solve the ethnic conflict soon after her overwhelming victory at elections in August 1994. Others say there will be no progress because the government is weak due to the President's mishandling of administration. An editorial in the LTTE flagship newspaper *Viduthalai Puligal*, while condemning US military presence in Sri Lanka, has called on the super power to take a neutral stance and become a mediator. But given the track record of the Tigers in breaking peace processes, governments are reluctant to be involved. Observers inevitably conclude that the latest Chandrika/LTTE calls for third parties are part of the continuing propaganda battle rather than a window of peace.

## No relief for Trincomalee

EPDP MP M Chandrakumar has accused the Trincomalee GA of delaying relief to Tamil refugees for the last two months. Speaking in Parliament on 5 September, Mr Chandrakumar said that the GA has brought Tamil refugee relief under his personal supervision and is using an outdated electoral register to deny relief for many recently displaced people.

The ferry service from Trincomalee, suspended in July resumed with the ship *Tharaki* carrying 270 passengers to Jaffna on 1 September. Over 1,000 people are awaiting at Trincomalee and reports say police are delaying travel permits to many of them.

District Land Officer TD Peiris, 52, was shot dead at his home in Trincomalee town on 17 September by

suspected LTTE gunmen. Following the assassination security has been tightened and people have been ordered to remain indoors after 8pm.

Security sources say the Navy damaged two *Sea Tiger* vessels near Foul Point at the Trincomalee harbour entrance. Two sailors were killed and six others injured. Eleven Home Guards and two policemen died in a LTTE attack in Kantalai on 29 September.

Further north in Mullaitivu District, a soldier was killed in a LTTE landmine attack at Kahatagollewa in Veli Oya area on 10 September. The Tigers and the Army clashed at Sinhapura in the same area on 17 September. Security sources say a civilian was abducted by the LTTE after the incident.

# Arrests and roundups continue in Colombo

## Reaping the whirlwind

THE alleged LTTE train bomber Savarimuthu Loganathan was produced by the police at a press conference in Colombo on 3 September. Over 70 people were killed by bombs on a train at Dehiwela on 24 July.

Loganathan had been arrested in a Tiger safe house in Dehiwela on 1 September. Arms and ammunition were also found. Police say Loganathan has confessed and on his information more arms were recovered in another safe house in Puttalam. Ten other suspects were arrested from the two houses.

Police suspect LTTE activists are hidden among the 150,000 Tamil refugees in the capital. Observers say the fall of Kilinochchi may trigger Tiger attacks in Colombo. A major search operation was launched on 4 September and over 80 Tamils were taken into custody.

LTTE agent *Columbus* has also been arrested. Police say he has confessed to hiding weapons in three places in the

capital. *Columbus'* wife and seven year-old child have also been detained.

Tamil MPs and human rights agencies say many innocent Tamils are arrested in search operations in Colombo and other southern areas. In a fundamental rights application to the Supreme Court, Colombo resident and bank employee V Satchithananthan says he was arrested after the July train bomb and detained for a day without assigning any reason. He refused to sign a pre-prepared confession in the Sinhala language. Confidential information about his bank account had been passed on to the police.

Hill Country youth Kandasamy Thiyagarajah, currently in Colombo's Magazine prison began a fast on 18 September demanding his release. He worked in a Bambalapitiya restaurant and was arrested in March 1995. Mr Thiyagarajah says that after a habeas corpus application was filed in the Court of Appeal on his behalf, he was forced to

sign a confession to justify his detention.

Tamil MP Joseph Pararajasingham says in a letter to President Chandrika that the lives of the 76 Tamils arrested in Jaffna and currently held in Magazine and Kalutara prisons will be endangered if they are taken to Anuradhapura for their case. When 47 of the detainees were produced in Anuradhapura on 20 September, crowds outside the court demanded their death. The MP says the 76 youths have been detained by police for over three months and confessions extracted from them under torture.

Manipay bakery owner S Sivalingam in his fundamental rights application from Magazine prison says he was arrested on 7 July at Uduvil and tortured at the Nadeswara College Army camp for two days. Colombo trader S Bastiampillai, 59, is held at the dreaded 6th Floor of the police headquarters. He has neither been informed of the reasons for the detention nor produced before a court.

## Warring parties

FIVE members of the main opposition United National Party (UNP) were killed in Negombo, 20 miles north of Colombo, on 20 September. The dead included Katunayake-Seeduwa Town Council Vice Chairman Silvan Perera. Twelve others were injured in the incident.

The assailants who are alleged to be supporters of the ruling People's Alliance (PA) threw grenades and fired on the car in which the UNP members were travelling. The attack is the latest in a series of clashes between UNP and PA supporters.

PA supporters Shelton Fernando and Ranjith Fernando were shot dead on 31 August at Kurana in the Katunayake area during ceremonies at St Mary's Baptist Church to commemorate UNP's 50th anniversary. Reports say the ceremonies were postponed after the church was attacked and the parish priest threatened. Western Province UNP councillor Devindra Mendis and security officer Shantha Kumara are in custody in connection with the murders.

UNP says the families of those who died in Negombo have been threatened by PA thugs. Party members are not convinced by the appointment of a special

police investigation team. They say the police have failed to probe a number of violent incidents since 1994 and allege President Chandrika is encouraging attacks on the UNP by her inaction.

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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British Refugee Council: Charity No. 1014576  
Company No. 2727514

ISSN 0955-5943

Funded by voluntary agencies worldwide.  
Technology by RnR DTP  
Printed by Printco, 374 Willesden High Rd,  
London NW10

UNP politician and Nuwara Eliya Mayor Nalin Herath was shot at by a motor cyclist on 4 August. Police suspect that two of her supporters were murdered and buried in the forest area of World's End, south of Nuwara Eliya. Thirteen suspects have been taken into custody.

UNP candidate for a cooperative society election in Piliyandala DKD Chandrapala and his brother Karunaratne were shot dead on 24 August, following a dispute in handing nomination papers. The following day the two political parties clashed in Matugama.

Many people are concerned that political violence may affect government's peace package currently before the Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform (PSC). UNP's support is vital for the passage of the proposals in Parliament. There is pressure within UNP to withdraw from the PSC. UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe who met NGOs in September over the issue of violence, declared that his party will continue to participate in the peace process. But if violence continues, Mr Wickremasinghe may find it difficult to resist the hardliners within the party.